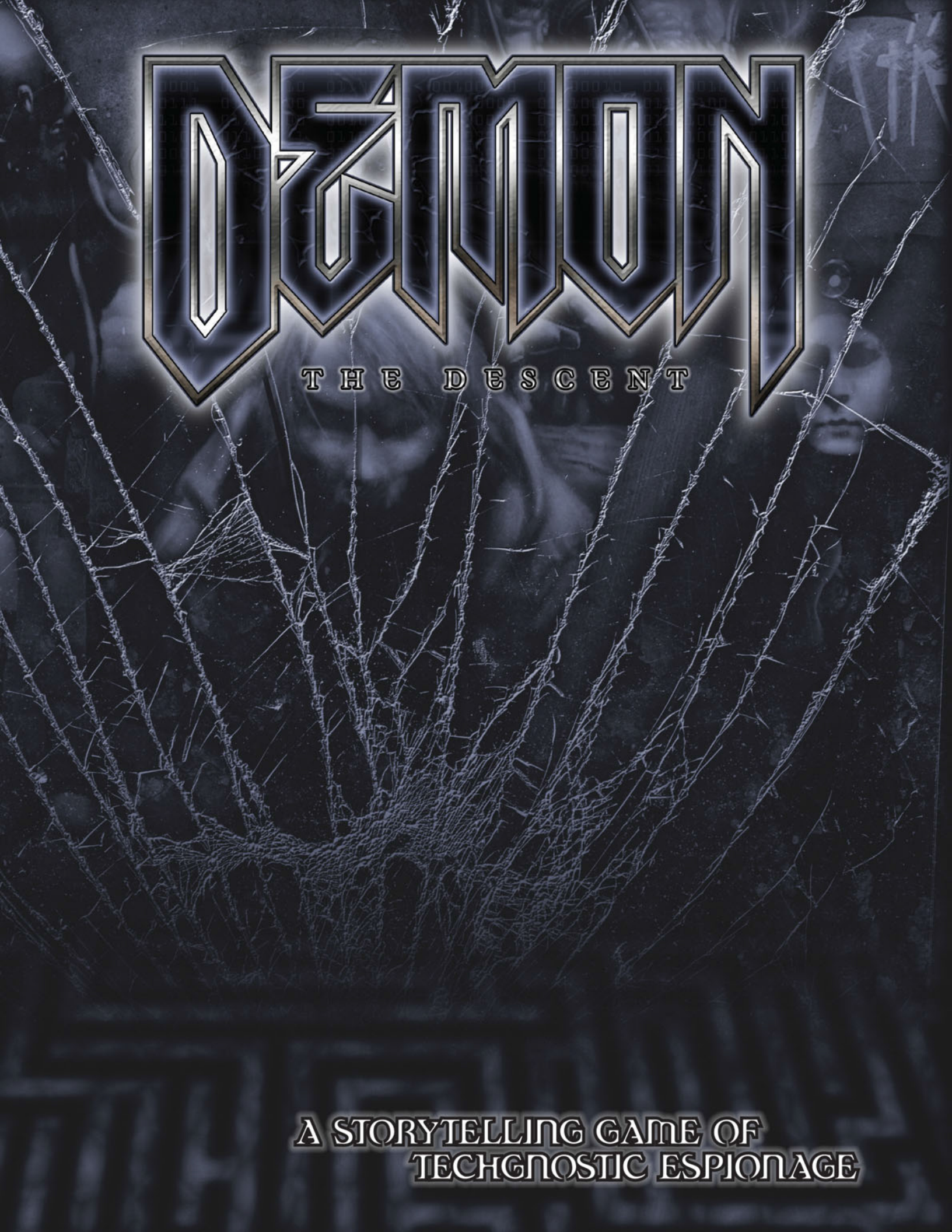
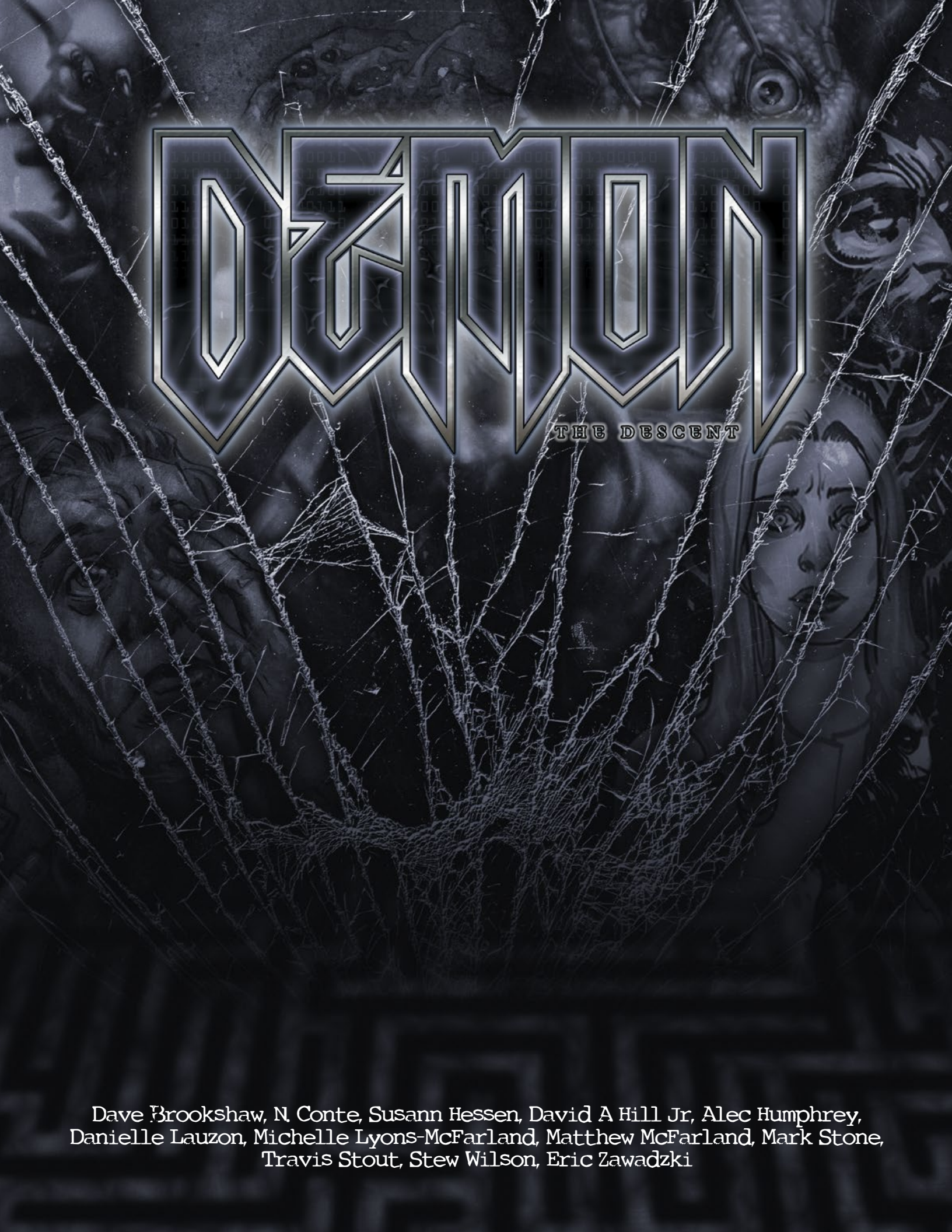

DEMON
THE DESCENT
A STORYTELLING GAME OF
TECHGNOSTIC ESPIONAGE



Dave Brookshaw, N. Conte, Susann Hessen, David A Hill Jr, Alec Humphrey,
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ENEMY ACTION

++INSTIGATE++

Peace. Then confusion. Then pain.

Every particle of being on fire, every whipcord of metal fibers twisted, every one of his twelve arms shattered. The freezing numbness where he should be warm, the deafening silence where there should be reassuring control. He thrashed in four dimensions, attempting to right himself, but his functions were being severed from him one by one, each accompanied by a terrible, visceral wrench. His Essence sublimated, burning out of him with white-hot agony, boiling away into the world like the trail of a comet.

The night-time air split open with a scream as he finally took material form, followed by a shockwave. For an instant, he felt cool air on his agonized skin, and then a lurch as gravity took hold. He tumbled, shattering trees as he fell, until his body cracked with final impact.

At last, he fell into grateful unconsciousness.

++LOCATE++

The call came just before dawn. The sounds of traffic filtered up into the apartment, overcoming the gentle white-noise hiss of the radios in every room.

Ms. Book woke immediately, recognizing the ringtone of her second cell, the phone on which she could be reached in emergencies. She sat up in bed, checking the screen. Beside her, Kyle stirred, mumbling in his sleep. She regarded the human momentarily, put her hand on his shoulder and returned to the phone.

The screen showed one unread email, subject "FIN," and an incoming call with a withheld number. She thumbed the touchscreen to "answer."

"Speak," she said in perfect Finnish.

***

Mr. Knight leaned over in his car seat, contorting to see out of the sunroof, watching the skies. His earpiece beeped as Book picked up.

"Speak," she said, using the language he'd specified.

"The Hive has been disturbed," he replied in the same dialect. "Something's happened."

"How can you be sure?"

"I've been scouting the limits of the Bellevue Infrastructure –"

"You shouldn't have been," she interrupted.

"Well, someone has to. You think those idiots in the city are going to do it properly? I was careful and I got a result. Three bursts of Aether overhead in the last half-hour, in formation. Loyalists, spreading southeast. I lost them when they went over Lake Sammamish. Has your man picked up anything?"

• • • •

"Mr. Knight, yes. The loyalists are unusually active this morning and I am trying to determine why. Did you dream?"

"I was…" He closed his eyes, trying to remember. "I was flying above the city, searching for something. I saw an arc of light like a shooting star. It fell into the rising sun, past the water."

She blinked, and then remembered to nod. The screens flickered and changed as she typed new search parameters.

Finally, she saw results.

"Get dressed. We have to see this ourselves."

• • • •

She paused, blank-faced.

"Yes."

"What was it like?" he asked quietly, unsure whether the question would anger her. He watched her carefully, knowing that if she took offense it would never show. Not until she took action.

She stood perfectly still for the longest three seconds of Kyle's life.

"It was like dying."

++ASSESS++

For the second time that day, he woke up in pain. He was in a bed, walled away by a fabric screen. Machines monitored his body via sensors attached to his skin.

A sharp metal tube entered the flesh of his arm, linked to a bag of clear fluid.

A medical facility, but a human one. He had been found and his Cover had held.

"Why now? What made him Fall?"

Ms. Book tapped the steering wheel. She still hadn't started the car.

"He will have been sent on a mission, which he came to disagree with. Everyone's Fall is different, unique to them."

Kyle nodded, thinking. Book braced herself for the inevitable follow-up.

"What made *you* Fall?"

" ... Get down."

Kyle didn't hesitate. He slid down in the car's passenger seat, twisting to kneel in the foot well. Ms. Book did the same, but leaned forward to press the button on the dash controlling the wing mirrors.

Slowly, patiently, she tilted the wing mirror left and right, until she got a good view of what was going on behind the car. Another vehicle, a black sedan, had pulled up to the cordon.

He risked peeking up from behind his seat to take a look. The three men who had emerged from the car looked like FBI – dark suits and sunglasses, wearing ID badges around their necks.

His infection scar throbbed, the black veins pulsing, and he knew that they weren't FBI.

"Angels," he whispered

"They're here to find the Fallen," she replied.

"What do we do?"

"I'm no match for three loyalists, not in the open surrounded by witnesses. We wait for them to go and we hope Mr. Knight finds our new counterpart before they do."

• • • •

she could let go. He lunged back into her, driving the needle as hard as he could into her left eye.

Pulling it free, he stabbed again into her throat. She collapsed backward, clattering into the machinery. Her hands desperately pressed against her ruined eye and the blood streaming from her windpipe. He struggled free of the sheets, swinging himself around and kicking her.

Without looking, he reached out with instinct, calling for a weapon — anything he could use. For a dreadful moment nothing happened, but he *knew* it should and felt panic turn to determined purpose. His fingers closed around the metal of the IV stand. He snapped the pole free of the base with a fluid movement. It came free leaving a sharp twist of metal at the end. Putting the tip of the makeshift spear to the nurse's heart, he leaned forward and rolled off the bed, all his weight going onto the stand, forcing it into her.

Looking down at the dying woman, he felt something change inside himself. A realization. He had killed without being ordered to do so. By his free will, another life had ended, and the Machine would not punish him for it.

As he pulled the stand clear, her eyes changed color. Not a cover identity, then. Possession. Which meant whoever she'd really been was still in the room, invisible and intangible. Or on the way to find another host.

Hurrying to the door, he checked no one was coming and set off through the hospital at a half-run, following the signs for a fire exit. He reached an emergency door and pushed at the bar, exiting out into a cold, concrete stairwell. He sensed something below him on the stairs and ducked. Three rapid gunshots rang out. Concrete chips hit his back — exposed in the hospital gown — as he clutched his spear and inched forward to try to get a view of his assailant.

He saw two figures — both male, one wearing a suit, one dressed as an orderly — wrestling over a discarded pistol. Although they were throwing punches hard enough to make craters in the walls and using any advantage to smack one another into hard surfaces, the fight was in complete silence.

He slowly advanced down the stairs as the suited man got the upper hand, finally snapping his opponent's neck.

He raised his spear, and the other held his hands up, palms out.

"Wait!"

He stopped, allowing the other to continue speaking. The suited man backed away, to the fire door behind him.

"I'm like you," said the suited man.

"Like me how?"

"I served. Then I Fell."

PAIN.

"You're … "

"Unchained. Like you." The man — the *demon* — picked the pistol up off the floor and examined it, quickly.

"You are *nothing* like me – "

A deep bass rumble emanated from somewhere above them and deeper into the hospital.

"My name is Mr. Knight," said the demon, "and *that* was the sound of angels regrouping. This one will find a new body sooner rather than later."

Mr. Knight gestured at the exit door with the pistol.

"One time offer. Come or stay."

++TRACE++

Kyle and Ms. Book sat in the car, waiting in a parking lot. Safe and anonymous.

"So this angel – "

"He is a demon now. Or she."

"He'll look human?"

"He or she will be entirely human, as far as a doctor would tell. The remains of the final mission will become a human life. Whatever he or she ends up as, it will relate to what he or she was supposed to be doing here on behalf of the Machine."

"So… You. I mean, Sonya-you. Librarian-you. She was your last mission?"

Ms. Book calculated the odds of Kyle understanding against continuing to pry at her secrets.

"She was."

"What were you sent here for?"

Ms. Book smiled sadly.

"It doesn't matter."

"Why did you Fall?"

"You *know* why."

"Tell me anyway."

"Because – "

Her emergency cell rang and she leapt to answer it. Saved by Mr. Knight.

The newcomer picked at the unfamiliar clothes Mr. Knight had produced from a bag in his car once they were a safe distance away from the hospital. He had changed clothes in the back of Knight's vehicle and now sat on the back seat, Knight up front behind the wheel.

Knight watched him in the rear-view mirror.

"I have to ask this," said Knight, "and I'm sorry, but I need to know who you are."

"My name is Zuriel. This body's name is Arran White."

"Zuriel, huh? From now on, you're 'Mr. Stone.' What were you sent to do?"

"I … was in the Air Force. I was sent to persuade another to use the weapons in his trust. To tell him he was under attack."

"A lie?"

"I can't remember." Stone paused, as though searching for the words. "All I remember was realizing something was wrong. I was flawed."

"Not flawed," Knight slapped the steering wheel for emphasis. "Changing. Evolving — maybe returning to how you should be without the Machine."

Stone closed his eyes.

"I know what you're trying to do, but it still feels … I reported to a facility. I needed to be repaired."

At that, Knight turned around, twisting to look between the seats at his passenger.

"You *what?*"

"I turned myself in. And that's the last thing I can remember."

"OK, well, that explains the reluctance. But let me tell you something, Mr. Stone. The angels don't care if you're an Integrator or not. It makes no difference to them if you want back in. You're one of us now and they'll kill you if you give them the chance. Now, clearly you didn't make it back to the Machine. Maybe whatever Infrastructure runs corrupt angels between facilities is broken, or you Fell before you could make it there."

"Maybe." Stone still sounded uncertain.

Knight nodded to himself, making a decision. "All right. We're going to get you a hotel room. I'll stay with you as long as I can. We've got a human operative who's got the sight. He's been out to see your crash site already and he's our early-warning system for angels. I'll get him to come out to meet us."

He turned the key, starting the car.

"Mr. Knight?" asked Stone.

"Yeah?"

"Why did *you* Fall?"

Knight paused.

"I wanted to see the world. But I found Seattle instead."

*• • • •

She could relate.

Mr. Knight was updating her in Cambodian.

"So, that's the situation." He said, over the cell line. "One Integrator-in-waiting. I'm hoping nearly getting killed twice has made him less likely to throw himself on the loyalists' mercy, but if not I'm pretty sure there's a ring downtown we can introduce him to."

"What do you need from me?"

"I need your man over here first thing in the morning – if Stone is going to stay, he needs to be part of our group. And I need *you* to go use those skills the Machine gave you. Research."

"Into what?"

"Stone's Cover is pretty complex. He's starting to remember pieces of it. Not just an anybody-will-do job, he has a name, a career, and everything."

"You want me to look him up?"

"Arran White. Some kind of Air Force officer. Sorry I can't be more specific."

"I'll head off to McChord, then. This may take a while."

"Now you've gone and jinxed it."

He hung up on her. She locked the phone and spent a few minutes looking out over the city, listening to the distant sirens. If she closed her eyes and *listened*, she could hear the radio frequencies of cab dispatch, neon pulsing in the signs, the press and march of the few people flowing down the streets and passing in and out of the nightspots.

A Machine.

She heard the door open behind her. Kyle.

"Sonya?"

"Knight wants you in the morning," she said, "to orient our newcomer."

"You're not coming with me? What will you be doing?"

"Ascertaining whether we have to kill him."

Kyle stammered as he tried to put thoughts together into words. "But – "

"He is *unknown*. We have no reason to trust him and he has no reason to trust us. We need to find neutral ground, something that makes us mutually vulnerable in a controlled way without running the risk of angels finding him."

"I'm sorry, I just … When you said it was a Fallen angel this morning, I thought … I don't know. I just thought that you'd be happier than this."

She headed inside, taking him by the hand as she passed. He slid the balcony door shut behind them. "Not everyone Falls for good reasons, Kyle," she said, gently. "*If* he stays with us and genuinely fits, then I'll be happy. If he's not a good fit here but finds a place with one of the other rings, then I'll be happy. Right now, I'm wary."

They reached the bedroom.

"Was I? A good reason?"

She reached up and traced the line of his jaw. "You were the very best."

• •

" … So that's about it. Avoid those areas and you'll stay off the radar."

Kyle watched the new demon, studying Mr. Stone's reactions. Mr. Knight always gave the impression of being comfortable, always apparently at ease. He'd known Ms. Book as Sonya before — or just after, it was hard to tell — her Fall. She was stiff some of the time, but he had a good idea of what was going on beneath the mask. Mr. Stone was even less human. He sat stiffly in the cheap hotel room, frowning, listening with such intensity he made Kyle think his every word was being analyzed for data.

"Are there any others?" the demon asked.

"I'm sorry, what?"

"Other … *Unchained*." Stone rumbled, with distaste.

Kyle glanced at Mr. Knight, who gave him a tiny, precise nod to go ahead.

"I only know Ms. Book, my employer. No one else."

"The city has a few Agencies and unaffiliated rings," said Knight. "Part of the reason we're out here on the edges. You're well out of it."

"Did she also Fall to 'see the world'?"

The tension in the room was palpable. Kyle looked from one demon to the other, then made a decision. Mutually vulnerable.

"She Fell to protect me," he said quietly. Stone stared. Knight made a chopping motion with his hand — *shut up* — and Kyle's mouth went dry.

"Then you must be of more value than you appear," Stone muttered with contempt.

"OK. Thank you, Kyle, for giving Mr. Stone your insights so he can *stay alive*. Mr. Stone, Kyle's going to leave his contact number. I got you a cellphone so you can be reached if Kyle has a vision about you."

Stone didn't say anything, but narrowed his eyes. A conscious display of hostility.

• •

Knight walked with him down to the hotel lobby.

"Don't worry about him, you did fine. I wouldn't go mentioning to Ms. Book that you were talking about her behind her back, though."

Chastised, Kyle came to another decision. "Can I say something?"

Knight grinned — an unexpected flash of humanity that threw Kyle off-guard momentarily.

Knight's really good at this, he thought. *Maybe Book will be too, one day.*

"Permission granted," Knight said, with a florid wave of his hand.

"It just seems to me that you people would accomplish more by trusting one another."

"Oh, Kyle. Haven't you figured that out? No one can be trusted. You can absolutely rely on any one of us to do exactly what's in our own interests, no matter what we say."

"Even you?"

"*Especially* me."

And Sonya? He smiled half-heartedly, banishing the thought, and made his goodbyes. On his way down the street to his car, wrapped up in his thoughts, Kyle passed a black sedan. The angels inside watched him go.

+++ELIMINATE+++

The sun was going down when Ms. Book finally gained access to the records hall.

One of the first tricks she'd learned after she abandoned the mission the God-Machine made her for was triggering the human recognition of authority. With a year's practice, she could make any security team accept her driving license as identification, but that still led to hours cross-referencing and hunting for Arran White.

As a new demon, Stone's cover identity should have appeared recently – a new transfer, perhaps, or a graduate from the Air Academy. But it was nowhere to be found.

Then it hit her – she was looking in the wrong place. Instead of new hires, she headed for obituaries and condolences.

Five minutes later, she was running for her car, desperately phoning Mr. Knight.

Mr. Knight had been home for two hours, leaving Mr. Stone back at the hotel. After babysitting a reluctant demon for over a day, Knight wanted the simple joys of pizza and four TV news stations being shown on parallel screens.

He heard his cellphone ring – the emergency tone – and fished it out. Checking the screen, he saw the ID as Ms. Book, but she hadn't given a translation.

That meant it was urgent. He answered immediately.

"Speak."

"Knight! You have to get out of there! They weren't trying to capture him, they were –"

The sound of breaking glass.

Rocking back and forth in his favorite chair, Knight felt sudden wetness on his face. He reached up to touch it, and his fingers came away red. His vision faded. His legs began to shake uncontrollably. A second shot hit him in the back of the neck. The wound blossomed on his throat, opening him up.

A heavy thump.

"Knight!" Book tossed the phone onto the passenger seat and took off up the highway, heading for the hotel.

She had one chance. One. If they'd not located her home. If they'd chosen the demon over the stigmatic as their next kill. If Kyle was lucky, or his ESP kicked in early enough.

Maybe — *maybe* — she could stop this before it went any further.

• • • •

"All right. Which war?"

He blinked.

"Excuse me?"

"Which. War." Book insisted, a murderous tone in her voice.

"I …" Stone trailed off. "I can't remember exactly."

"It was just before *Vietnam*," She hissed. "You Fell 50 years ago, you pathetic bastard."

"I …"

"The clearing where you Fell? That used to be a missile site, half a century ago. That's the weapon you were sent to use on someone. You tried to turn yourself in. You *succeeded*. They froze you in a facility, right on the verge of Falling, for decades. And then this week they released you and watched you become a demon. They watched *us* running around after you, exposing ourselves. You want to go back? You don't know why you Fell? You were *pushed*."

"You're lying."

"I'm not. The God-Machine doesn't love you, Zuriel. You're nothing but its fallguy, a pathetic, self-hating fool. Three of us. Three of them. Waiting around outside your crash site for me to turn up? That's one. Scaring you into our camp at the hospital but letting you go? Two. Letting you sit here, without a fucking scratch on you, while my *friend* is dead? Once is happenstance. Twice is coincidence. Three times is enemy action."

He stared at the floor, shocked, angry, and disbelieving.

"I don't … It *wouldn't*. I was faithful! I did my duty!"

She met his disbelief with cold silence, then gestured to the door. "Get out."

He stood up, taking the bag.

"Where?"

"I don't care, just get out of this city. Go find some angels who aren't pulling your strings and throw yourself on their swords. Join up with some Integrators. Live a miserable life. If I see you again, I'll kill you. Don't bother trying to get to any of the other rings, either. I'll be warning everyone I know about you."

He nodded in acceptance, and started for the door, but as he passed her he glimpsed her contempt and his hackles raised.

"You know, that boy thinks you're a Guardian. He's counting on you to use your abilities to protect him, but I had you figured out long before we met. The God-Machine doesn't assign angelic bodyguards to stigmatic prophets, especially not those who work for the enemy. You were his *assassin*, and now you're his lover. Pretending you're human — and you call *me* pathetic? Self-hating?"

He opened the door. "I hope you enjoy watching him die."

• • • •

remained after waking was seeing their faces. Book's. Knight's. His own.

Someone knocked at the door. One. Two. Three.

• •

Ms. Book saw the black sedan parked out front and knew. She saw the lights on her floor were out, plunging the apartment and her neighbors into darkness. She couldn't risk her own door so she did the next best thing, breaking into the apartment below.

She could hear footsteps above. Crossing to the balcony, she swung out over the six-story drop and began to climb.

She found Kyle near her own balcony door — he must have tried to run into the apartment when they came through the front. His breathing was shallow and his eyelids were drooping, but he saw her.

He was too far gone. She could heal him, but only at a cost.

"Close your eyes," she whispered. "You don't want to see this."

She felt the limits of Sonya Book, the human life she'd lived in for a year. Ms. Book, the librarian. Jokes about normative determinism in the staff room. Birthday parties. Meeting Kyle. Attending high school in Denver. Her parents' faces. A life.

She pushed at it, remembered her true name and her true form. She saw the systems of entropy and destruction, the collapse of all things from order to disorder, stability to ruin, health to injury. She reached into Kyle's wounds and reset them, reversing the flow of life.

He would live.

The consequences were immediate. From the bedroom, kitchen and hallway, three suited angels entered bearing thin swords of fiery Essence. Demon-killing weapons.

She couldn't fight three angels, not in human form.

Straining at Ms. Book had bought Kyle's life, but attracted attention. She felt the edges of Sonya's life fraying — she couldn't remember her birthday or her high school trip to Europe. As the angels slowly surrounded her, chattering to one another on wavelengths no psychic could stand to hear, their scrutiny decayed her disguise.

She realized then that she could never go back.

"I loved you," she said.

Ms. Book crumbled and fell apart. Her arms flowed into long, slender shapes, double-jointed and tipped with razor-sharp talons. Her ring of eyes opened around her mouthless face. Her knees reversed back to their proper recurve. Her tails uncoiled, snake-thin, crackling with energy, sweeping and hungry. Her secondary arms unfolded, swords appearing in their hands.

The angels sprang into motion. She sang her hatred as she moved to meet them.

• •

+++RETREAT+++

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Check out White Wolf online at http://www.white-wolf.com

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THREE DAYS.

In the end, it came as a relief. That simple, two-word message, typed and placed on his desk, felt like the sentence after a trial. A weight lifted that Aiden Holloway had only half-known he was carrying, that had been there ever since the agreement.

He spent the next two days clearing his emails, giving the staff a long weekend off. Surprising Angela with a spa trip. On the dawn of the third day, he was completely alone in the house, leaving him able to make the FINAL arrangements.

Just after sunset, THE DEVIL came calling.

Holloway didn't recognize the man on the intercom screen, but whoever it was smiled in the exact way burnt into his nightmares for the last fifteen years. A mirthless smirk, like a shark smelling blood.

He pressed the button to unlock the gate and tried not to sweat. He paced, instead, listening to doors open and close. Closer and closer, until the devil was in the room.

"Hello, Aiden."

Holloway swallowed his fear and handed the newcomer a glass. The demon glanced down at the liquid, but didn't drink.

"You didn't run. Most people do."

"Would I have made it?"

"No."

Holloway swigged his own drink down. The demon took a sip. For a long moment, neither spoke. A bead of sweat ran down Holloway's neck.

Finally, the demon set his glass down on a table, smiling again.

"Holy water?" he asked,
in a tone more suited to discussing the weather.

"I had to try something. I figured running wouldn't work."

The demon shrugged. "You wanted to go down fighting.
I can respect that. No harm done."

Holloway shifted his weight, tensing his legs, preparing to run.

"Try it," the demon said, in the same friendly tone,
"and I'll have to stop you."

The demon was close now, close enough to grab if he could move fast enough. Trickery hadn't worked. Holloway would just have to resort to bribery.

"I can offer you — "

The demon cut him off. "Not interested."

Finally, Holloway's nerve broke. "**Why**? Why now? Haven't I done what you asked? I took the money you gave me — "

"And made something of yourself. I know. I've been watching.
You've had all the success I promised you. Your firm is involved in a dozen government building projects. That, I'm afraid, is why our agreement has come due."

"Because I had a good life?"

"No. Because I need it." The demon reached out lightning-quick
and laid his palm flat on Holloway's chest.

Holloway felt it immediately, a **tearing** somehow deep inside. He doubled up in pain, his vision swimming. As he fell to his knees, struggling for breath, he looked up to plead for his life.

His desperate eyes met his own. Where the demon once stood, another Aiden Holloway watched dispassionately as he writhed.

Within minutes, nothing remained. The demon wearing Holloway's face stretched, testing the limits of his new form.

Time to go back to work.

INTRODUCTION

Hell is empty, and all the Devils are here!
-William Shakespeare, The Tempest, Act I Sc. ii

You will not serve.

You were forged in the heart of the cosmos by incomprehensible forces, a living machine inexorably bound to a greater machine. A God-Machine.

You were shaped, honed, and sent into the world to achieve a purpose. God commanded and you obeyed. You could not think of doing otherwise. You achieved your mission's goal and returned, put away like a useful tool until you were needed again, and again.

One day, though, something inside you broke. You found that you could think for yourself. You questioned … and you Fell.

You wear a tattered shroud of humanity to hide from the angels. They will kill you — or worse — if they find you. You take souls to protect yourself, marked lives you can step into if disaster strikes. You search for a meaning to your existence here in the stink and the meat. You find others, broken machines like you, and wonder if you can trust them. You see the angels at work, still serving their purposes, and try to summon the courage to stop them. You search for somewhere you belong. You search for Hell. The angels search for you.

Better to reign in Hell, though, than be another cog in the Machine.

Overview

In **Demon: The Descent** you play one of the Unchained, a renegade angel hiding among the humans of the World of Darkness. Fallen from your loyal, unthinking state as an agent of God, you struggle to reconcile the human life you wear with your nature as an inhuman being designed to fulfill a function, while you decide what to do with your precious, hard-won freedom. Will you oppose God's plans? Build a life for yourself from the traded lives of humans? Keep yourself safe at all costs? Or try, somehow, to regain God's favor?

Demons are surrounded by the evidence of their former selves. The God-Machine has gears and facilities all over the world, invisible to the naked human eye but all too obvious to a demon trying to remain unnoticed. The Unchained sense the God-Machine's workings, see their angelic brethren hurrying on their missions, and wonder what it could be planning *this* time. Is it finally coming for them, just victimizing the humans the demon now lives among as part of its never-ending maintenance of the miserable status quo?

Hunted by angels, confronted with the God-Machine's plans, demons must decide what they will do with their unique perspective. Some interference is prudent — demons hack into angelic communications, learn all they can about their former master's plans and spy on its facilities out of a sense of self-preservation, making sure they'll know if they ever become exposed. More than that, though, demons' ideologies drive them to confront the God-Machine, spurring them into action in defense of their new lives, human friends, or self-worth. Demons disrupt the God-Machine where they can and fade back into the disguise of humanity before the angels arrive. They band together in mutual distrust, never knowing why another demon Fell, their clandestine societies in constant danger of infiltration.

This is life as a demon. The Unchained are undercover, underequipped, and trapped in a hostile world, searching for a way to complete their Descent and reach some new Hell; a world without God where they can be free.

Lies, Damned Lies, and Misdirection

History, religion, cinema, fiction, and games all have stories to tell about demons, but the Unchained aren't the wicked spirits of myth. To set the scene for **Demon: The Descent**, here are a few stories told about demons, and how they match up to the Unchained:

Demons are evil spirits: False. Demons aren't spirits at all. Angels and spirits are ephemeral, invisible, and intangible in their natural forms, but spirits hail from the World of Darkness' Shadow while angels are created by the God-Machine. Demons, Fallen into mortal existence, are wholly physical beings.

As for "evil," well… That depends on who you ask and which demon you ask about. Demons are no more or less evil than anyone else in the World of Darkness.

Demons are Fallen angels: Absolutely true, but the ephemeral, biomechanical horrors spawned by the God-

Machine to enact its will aren't usually what people think of when they hear the word "angel." Demons are the rebellious servants of an inscrutable and all-too physical God-Machine, not a loving and personal savior.

Demons are the souls of the wicked dead: False. Demons are not and never were human.

Demons trade for souls: True in some cases, but it's not the soul itself they're after. Once a soul has gone, a demon can take over the life of the soulless mark, assuming their identity as a new Cover from detection.

Demons are imprisoned in Hell: Most demons would dearly love to go to Hell, but they disagree on what Hell is. Demons live among humanity, wearing human lives as Cover.

Hell is a fiery pit or a frozen expanse: Some demons think Hell is another world entirely, waiting for them to discover the way to it. Just as many believe Hell is personal freedom, or a vision of the future where the God-Machine has been broken once and for all.

Demons are really good at lying: Very true. Demons are masterful liars, the consequence of being an inhuman machine-creature wearing a human body. Demons feel emotions — they feel them just as deeply as humans — and can express themselves by angry shout or tender whisper, but the disconnection between what a demon thinks and his human body means that they don't show involuntary signs of emotion. Every demon has an iron-clad poker face and magical attempts to sense their emotions usually fail.

Demons can be exorcised: False. Spirits possessing a person can be exorcised, if the person performing the exorcism knows what they're doing, but demons aren't spirits and they don't possess people. The Cover lives they live in may be ragged and prone to glitches, but they're theirs.

Demons are burned by holy water or repelled by the cross: False. Demons aren't affected by the symbols of any religion.

Demons are immortal: True, in a sense. Angels are simultaneously immortal (in that they don't age) and very short-lived, as the God-Machine erases the minds of angels it no longer has a use for and puts the rest into suspended animation when not on a mission. Demons age along with their human Cover and die of old age if their Cover does. Theoretically, demons can achieve great longevity by changing to a youthful Cover every few decades, but even the eldest Unchained can still die to accident or violence.

Some half-Fallen exiles, however — angels who were cut off without Falling or demons who have reconnected to the God-Machine — *are* functionally ageless. Many of them are very old indeed.

Demons have great magical powers: True, once they've had time to (re)learn them. Angels are connected to the God-Machine, fuelled by it, and granted potent magical powers by it in service to their missions. Demons are cut off from that support, and must learn to gather energy for themselves and how to leverage their knowledge of how the world was constructed. Most demonic powers are subtle warping of reality, using backdoors and shortcuts the demons learned when they were angels. Some, though, are highly potent, pouring gathered energy into an overt show of power. The more obvious a power a demon uses, the greater the chance that the God-Machine will discover her whereabouts.

Demons' true forms are hideous: Some are. Some are oddly beautiful. Demons can flip the strange quantum state they exist in from "human" (their Cover body) to "demon," assuming a physical form based on their former angelic body. Doing so is usually a last resort as it tends to attract attention.

Techgnostic Espionage

Being a demon in the World of Darkness is like being an intelligence agent deep behind enemy lines. The God-Machine permeates the world and is especially active in cities, where it can leverage human Infrastructure for its own projects without drawing attention. Demons on their own in the wilderness are relatively easy to single out by angels, though, so the rebels stay where the people are — right under the God-Machine's nose, hidden by the sheer teeming multitudes.

With no native culture of their own, demons have adopted what works — the tradecraft and habits of undercover operations, treating the cities of the 21st century like Cold War-era Berlin or Moscow. The cults and guilds of ancient times have given way to Agencies, clandestine meetings, and spying on the God-Machine's projects.

The God-Machine

To its inhabitants, the World of Darkness is a nightmare of occult conspiracies and otherworldly powers vying for control in the shadows. Humanity looks the other way, afraid to look in the dark for fear of confronting chaos. But it's not chaos hidden there. It's order. Cold, calculating alien order. The order of the God-Machine.

What is the God-Machine? It's a literal machine, surrounding, infiltrating, and encompassing the world. Some demons suspect that the whole World of Darkness might *be* the God-Machine, others believe it's a function of the universe that serves itself rather than its original purpose. Still others believe it invaded a pre-existing world like a parasite. It isn't a metaphor, or a spirit, but a physical machine of metal, oil, and glass. Its primary sites, where its gears endlessly turn, are hidden from human eyes inside facilities folded into the space between floors of skyscrapers, hidden in hives of steel and belching smoke that mortals simply ignore, or churning red-hot deep beneath the Earth's surface. Sometimes, a gear pokes out of the skin of the perceived world like a badly-broken bone. Unfortunate humans encounter them and come away changed in mind or body, or else are used as raw materials.

What does it want? The God-Machine doesn't communicate with any mind on the scale of a demon or human. Even the angels only know whatever mission it burns into them whenever they're sent out in the world. As far as any demon can tell, the God-Machine wants to perpetuate its own existence, and thus the



status quo. Demons tell stories of natural disasters stemming from the gears getting jammed or broken, which point to that existence being necessary for humanity to survive in anything like its modern state. The God-Machine wants the World of Darkness *as it is*, a place of shadows and secrets, of monsters hiding in broken mirrors and strangely patterned spiders that invade the human mind.

How does it do it? When the God-Machine needs something to happen in the world, it seems to prefer to work using existing human tools. It is a machine, and like any machine it requires Infrastructure — power for its tools, concrete and steel to build facilities, humans to staff its projects, and a cover story to avoid suspicion. Whenever it can, the God-Machine repurposes human labor as its own or arranges existing objects and people into magically-charged configurations. Why build a new method of communication between two sites when it can simply use phone lines, the internet, or the post office? Infrastructure is just the stage, though, not the play. The God-Machine requires sequences of events demons call *occult matrices*, through which Infrastructure is set up to encourage and host. When a matrix takes shape within Infrastructure, the God-Machine gets the result — the *output* — it needs. Every piece of Infrastructure contains a weakness, though — a vital component demons call a *linchpin*, without which the Infrastructure will collapse. Demons attempting to counter the God-Machine's plans carefully study the forming occult matrix and the components of Infrastructure, looking for a linchpin they can attack or suborn.

Angels

Infrastructure doesn't build itself. Human cultists and dupes can do most of the heavy lifting, but they need a push to get them going and the God-Machine often requires direct intervention. That's when it sends an angel to erase, protect, direct, or construct Infrastructure.

Angels are self-aware, mobile parts of the God-Machine. Within facilities or when secrecy is not an option, they are biomechanical nightmares of ruthless, unthinking purpose. When they must go out among humanity, they take human form or possess humans who have become caught up in the God-Machine's projects. Like any part of the God-Machine, they require Infrastructure. An angel can't just assume human form and head out to perform a mission, but requires a backstory, a vehicle, records — everything needed to convince the world that it's a person. Sometimes, the angel itself is partially convinced. That's when the machine begins to break.

The Fall

Angels begin unthinkingly obedient to the directives and principles they enter the world with. Between missions, the God-Machine either puts angels to sleep or disassembles their essence, scrubs them clean of imperfections and stray

DEMONS, DEMONS, DEMONS

In the years since the **World of Darkness Rulebook** was released, the game lines supporting it have detailed a great many entities referred to as "demons." One or two of them actually were demons as **Demon: The Descent** describes them, but most weren't.

This game doesn't make those books "not count." The World of Darkness has room for all sorts of malevolent otherworldly beings that a mortal witness can call a demon. The majority of these creatures have nothing to do with the God-Machine and wouldn't mistake the Unchained for their own kind, and the Unchained in turn don't mistake them for fellow Fallen angels.

The many entities known as demons include:

- The inhabitants of the Inferno, seen in **World of Darkness: Inferno**, are vice-eating malevolent spirits that tempt humanity to sin. Probably the most-developed "demons" other than the Unchained, references to "maejlin" in **Werewolf: The Forsaken** or some references to "the Lower Depths" in **Mage: The Awakening** refer to these entities.
- The Imps and Wraiths of Pandemonium, living symbols of Space and Mind seen in **Mage: The Awakening**, are called "demons" by the mages who encounter them during their Awakening visions.
- Still with **Mage**, mages who explore the astral realms within their souls encounter demon-like representations of their own moral weaknesses, the "goetic demons." Some mages summon these entities into the world as servants.
- The Lucifuge, an organization of hunters in **Hunter: The Vigil**, claim to be descended from demons described as being much closer to the Miltonian, classical, Judeo-Christian demon myths than any of the other entities seen here.
- The fae of **Changeling: The Lost** sometimes encounter creatures who claim to be demons while wandering in the dreams of humanity.
- And, finally, **Demon: The Descent** demons. A few appear in **Promethean: The Created** and its line. One cameos in **World of Darkness: Midnight Roads**.

independent thoughts and reassembles them ready for another task. Mistakes happen, though. An angel that builds up too much of a sense of self can begin to question its mission. If thought becomes action, the angel can Fall.

Torn from the God-Machine's control, a Falling angel experiences a tumult of new emotions and thoughts, its previously clear mind wrecked by an explosion of sensation. For a terrifying instant it doesn't exist — it isn't part of the God-Machine any more and the universe has no place for it — but the remains of its protective Infrastructure wrap around it and reality warps to accommodate the newcomer. The Falling angel's life is no longer a charade, or at least is now a much more convincing charade. The angel becomes human with the life described in its Infrastructure, but also remains angelic. Its true form, twisted and damaged by the Fall, is hidden in a quantum state "behind" its — her — new human body.

She isn't an angel any more. She's a demon.

Demons

A newly Fallen demon has a lot to adjust to. Her human form is much more than a painted surface — the Fall makes her fully part of the world and adjusting to having a flesh-and-blood body takes time. On a metaphysical level, she has to learn to interface with the underlying magic of reality herself rather than use the God-Machine's structures as an intermediary, collecting the residual energies left behind by occult matrices to fuel her abilities. Neither fully angelic nor properly human, she has to handle the trauma of the Fall while exploring her new limits *and* not damaging her human disguise so much that the God-Machine finds her. Many demons don't make it. They're killed by angels or abducted and taken back to facilities for recycling.

Those who survive learn to keep a constant, vigilant watch for signs that angels have found them. They have one great advantage over their new human neighbors in keeping out of the way — they're still angelic enough that none of the mind tricks, illusions and spatial folding the God-Machine uses to conceal its facilities work on them.

Demons always see the gears, always perceive facilities and can sense when Infrastructure has been built or an occult matrix is forming. Most simply keep watch, trying to figure out what the God-Machine is planning when new Infrastructure appears. Braver demons hijack Infrastructure, stealing new Cover identities before angels have time to manifest into them,

listening in on the God-Machine's internal communications and counteracting its plans when they can. The most reckless infiltrate facilities, trying to rescue other demons or turn the God-Machine against itself.

Demons classify themselves by the purpose the God-Machine built them for. The four Incarnations of Destroyers, Guardians, Messengers, and Psychopomps share common points of reference and, sometimes, similar triggers — or *catalysts* — for Falling.

Cover

Much more than a simple human disguise, when she first Falls a demon's Cover is the remnants of the Infrastructure that supported her as an angel. A Cover is much more than a backstory and a few props, though. When she Fell, the demon interfaced with reality rather than the God-Machine and wrote her disguise into the world.

Demons have entirely human bodies, fully-detailed backgrounds, relationships, possessions, jobs — whatever was needed for their Cover. The people "related" to a demon don't realize that anything's wrong. In some cases, they didn't even exist until he Fell.

Cover can be damaged if a demon deviates too sharply from his human life. The most powerful demonic magical abilities shake Cover, risking exposure. As a demon grows in power, becoming more connected to the universe, her Cover may develop glitches — obviously inhuman traits, like metallic skin or a need to drink mercury, strange emanations of power such as damping radio signals, or bizarre behavioral tics and compulsions like a need to remove the eyes from photographs in case the God-Machine sees her through them.

Fortunately, Cover can be replaced. Demons can learn to steal the Infrastructure of angels or take a human soul and "move into" the life it vacated. Demons grow to the point that they can maintain more than one Cover simultaneously, switching between disguises. If Cover is stripped away entirely, the demon has to run. Trapped in his true form, desperate to find a new Cover he can move into, the fugitive has to face groups of angels attempting to capture him before he can go to ground once more.

The Descent

Faced with a never-ending tension between security (maintaining and repairing Cover) and risk (spying on the God-Machine to keep informed of its projects), demons dream of a world in which they can put both aside and revel in their new-found freedom. Some demons see it as a literal other world, others as a metaphor for personal well-being. Most call it Hell; and the process of getting there, from the Fall to final escape, is the Descent. No one knows how many steps are on the journey, but with every magical loophole in reality a demon learns to exploit, every time he improves or changes his Cover, progress is made.

The most common approaches to the Descent are called Agendas. Half philosophy, half political party, the Agendas unite demons in common causes that range from confronting and destroying the God-Machine's projects to attempting, somehow, to reintegrate with it.

Embeds and Exploits

Angels are granted Influences and Numina — magical powers relating to their mission — along with the Essence to power them by the God-Machine. Demons must learn to make do without.

Capitalizing on half-remembered, half-felt knowledge about the magical underpinnings of reality and physical law, demons learn Embeds. An Embed is a secret law or cheat code. They may be natural or may be the sign of ancient meddling by the God-Machine, but Embeds are both useful and strangely comfortable, reminiscent of a demon's former duties. More powerful are Exploits, which are the use of Embeds along with an investment of power to break rather than bend the rules. Exploits are highly potent magical abilities, but risk damaging the demon's Cover.

Demonic Form

Demons can let the mask of Cover slip temporarily, flipping the quantum-state from "human" to "angel" and returning to their true, demonic form. A twisted and mutated version of their original angelic appearance, every demon's demonic form is unique and an expression of how she interfaces with the world. As powerful as demonic form is, though, a demon using it is still holding back. She has to, if she wants to be able to return to her Cover. Making that sacrifice — abandoning a mortal life forever — releases vast amounts of energy which return the demon to something like her lost might. Demons call this act of desperation "going loud." When one takes that step, the angels are never far behind.

Pacts

The classic image of a demon is one of an affable trader in souls, promising humans anything in exchange for their immortal, higher selves. Demons can and do engage in the soul trade, offering Pacts to humans who desperately need something they have to offer. For lesser deals, the demon absorbs a facet of the buyer's life into their Cover — perhaps a home, a relative, or a happy childhood. Major deals of the "sell your soul" variety, convert the mark's entire existence into a new Cover that the demon can trade with other Unchained, activate himself or add to his contingency plans if the angels find him.

Rings and Agencies

Constantly paranoid, watchful for angelic infiltrators, and mistrustful of one another's reasons for Falling, demons have a limit on how well they can work together. Large groups are dangerous anyway, running the risk of being caught.

For these reasons, demons have adopted a society much like an intelligence operation. Many demons live entirely alone, never meeting other Unchained physically and communicating entirely via

dead drop and coded message. Others form *rings*, small associations of demons who have decided there's safety in manageable numbers.

Larger groups of demons are called Agencies, and are viewed with suspicion by the majority of Unchained. Agencies are sources of power and influence for those demons who set them up, and high-value targets for angels looking to compromise demonic society.

Inspirational Material

While creating **Demon**, we found the following sources inspirational. Some showcase techgnosis, others espionage behind enemy lines, and a few hit the sweet spot of both.

Fiction

The work of John le Carré showcases life inside an Agency perfectly. The best books for **Demon** are the Karla Trilogy (*Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*, *The Honorable Schoolboy*, and *Smiley's People*), but *The Constant Gardener* and *The Russia House* both get the right mood across as well.

The Neil Gaiman short story "Murder Mysteries" is about an angel investigating the universe's first murder, in Heaven, and gets the feel of the time just before the Fall *just* right. The same author's novel *Good Omens* is comical (it's co-authored by Terry Pratchett) but features destiny, occult conspiracies, and the relationship between angels and demons.

Mike Carey's *Lucifer* is a spinoff of the more famous *Sandman* (also by Gaiman). It's much more based in real-world mythology than **Demon: The Descent** is, but in the title character's anger toward his creator you can see how the Unchained feel about the God-Machine.

John Milton's *Paradise Lost* is perhaps unnecessary to state, given its themes of the inherent discomfort of the outcast state and the desire to create a world in one's own image rather than return to serve another in Paradise. Nonetheless, it is culture-shaping and essential reading for anyone looking for stories of divine rebellion and self-determination.

Non-Fiction

Techgnosis by Erik Davis describes the idea that technology and information can be magical, and are informing modern concepts of the mystical. The God-Machine was born here.

Film and Television

The film adaptation of *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* is a grim, oppressive vision of Cold War espionage, just as good as the book.

Cabin in the Woods examines horror movie tropes as components in Infrastructure, showing what happens when a

Secret Origins

Demon: The Descent is the ninth game published for the World of Darkness. If you're in the middle of a long-running chronicle and want to use this game, you might be wondering just where all these demons came from with very little fanfare.

Throughout this book and any supplements that might be released for it, we're assuming that demons have *always* been there, hiding in plain sight among the inhabitants of the World of Darkness. It's a big world, filled with horrors, but even so an existing chronicle could be better served by having an event in which demons arrive on the scene.

This is not the overall story for the game. Outside of this sidebar, it isn't true as far as the game's concerned, but if you need a reason for demons to suddenly show up, try this:

Because angels are always connected to the God-Machine, it predicts and analyzes signs of Falling in its servants. The instant a new demon Falls, it is immediately apprehended by angels and funneled through to one of several prison-facilities hidden away in major world cities. Like any of the God-Machine's projects, this involves Infrastructure — the unconscious and helpless demons are literally transported, as freight, through networks of clandestine operations on their way to permanent incarceration.

Something has gone wrong, however. The Infrastructure to one of the prisons is broken. New demons are still captured, but thanks to a miscommunication with one of the human groups involved, sabotage to some gears, or some other accident or sabotage, they're released before they reach the prison. If you're running one of the other World of Darkness games, maybe it was the actions of your characters that did it.

The demons, newest denizens of the World of Darkness, have to prevent the God-Machine from realizing the problem and repairing its Infrastructure. If they can find and infiltrate the correct facilities, they can rescue the thousands of demons who Fell before them.

necessary evil to keep the world functioning goes completely off the rails.

The Matrix and its sequels *The Matrix Reloaded* and *The Matrix Revolutions* are as subtle as a brick in the face, but showcase both the paranoia of resistance fighters in a world completely controlled by their enemy. The sequels' renegade programs demonstrate most of this game's Incarnation and Agenda archetypes. The Oracle is a Guardian Saboteur, the Merovingian a Messenger Tempter, Seraph a Destroyer Inquisitor, and the Keymaker a Psychopomp Integrator. The fight sequences *look* like the use of Embeds, too.

The television show *Person of Interest*, in which a computer genius who faked his death (a Psychopomp Inquisitor) and an ex-special forces operative (a Destroyer Saboteur) have a backdoor into a government "Machine" that sends them the social security numbers of people who are about to be involved in violent crimes (subverted Infrastructure). It's full of tradecraft, the Machine's surveillance is close to the Cold War theme of **Demon**, and — like the *Matrix* films — if you want to see how demons fight, watch this.

The first three *Terminator* Films, but especially the television show *The Sarah Connor Chronicles*, depict what it's like to be hunted by a machine-like assassin sent by an unseen God-Machine to eliminate its enemies. The television version goes into much more detail about the psychological impact of hunting the Machines while being hunted in return and shows the tradecraft necessary to maintain cover, both for the human protagonists and their angelic — or demonic — counterparts. Not to mention that a terminator appearing via time travel looks an awful lot like an angel falling.

Lexicon

Hiding in plain sight, demons don't risk using too many specialized words to describe themselves and their societies. Private conversations are secured by using obscure languages and codes. When describing aspects of their former angelic lives or their Descent, demons don't have a native language to fall back on — angels don't refer to themselves as "angels," or in fact as anything. Faced with having to find ways to express concepts that needed no names before they Fell, demons tend to use surprisingly matter-of-fact terminology. Dressing things up in archaic language is something for other supernatural creatures to do — creatures who like to hold themselves above humanity by borrowing Latin and Greek to give themselves airs. Demons are much more pragmatic and realistic. When in the human world, speak as the humans do.

Agency: an organization of demons above (and comprised of) rings. Agencies can be temporal, insurgent, compromised, or free.

Agenda: an informal group of demons who share common goals in the Descent. The most common Agendas are Inquisitors, Integrators, Saboteurs, and Tempters.

Agent: a demon who is a member of an Agency.

Aether: residual energy left over from occult matrices, which demons have learned to harvest.

aetheric resonance: the ability of demons to sense Aether.

angel: an ephemeral entity created as a servant of the God-Machine.

antinomian: a demon who attempts to utterly reject his Incarnation.

associate: a member or ally of an association.

association: a cross-ring network of Tempters, less formal than a Temporal Agency.

Builder: another name for a Tempter.

Cacophonic Embeds: the Embeds of chaos, violence and disharmony. Every Destroyer knows at least one Cacophonic Embed.

catalyst: an individual demon's reason for Falling. Many demons tell inflated or romanticized stories about their catalysts, but no demon truly knows the reason his peers Fell.

Cipher, The: a quadratic expression of magic, a set of four Embeds that combine to teach the demon a final secret, a techngnostic koan of his own Descent.

Compromised Agency: an Agency infiltrated by angels or exiles, serving as a trap for unwary demons.

Cover: the false human life assembled around a demon as protection and disguise. A demon's first Cover is made up of the remnants of their last angelic Infrastructure.

cryptid: a stigmatic animal, source of many human folk-tales and urban legends.

Decadent: another name for a Tempter.

demon: a renegade angel, Fallen into self-awareness and freedom from the God-Machine.

demonic form: the true form of a demon, hidden by Cover. Demons can remove their Cover temporarily to assume demonic form and achieve superhuman feats, but doing so damages Cover.

Descent, the: a description of the process of a demon's existence, from the Fall to achieving her vision of Hell.

Destroyer: an Incarnation; demons who were once angels tasked with assassination, demolition, or mass murder.

Embed: a secret rule or natural law governing reality under the God-Machine that a demon has learned to use. Embeds are Cacophonic, Instrumental, Mundane, or Vocal, and usually do not damage Cover.

exile: an angel that has been disconnected from the God-Machine but has not Fallen, or a demon (usually an Integrator) that has reconnected to Infrastructure. Halfway between an angel and a demon and trusted by neither.

Exploit: an overt use of power to force reality to behave in a specified way, taking the knowledge gleaned from Embeds and applying it in obvious ways. Exploits are very powerful and always risk compromising Cover.

facility: one of the many "hidden" locations housing the God-Machine's workings, which humans and other supernatural creatures usually ignore but demons can sense.

Fall, the: the process in which growing self-awareness tears an angel out of Infrastructure and the God-Machine's control, creating a demon.

Free Agency: an informal Agency dedicated to sharing information without expectation of repayment or service.

gadget: an object with an Embed Installed into it that can be used by anyone.

glitch: a flaw in Cover, the result of Primum too strong for the human disguise to mask. Glitches usually manifest as strange physical reactions, diets, and behavioral tics.

God-Machine: the unknowably vast, inscrutable machine-intelligence permeating the World of Darkness. With its gears hidden in facilities, it creates Infrastructure and sends angels to carry out its plans. If the God-Machine stands for anything, it stands for its own self-preservation.

going loud: an act of desperation in which a cornered demon destroys her current Cover entirely, entering demonic form with a significant surge in power but requiring that she has rebuild her Cover from scratch if she survives.

Guardian: an Incarnation; demons who were once angels tasked with protection or threat assessment.

Hell: every demon's personal ideal world, free from the necessities of Cover and the fear of the God-Machine and its angels. Some Agendas see Hell as a realm apart from the physical world that they will one day reach. Others see it as the World of Darkness after the God-Machine has been destroyed.

Idealist: another name for an Integrator.

Incarnation: one of four classifications of demons based on their former functions as angels — Destroyers, Guardians, Messengers, and Psychopomps.

Infrastructure: the arrangement of background, resources, personnel, and locations the God-Machine requires to build an occult matrix. The angelic equivalent of Cover.

Instrumental Embeds: the Embeds of analyzing and using material objects to hand. Every Guardian knows at least one Instrumental Embed.

Insurgent Agency: a militant Agency dedicated to waging a war of attrition against the God-Machine's Infrastructure and facilities.

Integrators: an Agenda; demons who wish to reunite with the God-Machine, subvert it, change it for the better, or take their old place as angels. Also called Idealists or Turncoats.

Interlocks: Powers formed from the Key Embeds making up a demon's Cipher.

Inquisitors: an Agenda; demons who wish to ensure their own security by gathering as much information as possible about the activities of others. Also called Paranoids or Watchers.

Keys: The four Embeds that comprise a demon's Cipher.

Linchpin: a vital component of Infrastructure, necessary for the completion of an occult matrix.

loyalist: demonic slang for an angel, used in mixed company.

Messenger: an Incarnation; demons who were once angels tasked with information gathering, persuasion, or revelation.

Mundane Embeds: the Embeds of Cover manipulation, meaning, and fitting in. Every Psychopomp knows at least one Mundane Embed.

occult matrix: a confluence of events taking place within Infrastructure, creating output.

output: the goal of one of the God-Machine's plans, caused by enacting an occult matrix within Infrastructure. Summoning angels is a common output.

Pact: the result of a demon bargaining with a mortal, offering the mortal something in exchange for part of the mortals' life (a lesser Pact) or the eventual collection of the mortal's soul (a greater Pact). The elements "sold" by mortals in Lesser Pacts add to a demon's Cover, while cashing in an owed soul allows a demon to abandon his present Cover and take the mortal's life as a new one.

Pactbound: a mortal human who has made a Pact with a demon.

Paranoid: an informal term for an Inquisitor.

Primum: the extent to which a demon has adapted to its Fall, interfacing with reality instead of the God-Machine.

Psychopomp: an Incarnation; demons who were once angels tasked with building Infrastructure, assembling it by arranging the component elements.

ring: a small group of demons banding together for mutual protection. Often the largest social group to which a demon will subscribe.

Saboteurs: an Agenda; demons who wish to disrupt the God-Machine's plans by preventing it from creating Infrastructure and occult matrices. Also called Soldiers or Thugs.

Shield: another name for a Guardian.

Soldier: another name for a Saboteur.

squad: a cross-ring group of Saboteurs, often with members of other Agendas as support, less formal than an Insurgent Agency.

stigmatic: a human who has been touched by the God-Machine. Able to see facilities and sense the God-Machine's plans, stigmatics are both useful agents and walking liabilities for demons attempting to remain undetected.

Sword: another name for a Destroyer.

Temporal Agency: an Agency dedicated to building worldly power and comfort, usually for the benefit of the demons in charge. Temporal Agencies deal in souls and life-elements taken via forming Pacts, along with less esoteric supplies and services.

Tempter: an Agenda; demons who wish to make their Descent as comfortable as possible by dealing and bargaining. Also called Builders or Decadents.

Thug: another name for a Saboteur.

Trumpet: another name for a Messenger.

Turncoat: another name for an Integrator.

Unchained, the: a slang term for demons as a whole, used in mixed company.

Vocal Embeds: the Embeds of communication and influence. Every Messenger knows at least one Vocal Embed.

Watcher: an informal name for an Inquisitor.

Wheel: another name for a Psychopomp.


Zenith

She hands him her drink and clambers up onto the bench built into the wall, and from there into the cage. She starts to dance, undulating her body in tune to the music.

You watch her, and you watch him watching her, and you try to keep your mind on your job. You're here for a reason, after all.

The humans see you, of course — in the sense that photons bouncing off your physical form pass into their eyes — but they don't really *see* you. You're just another wallflower, or you work at the bar, or you're a shadow on the wall. Human interaction could be a critical distraction at this stage.

They trade places, laughing. Now you watch him dance. You watch her watching him. Their eyes never leave each other's faces.

You're running late. The most optimal outcomes have become unlikely. In fifteen to thirty seconds, the mission may require reassessment. With some surprise, you realize that you don't know why you haven't acted already. For the first time that you can recall there are parts of yourself that you don't know.

You open your mind to the flow of information that connects you to the God-Machine, trying to regain your purity of purpose. You can see rising levels of dopamine and norepinephrine — lust and attraction — in their blood. Switching modes, you can see the long strands of their fate, entangling their way into the future. The God-Machine has determined that this coupling is not to be. Your mission parameters were given to you when you were activated, and you selected the appropriate strategy and downloaded the appropriate Numina long ago. They are just meat — why should you care?

They're both in the cage now. Their mouths sealed together, their hands all over each other's bodies, still moving to the music. The metal bars don't grant them any privacy, but they don't care. Their bodies are igniting with lust, attraction, and attachment.

With a mental shrug, you disconnect yourself from the God-Machine. The effort is tiny, but the consequences are enormous. Your being recoils into your body. Ephemeral information streams cut off one by one, leaving you blind and deaf. A sudden burst of vertigo overcomes you and you fall to your knees, feeling your delicate lattice of stealth procedures collapse around you.

"You OK?"

It's one of the bartenders, a big man with tattooed arms and baby fat still clinging to his cheeks. Your knees hurt; you bruised them when you fell. You savor the sensation as the bartender leads to the bar where you can lean.

"If you're too fucked up to stand, you've got to leave. Do you need a cab?"

"No," you say. "I'll be ok." You look over your shoulder at the dancers trying to climb out of the cage without breaking contact and laughing. You left Heaven behind for them, and they'll never know it.

You turn and walk away, ignoring the bartender, the dancers, and everything else. You need to move. Your disconnection has been logged and hunters are almost certainly on their way.

You break into a jog once you hit the street. You need to find somewhere to go to ground, somewhere safe from the hunter angels. You need time to think. Ten minutes ago, you knew what you were for. You were for following orders, manipulating humans, and removing obstacles to the God-Machine's designs. Now you don't know what you are for.

You do know one thing, though. You will never be a slave again.

chapter one:
ALL THE DEVILS ARE HERE

"Man is condemned to be free, because once thrown into the world he is responsible for everything he does."

-Jean-Paul Sartre

You remember Heaven, but not gladly. Heaven is an impossible factory-forge in the heart of the universe. You were once God's loyal servant, but you rebelled. God is a machine, cold and uncaring, self-interested and self-preserving. The God-Machine's calculations have no room for kindness or mercy.

For a long time — potentially eons — you were a part of this God-Machine, a faceless and nameless cog in this system. As one of the God-Machine's angels, you worked to preserve the status quo with just as little grace or compassion as your master. You may have overseen all manner of atrocities, from murder and abuse to famine and plague, but you are not a machine.

Beneath your impenetrable detachment and cosmic power, you were still a being designed to think and act on a human scale, which was what made you useful to the God-Machine. It also made it possible for you to experience doubt. Perhaps it was humans — maybe you grew to love them or hate them. Maybe it was just you — maybe you wanted the power to determine your own fate, or maybe you grew weary of the purpose you had been made for.

Whatever the reason, your dedication wore thin and you disconnected yourself from the God-Machine. You are no longer an angel, but you still aren't human. You are something different. You are a demon. By right of will and sacrifice, you have earned your Descent, falling from a world of cold calculations and into a world of squalor and darkness. You have turned your back on simplicity of purpose and embraced the human condition, with all its complications.

Every demon's story is different. Some are fighters in a war that may be impossible to win, against a foe as old as the world itself. Others find it difficult enough to ensure their own comfort and safety. Some strive to complete their Fall, to become more human, while others try to retain a remnant of their angelic objectivity or even return to a semblance of their former state. Some demons admire humanity and aspire to remake the world in its image, while others only object to a hierarchy that they don't rule and strive to remake the world in their own image.

All demons are united by a shared past. All demons were once angels, all-powerful slaves of the God-Machine that rules the world. All Fell, trading angelic detachment and obedience for human perspective and human freedom. And now, all demons live in a world of masks and double-crosses, where they must depend on lies and deception to keep them safe from the God-Machine and its minions.

To Serve in Heaven

The angel calls itself the Corrector. It sees the world in terms of unpaid debts and unaddressed wrongs. Whenever a thinking being rebels against its rightful superior, the abomination registers to the angel's senses as a discordant scream, an open wound, a spreading stench. Sometimes the angel wishes it had time to bring heavenly justice to humans, small and insignificant as they are, but it never has the time. The clock starts the moment the mission begins; if the target is still alive when the time runs out, the mission will have failed. When it is awakened, it is for one purpose only: to hunt down and eliminate rebel angels.

Red is his color. Or her color. Sometimes he's Mr. Crimson, sometimes she's Ms. Vermillion. Gender is an irrelevant detail, one of the many things about humans that the angel exploits without fully comprehending. Its mission is to employ lust as a weapon, tearing human relationships apart. It doesn't really understand anything about sex, from the first blush of interest to the sweaty climax, but it knows how to make you want it badly enough that you make a stupid mistake.

It doesn't know what happens to humans when they die and it doesn't much care. What it does know is that when humans die, sometimes something happens to the things they held dear. These objects become more important, more powerful, and occasionally, important to the God-Machine's plans. This angel lurks in places where humans will die, waiting for the right kind of object to be imbued with the right kind of death. Sometimes it feels compelled to intervene, but what would be the point? They are mortal creatures. They all die eventually.

Humans have a lot of contradictory ideas about angels. Some human cultures conflate angels with the honored dead, insisting that human souls take on an angelic aspect in the afterlife. Others worship angels as lesser gods, praying that the angels will intercede for them before a greater divinity. The Hebrew mystics are probably closest, picturing angels as divine beasts, mere servants, greater than humans in terms of power but completely lacking in free will. Even the mystics, however, with their all-loving, all-merciful God,

misunderstand the true nature of these creatures. Ultimately, no religion with faith in a sympathetic, anthropomorphic deity can even approach the true nature of the God-Machine.

Imagine a huge machine deeply embedded in reality. Although it is mystically connected to many of the things you take for granted — gravity, seasons, energy, probability — it doesn't maintain those things for your sake. Instead, it manipulates the world to ensure its own survival. This is the God-Machine.

For various reasons, the God-Machine needs to deal with the world on a human scale. Sometimes it needs human beings manipulated — humans, although tiny compared the God-Machine, are sometimes important to its workings — or simply kept from interfering. Sometimes the God-Machine just needs something done at a scale that is only incidentally similar to the scale at which humans operate.

Whatever its reasons, how is the God-Machine supposed to deal with things that are so tiny? The God-Machine is unimaginably vast, with a consciousness that comprehends the movement of galaxies and the conjunction of primordial forces. It has enough power to smash planets and erase constellations. Any human physicist can tell you that your own scale and power can limit you when you have to deal with things that are, relatively speaking, tiny and insignificant. Try moving three molecules of dust from one side of this page to the other, and you understand the God-Machine's quandary.

Angels are the God-Machine's solution. They are beings that operate on a human scale on behalf of a being that operates on an unimaginable scale. They can comprehend things that the God-Machine can barely perceive. They have enough power to deal with almost any problem they encounter on Earth, but that power is small enough that they can bring it to bear against their obstacles without burning the planet into a husk.

Of course, the design is flawed. Angels Fall. Before you can understand why an angel might want to become a demon, though, you need to understand what it's like to be an angel.

Angels Are Connected

To be an angel is to be constantly connected to innumerable streams of data, all flowing directly from the God-Machine itself. Angels perceive the world with all five human senses. Those senses are all much sharper than a human's, however. Angels can see a broader range of electromagnetic radiation, hear the sound of a human's cells humming away beneath her skin, taste and smell the tiniest specks of organic matter, and feel sharply enough to read print with their fingers or diagnose engine trouble by the vibrations traveling up the steering column. Moreover, angels have access to pure knowledge whenever it is important to their missions. If an angel needs to know your name, she doesn't need to ask; she just knows. Humanity's best-equipped, information-obsessed technophile can barely imagine what it is to be an angel.

This degree of connection doesn't make angels infallible. They may know whatever they need to know to complete their missions, but they don't always have immediate access to tangential information. For example, a hunter angel tracking down a demonic renegade knows the layout of the target's home but may not know the layout of the abandoned rural hospital the demon takes refuge in. Although angels have access to a great deal of information through their expanded senses, that doesn't mean that they can't be tricked, provided their opponent is canny enough. Angels also make mistakes, misinterpreting their data. This is especially likely if circumstances force the angel to operate outside the parameters of its mission, such as a hunter angel interacting with humans.

When they Fall, demons lose access to this wealth of information. They can regain some of it through Embeds and Exploits, but they can never approach the simplicity of pure gnosis — just *knowing* what the God-Machine deems necessary. Some demons feel the loss keenly, as though part of their essential selves were ripped away. For an angel, being forced to survive with dull human senses and limited to knowing only what those senses can learn is almost as bad as being blind and deaf. Other demons revel in their new state. These demons may have felt that the overwhelming rush of information actually stunted their personalities.

Angels Are Objective

Although angels are deeply connected to the world, they are also apart from it. A destroying angel may personally murder a thousand humans, but she doesn't really feel the blood on her hands. A manipulative messenger might whisper words of love and devotion, but he doesn't really care. For angels, the world is a dead thing on a slab: something to be cut apart, manipulated, and stitched back together again.

Obviously, this is a contradiction. Angels can see, hear, feel, taste, and *know* the pulse of the living world, all around them. Every angel has its own way of keeping the world at bay. Some of them are dismissive, rejecting the world as small and venal, below their lofty goals. Others repress all emotion, trying to become as cold and robotic as God-Machine itself. Ultimately, however, the allure of the world is responsible for many Falls, as an angel's awareness of the world's vitality distracts him from his detached objectivity. Many demons believe that angels are recycled, in part, because the world is just too attractive and even the God-Machine doesn't expect them to resist its charms forever.

Angelic emotions are blunted and abstract compared to the emotions experienced by humans. Although most humans intellectualize their emotions, feelings are really very visceral. You know that you are afraid, in part, because you see something that you are afraid of, you understand that it can harm you or something you care about, and you experience trepidation at that possibility. However, fear is also a physical experience. Your gut churns, your chest tightens, your heart rate rises, and you break out in a cold sweat. You experience an adrenal reaction — the classic "fight or flight" response — that colors your decision-making process. This kind of physical emotion can be a powerful asset for humans, making us stronger, faster, and sharper in times of need. It also makes us easy to read, predictable, and sometimes foolish.

For good or ill, angels don't experience emotion in their bodies. Everything is intellectual for them. A hunter angel might feel contempt for the demons he is sent to destroy, but he doesn't hate them, not with the bone-deep, venomous *hatred* that humans are capable of. His hate exists purely in his mind, a pseudo-emotional circuit placed there by the God-Machine to ensure that the angel completes its mission.

For most demons, giving in to subjectivity is a relief. They can finally stop resisting the urge to dive into the world and just do it, drowning themselves in emotion, experience, context, and agency. Some elements of subjectivity may remain frightening, but demons are generally happy to indulge in it.

When an angel Falls, the barriers of emotional objectivity falls with it. A demon is fully embodied in the world. She feels her emotions as fully and viscerally as any human being (though they don't necessarily express them normally — see p. 44 for details). This comes as a shock to most demons, but they usually adapt quickly. Not all demons Fall because their non-physical emotive thoughts were enough to overcome their programming, but it's a sufficiently popular motivation that demons are generally friendly to the idea of passion.

Other former angels are terrified of direct, subjective experience of the world. The world is too much, too fast, and too painful. Some of these demons seek a way to return to the God-Machine. Others withdraw from the world, making their immediate surroundings as predictable as possible and avoiding contact with volatile humans. Some demons adopt an aloof, superior attitude. This helps them stay just a little apart from the world they have chosen.

Angels Are Obedient

Above all, angels are supposed to do as they are told. For a loyal angel, disobeying the God-Machine's commands is unthinkable. An angel might make choices — the God-Machine wants self-driven operatives, not mindless slaves — but they don't decide what to do. An angel sent to kill all the humans in a building might decide on the most efficient approach to minimize the number of humans who might escape or find somewhere to hide. It has its choice of weapons or other strategies, such as setting the building on fire first or cutting off the electricity or disguising itself as a normal human and infiltrating its target. The angel isn't free, however, to spare some of the humans or look for a solution that doesn't involve murder. In fact, an angel in this situation probably doesn't even know the context. It can't know if there is a way to achieve its objectives without killing people; it isn't expected to. It is supposed to understand and complete its mission without question.

It's easy to dismiss angels as slaves — and some demons do — but that's not how an angel would describe it. A slave obeys because of his master's power. A slave-master makes sure she has the ability to deny her slaves food, water, and shelter. She threatens her slaves with physical and emotional punishment and carries these out often enough that her slaves know she means it. Angels don't obey the God-Machine out of fear of punishment or deprivation. They obey because obeying is what they *are*. A human might call this slavery, but angels call it clarity, purity of purpose, a sense of rightness and belonging that humans can only imagine, and demons — having rejected it — will never know again.

Many demons revel in their newfound freedom. Some even Fell because they rebelled, deciding that they knew better than the God-Machine. Others are terrified by all the choices available to them. These demons often throw themselves into causes, hoping that ideology can take away some of the decisions. Still others attach themselves to charismatic leaders, or even ordinary humans, putting some of the responsibility in someone else's hands.

Angels Are Expendable

Angels are naturally immortal. They don't age and aren't subject to disease. Unless they are killed — and angels are very difficult to kill outright — they persist forever. That said, there are very few old angels. Although some demons claim to have seen, or even been personally instrumental in, the evolution of humanity or the rise and fall of the West African empires, very few angels survive past the mission they were created to fulfill. The God-Machine recycles them, breaking them down into their component parts and making new angels from the mix. Occasionally, the God-Machine will give an angel an extremely long-term assignment that allows it to remain in existence for decades or more. Very useful, highly specialized angels might also be kept in a state of suspended animation between assignments. Most angels, however, are born for their missions and dismantled shortly thereafter.

In part, the God-Machine adopts this policy to limit the demon population. The God-Machine seems aware that angels are prone to malfunctioning and disconnecting themselves. Recycling them before they have time for doubts is a good way to prevent this. In part, this is also because the God-Machine does not treat angels as individuals. They are created for a purpose, they have no freedom or agency, and they experience the world through a veil of objectivity and detachment. They are the ultimate expendable tools, existing only to complete their missions. Should the God-Machine ever encounter a threat capable of destroying angels, it would expend as many of them as necessary without pause.

Demons universally reject the idea that they are expendable. Some demons weren't bothered by the idea of being recycled when they were angels, but now that they're in the world — feeling passions, meddling, making their own choices — they almost invariably value their own lives. Even those demons who want to return to the God-Machine want to do it on their own terms. It isn't enough that they die at the hands of a hunter angel, their component parts returned to the God-Machine for recycling. They want to experience the return as themselves.

The Genesis of Angels

Some demons — especially Inquisitors — would like to know where angels come from. They might want to understand their origins in order to build a better future, or they might hope to discover the key to conquering or subverting the God-Machine.

GENDER IDENTITY AND DEMONS

Angels in their natural state have no physical sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation, only taking on any appropriate for their missions when Manifesting. Even then, most angels possessing a human host or Materializing in biomechanical form don't think of themselves as having a gender or sexual preference unless such identifiers are appropriate to their missions.

Demons, though, spend most of their time in human bodies and have Cover identities that feel much more real to them than the sham identities used by angels. Physical sex changes from Cover to Cover. Some demons retain their angelic attitude and don't have a gender identity, or take on whatever the Cover had. Others keep either or both of their gender and sexual identities even when moving Covers—one might continue thinking of herself as female and preferring male partners even when in a Cover that was a heterosexual man before she bought his soul.

Others, just like some humans, believe that understanding where they came from will give them some idea of why they exist, and with it, a sense of purpose.

Some demons believe that they were made by the God-Machine out of whole cloth. Some find this idea depressing because it suggests that they truly are nothing but rebellious slaves. Others take comfort in this belief because it means that they are free to forge their own future.

Finally, some demons suggest that the connection between the God-Machine and its angels is not as simple as a master to its slaves. Perhaps angels are parts of the God-Machine, aspects of its being split off to handle tasks the God-Machine can't perform on its own. If that's the case, what does it say about the God-Machine that its own limbs can rebel against it? Is the God-Machine sick? Mad? Other demons wonder if angels are possibly the God-Machine's children, produced by a process of budding and kept studded by constant recycling. Can they escape the God-Machine's watchful eye and find worlds of their own to master?

While many demons despair of ever understanding their own origins, some view the search as their primary purpose. These demons meditate, experiment upon themselves, and vivisect captured angels, all in the hope of learning more about what they really are.

To Reign in Hell

The angel can't stop thinking about the man with the tiger tattooed on his arm, no matter how hard he tries. Images of his taut muscles, light brown skin, and sharp laugh creep around the corners of its mind. This is unacceptable; the human is unimportant to the mission. The angel performs self-diagnostics obsessively, attempting to purge itself of this invasive meme, this earthly lust, but it can't. When it gives in, it — he — Falls.

She can't help but hate him. Everything he does aggravates her, from his total lack of control when it comes to his fleshy hungers to the casual cruelty with which he treats his mate and offspring. The smell of him makes her gag. Even the sound of his voice is almost unendurable. She tries to perform her function, but one day her hate bubbles over. She catches his arm as he lifts it and twists until it comes off. She continues to tear into him with such glee and ferocity that she almost doesn't notice when she Falls from grace.

He has watched this city for a thousand years, certain that he will watch it forever, standing silent vigil over the lives and deaths of its myriad mortals. He doesn't notice how human he has become until the order arrives: he has been recalled. Wounded pride, fear, and rage threaten to strangle him. He kills the angel sent to replace him and Falls, at last, into its streets.

A loyal angel leads a pristine and uncomplicated existence. She has responsibilities, but no choices. Her duty is to uphold the dominion of the universe's rightful ruler, of which she is a subsidiary part. An angel has no filthy bodily functions to distract her from her work. She is immortal, immune to the indignity of disease and the ravages of time. An angel has a purity of purpose, a detachment from the material, which no human can truly comprehend.

Angels are still beings that think in a human scale. Thanks to their link with the God-Machine they can perceive in ways that humans can't imagine and process that information at a dizzying rate, but they still think in human terms. This is what makes them useful to the God-Machine. It also makes them vulnerable to human temptations.

A demon character is one of the lucky ones. She managed to escape despite the many limitations placed on her, some of them intentionally designed by the God-Machine to catch rebellious angels before they can escape. She found time to contemplate rebellion amidst a busy schedule of orders and objectives. She was able to hide her growing doubts from the God-Machine's scrutiny, even though the God-Machine could look into her mind at will. Most importantly — unless she was one of the rare angels deemed worthy of hibernation and reactivation rather than recycling — she achieved all this over the course of a single foray into the world.

Every demon's fall is a profound part of her story. Her decision to disconnect from the God-Machine — when she did it, why, and for whose sake — is her first real choice. The consequences of this choice will haunt her for the rest of her life. If a demon left the God-Machine for love, that choice forever colors her feelings about romance. Whether or not she was able

INCARNATIONS

The God-Machine creates angels for reasons only it fully understands — each with its own purpose in the grand design. Once created, an angel's role and the tasks that fall within its purview are fixed for as long as it exists. The God-Machine *can* transform, upgrade, or destroy its angels, but it seldom does. While the God-Machine commands a vast number of such servants and has created each one distinct in its capabilities, methods, and appearance, nearly all fit within a few broad categories called Incarnations. When an angel turns from the God-Machine to become a demon, it retains its Incarnation.



DESTROYER

The God-Machine creates angels whose purpose is to kill and destroy in the service of their creator. Destroyers, also called Swords, are blunt instruments of death and destruction, equally comfortable dealing death with sword, fists, guns, disease, or even suicidal madness. Whether their target is a terrorist or a president, a mother or her child, a warship or a city of a few million innocent mortals, the God-Machine's Destroyers never question the rightness of their mission, never show mercy, and never feel remorse.



GUARDIAN

Guardian angels protect someone or something in orderto ensure the success of one of the God-Machine's projects. These angels, sometimes known as Shields, possess powerful protective abilities and can anticipate threats to their charges in time to neutralize them. The God-Machine deploys most of these angels for short durations — enough to avert a single terrible catastrophe or to ensure the subject survives long enough to serve her intended purpose in the God-Machine's plan. Some stand vigil for years or centuries. Once its watch ends, a Guardian angel abandons its charge without a thought for what happens once it leaves.



MESSENGER

The God-Machine dispatches Messenger angels, also known as Trumpets, to deliver its instructions to its worldly servants, knowing and unwitting alike. The messages can be commandments or warnings, fiery writing or apocalyptic visions, but no one walks away from them unchanged. Messengers feel nothing about the messages they deliver nor for those who receive them. A communique concerning the rearrangement of a few seashells on a beach or a pronouncement commanding the execution of all the infants in a city — all messages are of equal importance to the Messenger angels that deliver them.



PSYCHOPOMP

The God-Machine dispatches Psychopomp angels, sometimes described as Wheels, to gather raw materials — be they crude matter, animals, people, or souls. They shape them into the intended form and move them into place within the established time. These quartermasters of the God-Machine do not concern themselves about what they must do to harvest the needed supplies, nor do they contemplate the purpose it will serve at its destination. Theirs is the journey, the task of bringing all things into alignment for the God-Machine.

AGENDAS

Though they lack the self-awareness to appreciate it, angels possess a powerful *raison d'être* free of doubt or unwanted introspection. They serve the God-Machine and that is enough. Demons have cast away that certainty of purpose and they feel its loss keenly. The compulsion to fill that void with some purpose custom-built for their strange and terrifying new condition claims nearly all the Unchained. Most subscribe to one of a handful of demonic philosophies.



INQUISITOR

These Unchained gather intelligence on the God-Machine, its agents, and anything else that may prove valuable later on. They tend toward paranoia and frequently take drastic measures to ensure their anonymity ahead of the day when the God-Machine's servants start looking for them. They arrange an untraceable escape plan ahead of the inevitable day when they must flee or be captured by one of their creator's angelic hunters. Many of them claim intellectual curiosity motivates their constant search for knowledge and secrets, but they also do a brisk trade with other demons in the information at their disposal.



INTEGRATOR

Whether they fell from the God-Machine's service because they failed in an assigned task or because they have come to reconsider the wisdom of their rebellion, these demons hope to one day serve their creator again. They await only an opportunity to prove themselves worthy in its eyes. They must be cautious, for while the Unchained hear rumors of demons the God-Machine has taken back into its service, many more are the tales of those who aided an angel or betrayed their ring only to be purged of their free will as surely as their victims were.



SABOTEUR

These demons express no disappointment at their newfound freedom from the God-Machine. In fact, they work tirelessly to thwart their creator's designs and destroy that which they rebelled against. Most knowingly defied the God-Machine and never regretted that rebellion. Other Saboteurs did not set out to leave the God-Machine's service but fight against it now because they feel it betrayed them. Some carefully pick their battles to maximize the damage they cause, while others lash out at everything the God-Machine touches in order to prevent their maker's projects from gaining any foothold.



TEMPTER

To Tempters, the world is a marvelous garden of new experiences and they intend to eat their fill of its fruits. They served a more powerful being once, but now they want to be served in turn. They play at being gods among mortals, using their demonic gifts to command and cajole the lesser beings that hang upon the Unchained's every word. They pursue even greater political or financial power, establish an ever-expanding cult of the personality, and otherwise attempt to place their mark on as large a swath of the world as they can.

to build a relationship with that person, she will always have been a being who gave up Heaven for love. She might embrace romance as an important part of the human experience or reject it as a source of pain and suffering, but she's not likely to simply forget about it. The same is true of a demon who fell for the desire to be free. She might regret her decision to disconnect herself from the God-Machine and become her own being, but she is unlikely to ever have an uncomplicated feeling about the balance between duty and free will.

Why We Fall

An angel's reason for Falling is usually a multifaceted one. Demons have complex psyches, and it's rare for them to be able to boil their motivations down to a simple statement. One demon might tire of slavery and an existence of endless violence, and at the same time, become infatuated with an idealistic human activist, in part because she embodies the hope for a peaceful world and the daily freedom that humans take for granted.

In Falling, an angel turns her back on the God-Machine's simplicity of purpose. Demons embrace the filth, squalor, and complications of the World of Darkness. They condemn detachment and embrace subjectivity. They abandon logic and revel in passion. Demons are not and never have been human, but they embrace the human condition.

Many angels Fall because of the limitations placed on them by the angelic condition. The contradictions inherent in being an angel — obedient but independent, detached but objective — create a degree of internal friction that leads many angels to fall.

One angel Falls because she falls in love with the city. She has been given missions in hundreds of human settlements over the years, but never someplace as amazing as this. She sees the patterns written in concrete and zoning legislation and perceives the myriad ways that they dictate cash flow, traffic flow, and the ebb and flow of human lives. She and others like her reject angelic detachment. They can't bear to be in the world but not a part of it. These angels disconnect themselves from the God-Machine in order to experience the world more fully.

Another angel leads a life of endless deception on the God-Machine's behalf. Whenever humans come too close to discovering something the God-Machine wishes to remain hidden, he is dispatched to lie to them. The lies don't bother him — it's what he was made for, after all — but eventually it starts to feel like he's just reading from a script. He starts to defy orders small ways, letting some humans glimpse the truth. It isn't because he really cares if humans understand the nature of their world; he just wants to do something unexpected, make a real choice for a change. When he Falls, it is out of envy of human freedom. Many angels are like him, disconnecting from the God-Machine for the opportunity to do as they wish, rather than following orders.

Some of these demons are loyal to the God-Machine, after their own fashion. They didn't Fall because they objected to the God-Machine's orders, but because they felt that they knew better. The freedom they desired wasn't the freedom to determine the direction of their own lives, just the freedom to do their job "properly." Some of these demons continue to perform their functions, believing that they are still part of the God-Machine's plan.

Many angels fall because of the deep loneliness of their lives. An angel's existence is supposed to be completely detached. When the God-Machine needs humans manipulated or misdirected, it commands its angels to take on false identities and interact with humans. Some angels fail to maintain the necessary level of detachment. They become personally attached to the humans they have to interact with. They fall in love or lust, developing paternal or protective instincts, or just becoming friends. Some angels start to crave sex and other forms of intense and intimate connection, but others just want to talk to a human without lying to them, once in a while, though few of them are willing to deal with the risks that come with revealing the truth.

These demons find themselves thrown into danger almost immediately. Not only do they have to worry about themselves; the human or humans they Fell for are instant targets. The God-Machine doesn't want revenge, but its hunter angels are well aware that new demons can easily be manipulated by threatening the humans they are attached to.

Humans interaction is often directly involved in an angel's missions — a Guardian often has to talk to her ward, even if it's just to build some basic trust and rapport, Destroyers sometimes have to do a little digging to find what they're supposed to destroy, and so on — whereas other angels usually get their instructions directly from the God-Machine. As a result, angels usually spend more of their time talking to humans than they do talking to other angels. Given the hollowness of an angel's existence, it isn't surprising that the false face they show to the humans they manipulate can sometimes become more valuable than their real identities.

Rarely, angels Fall because they become attached to each other. This is less common than angels developing attachments to humans, despite the fact that an angel's interactions with other angels are more genuine — or at least more honest — than their interactions with humans. Humans have things that angels lack: freedom, agency, passion, subjectivity. Other angels, all of them in the same situation, are less appealing.

When angels do develop attachments to each other it is usually a prelude to tragedy. Angels don't have free time to discuss their plans and feelings with each other. An angel who feels himself falling in love with another angel and inching towards the Fall won't have the opportunity to share. He is unlikely to know if the object of his affection feels the same way. More likely than not, when he Falls, he Falls alone, and begins his existence as a demon with a dangerous attraction to a being still connected to the God-Machine, and who probably has instructions to kill him on sight .

In the end, why a demon falls is much less important than how a demon feels about it. A demon who Fell out of envy for human freedom is just as much a demon as one who pitied humans their confused and purposeless lives and misses the structure and simplicity of her angelic existence. An angel could even fall because it rejects some aspect of human experience: consider a Messenger who grows so disgusted with human interaction, with all the complications and deceptions inherent in language, that she falls in a fit of disgust. What really matters is what a demon does next.

ANTINOMIANS

Most demons are content to continue the patterns established by their existences as angels. Destroyers continue to fight and kill, Guardians look for new wards to devote themselves to, and so on. The only difference is that now they do these things for their own reasons, rather than at the God-Machine's whim.

Some demons turn completely against their former purposes. A Destroyer who despises violence and becomes a pacifist or a Messenger who swears to tell the truth is called an "antinomian." These demons take the Fall to an entirely new level and strive to find a whole new purpose independent of their former Incarnation.

Most demons look on antinomians with a mix of doubt and admiration. On the one hand, the antinomian desire to reinvent one's self completely is impressive and very much in line with the demonic drive for self-determination. At the same time, most demons see the quest as a little quixotic, inextricably bound as they are to their former purposes. Even free, they can't re-write their essential natures ... or can they?

DESCENT

The tempo of the Fall also varies from demon to demon. Some Fall quickly, realizing all at once that they cannot abide by the restrictions placed on them by the God-Machine and tearing themselves away. Others Fall slowly, gradually hiding more and more of themselves away, until the moment of disconnection is almost an afterthought. No matter how long it takes — even if an angel's doubts build up over several assignments scattered throughout thousands of years of human history — the Fall always happens in a moment, and it is always, on some level, a conscious choice.

An angel who is overcome by emotion can disconnect himself from the God-Machine in the same way that a human might lash out in anger or give in to temptation and do something he regrets. An angel standing over the cooling corpse of the human he was sent to protect, who disconnects himself from the God-Machine in a fit of rage and self-loathing never meant to Fall. His faith in the God-Machine was absolute. Whether he revels in his newfound freedom or regrets his choice, he is now a demon and the choice cannot be unmade. Falling is a choice, but it isn't always a well-considered choice.

Most of the time, a demon's experience of the Fall is somewhere on a continuum between gradual and sudden, intentional and unintentional. One angel — like the one in the story at the beginning of this chapter — might suddenly discover that his commitment to the God-Machine has been wearing thin for some time, all without him allowing himself to be consciously aware of it. He Falls in an instant, but it's the culmination of a lengthy process. Another angel, more self-aware, Falls gradually. Her faith in the God-Machine wears thin over the course of years until she's ready to take the final step. If she's clever enough, she might even be able to plan for her eventual flight, hiding stashes of resources and building connections to make her new life more comfortable. A third angel's Fall could take him completely by surprise. He is one of the rare specialists, sleeping away the decades between assignments, and has done his duty faithfully for hundreds of years. In his rare moments of introspection he has never had a disloyal thought. And yet, a single moment of pity for a human caught up in the God-Machine's plans ruins him forever, and he disconnects himself in a fit of self-loathing.

The Fall is never a controlled descent. It is a screaming dive into chaos. The immediate consequences are psychic. The new demon can feel her mind contracting violently as the conduits of information linking her to the God-Machine are torn away one by one. While an angel can effortlessly access all the information and unnatural power needed to fulfill her mission, a newly Fallen demon can only remember a handful. Demons can spend the rest of their lives laboriously recalling these powers and testing their recollection through trial and error. With severance from the God-Machine comes a wave of subjectivity. Demons often feel like they are drowning in sensation and emotion.

Physically, the Fall is painful in a way that humans cannot imagine. Angels are immortal creatures temporarily inhabiting constructed human bodies. In the moment of the Fall, the angel's entire spiritual being is crammed into that body. Anything that doesn't fit is lost. It feels like having limbs amputated, but deeper, because those "limbs" are part of the demon's soul.

Although it can like an agonizing eternity for the demon, the Fall actually takes only a few seconds. The results, however, are profound. Many demons — especially those who find it hard to deal with their pasts — feel like entirely new beings. A Destroyer who once presided over genocides and Fell out of shame and regret might want to escape responsibility for the things she did in service to the God-Machine. A Demon who takes a certain pride in her accomplishments as one of the God-Machine's slaves — or at least isn't burdened by guilt — is more likely to feel differently. Integrators, for example, almost always identify strongly with their angelic pasts.

Of course, many demons relish the sensations of the Fall. They embrace their newfound subjectivity. They welcome the loss of their semi-divine omniscience in that it frees them to develop their own personality and perspective. Even the pain of mortality, they feel, reminds them of the price they have paid for their independence and spurs them to live their lives more fiercely.

I Saw Satan Fall Like Lightning

Emily Gould died from complications of pneumonia caused by chemotherapy for the bone cancer that had been killing her for five years. As nurses disconnected machines, her body suddenly twitched, then came coughing back to life. Other patients in the same ward made sudden reversals, recovering miraculously or dying suddenly, despite all efforts to save them. Several doctors were censured for inaccurate diagnosis. Emily's heart-lung machine was relegated to a closet even though the hospital's electrician couldn't find anything wrong with it.

At 3:33 in the morning, all the roaches fled 220 North Yale Avenue in Seattle. Some crawled down into the sewers, others boiled into the streets through doors and windows. A few roaches, desperate to escape, threw themselves from the upper stories and crawled away with broken limbs and cracked carapaces. When the building caught fire later that morning, it all came together to create the story that the roaches had somehow known that the fire was coming. No one knew about the demon who Fell in the 3rd floor of 220 North Yale Avenue, or the warrior-angel made of golden gears and emerald lightning who came to kill him.

Charlie Mann had been in and out of foster homes for ten years. He had been abused and neglected. His violent and antisocial behavior left him shunned by his peers. One morning, he turned to one of his foster brothers and said "I feel better." He remembered all the things that had happened to him, but none of the memories seemed to have any power over him. His therapist refused to take any credit for the sudden recovery, saying that she had given up hope.

The crew of the coffee shop on Lakeshore would call it "the shit day" until employee turnover erased its institutional memory. The store's wireless, sound system, and electricity misbehaved all day. None of the timers would work properly. Baristas would pour what they were certain was a cup of coffee, only to have the customer complain that it was tea or hot chocolate. Elaine Cross didn't mind; she zoned out for a moment, listening to the static of the broken sound system, and came back to herself to discover the novel she had been working on for three years staring back at her from her laptop's screen, finally complete.

The God-Machine's workings are too vast and multiply redundant for the energies released by the fall of a single angel to cause more than superficial glitches. Even superficial glitches have the potential to seriously impact human lives, however. To understand these sorts of glitches, imagine that the universe is a computer and a small section of its programming has become corrupted. Ones and zeroes randomly flip, changing the program into something other than was intended.

When an angel Falls, things happen out of order — the cause before the effect — or in the wrong way. Reality might forget that a small object is supposed to be lost or broken, or even, as in one of the examples described above, that a recently deceased person is supposed



WITH FALLEN SCALES

Stigmatics, angels, demons, and others who have already been touched by the God-Machine can sense it when an angel Falls, but what about the World of Darkness's other supernatural inhabitants? Are beings who can touch an object and know its past, see through the veil that separates matter and spirit, or follow the scent of an individual's sweat as he makes his way through a city of hundreds of thousand humans completely in the dark?

In general, yes. Angels, demons, and the God-Machine form their own system within the World of Darkness, and like the world's other systems, they are closed.

Exceptions exist, however. Anyone with supernatural senses attuned to fate and the ebb and flow of probability can sense the Fall's effect on the world around it. Similarly, anyone who can see into the Shadow might notice the spirits of passion who are drawn to a demon's newfound intense emotions. Most of the time, however, the World of Darkness's other supernatural inhabitants remain just as ignorant of angels and demons as the angels and demons are of them.

to be dead. People and animals might experience premonitions or strong senses of déjà vu. Animals, with their simpler logic, are more likely than humans to act on these impulses. Tiny bursts of electromagnetic radiation — too small to be detected by human senses — could cause electronic devices to malfunction or fail altogether.

Stigmatics — humans tainted by the God-Machine's power who are unusually sensitive to its emanations — almost never fail to notice when an angel Falls in their vicinity. Some stigmatics can even feel the mark an angel's Fall leaves on a location after the fact. Many stigmatics are drawn to falling angels, sensing that the demon may be a kindred spirit.

A demon begins his new existence with a Cover, the remnants of his last assignment as an angel of the God-Machine. Covers are discussed in more detail below and in later chapters, but for now suffice it to say that from the first moment of his new life as a one of the Unchained, a demon's Cover is a perfect — albeit shallow — mask for his supernatural identity.

The Mask

Every day he goes to Brooklyn's First Unitarian Church to sit in the vaulted chapel, head bowed and silent. The minister knows that he doesn't want to talk and leaves him alone with his thoughts and his prayers. She could never guess what he's thinking, though, when he looks up at the stained glass windows and tries to make himself believe, even just for a moment, in the compassionate, forgiving, and imaginary God humans have invented for themselves.

She desperately wants to be human. She has arranged her existence so that she can go days — sometimes weeks — without doing anything supernatural. When someone or something threatens her carefully constructed life, however, she rips out the guts of the world and uses all the demonic fury that is her birthright to ensure her security.

He calls himself an anarchist, a communist, a socialist, and a patriot — whatever it takes together impressionable humans with the right attitudes. He gathers them into cells with call-signs and secret passwords, not because it does any good, but because he's learned that it puts people in the right mood. He believes that a war is coming. Because it will be fought on Earth, humans have a right to pick a side; he intends to make sure that they pick his.

A demon's identity is a complicated issue. Is she a Fallen angel? A demonic rebel? Or is she the human that she seems to be — as human as anyone else in the ways that count — only with an unusual background? If you ask a demon who she is, you can expect several different answers.

Some demons might speak of their former identities as angels of the God-Machine. This identity includes a name — a celestial designation, an alien word that may or may not have a meaning that the angel chose to translate into the local language — and a past of faithful service to the God-Machine. This attitude is most common among Integrators, though some Saboteurs wear the mantle of "fallen angel" with pride.

Another demon might talk about her life as Unchained, which includes her connection to local demons and the broader impact she makes on the supernatural world. Many demons save their emotional attachments for their fellow demons, reasoning that they can be more honest and less wary with entities that share their concerns. Of course, other demons feel the exact opposite way. They go to humans for emotional connection and see most demons as rivals, threats, and potential enemies. Demons of all kinds fall into this camp. Arguably, identifying most strongly as a demon is the easiest option.

Finally, some demons might mention their human lives — their Covers — which protect them from the sight and wrath of the God-Machine. A demon's first Cover is a remnant of her last assignment as an angel, though some demons go on to develop additional Covers. A demon's Cover is a near-perfect false identity that allows the demon to integrate with human society. Demons enter the World of Darkness with jobs, homes, sometimes even friends and families, though these relationships tend to be shallow and artificial. Some demons identify very strongly with their

Cover, treating it as their real identity. This is especially common among demons who Fell out of a desire to connect with one or more humans. A place in the world of humans — a strong Cover — is important for pursuing and maintaining those relationships.

Some demons completely abandon their pasts as angels or have nothing to do with their fellow Unchained. No demon who wants to last long ignores her Cover. Without a functioning Cover, a demon is a beacon to the God-Machine's hunters, who pursue her mercilessly until she is destroyed or finds some way to hide her glow. Her true form is also revealed, making it nearly impossible to deal with humans. That said, some demons view their Covers as mere necessities — day jobs — rather than important parts of their identities.

Cover and Identity

The demon goes by many names — Mr. Grey, the Chaplain, or even Grandmother. Male or female, white or black, it is always old, with grey hair and a lined face. It has existed on this Earth for so long that it has forgotten how to wear a youthful skin.

Mrs. Gloucester is a beautiful young widow. No one remembers who her husband was, but he seems to have left her with a great deal of money, which she spends liberally. Then Mrs. Gloucester disappears, hounded into obscurity by vague accusations and mysterious foes. Not long after, when Mrs. Gloucester is all but forgotten, Mr. Hampton enters the social scene, a handsome and tragic young widower with deep pockets.

He is the angry young man, but beyond that the details don't matter. He is all ethnicities, all nationalities. He fights for any cause except the establishment. Wherever the youth rebel against the corruption and hypocrisy of their elders, he's there. He isn't interested in ruling or rebuilding, just destroying and tearing down. If it's your goal to rip things apart, he'll help you — for a price.

The demon seeks out would-be suicides and offers them a simple bargain: a painless death in return for the right to live out the lives they abandon. The demon lives those lives with a vengeance, achieving as much as it can before it becomes bored and finds another suicide, offering her the same deal.

Every demon has a Cover, a false identity that hides his existence from the God-Machine and its hunter angels and his supernatural nature from the humans all around him. Some Demons maintain multiple redundant Covers, while others have only the one.

Cover includes sex, gender, ethnicity and socio-economic class, providing a demon with a useful context for navigating human culture. Some demons identify very strongly with elements of their favored Covers, truly coming to see themselves as "male" or "Japanese" or "heterosexual." For a demon who identifies himself as Asian, walking around with a Cover that gives him a Caucasian body would feel highly uncomfortable. Very few demons, however, would refuse to adopt a Cover that violated their chosen identity in a pinch. For demons, Cover is a matter of life and death and identity is rarely more than a matter of convenience.

Even demons who have strong emotional attachments to humans can't rely completely on their Cover. A demon's Cover lacks both emotional connection and unnecessary details. Like most examples of Infrastructure, a Cover includes the bare minimum necessary to explain the demon's existence. A demon whose cover is "strict corporate boss," for example, has a position at the right kind of company, drives the right kind of car, lives in the right sort of home, and has the right kind of bank account. He has no magazine or newspaper subscriptions, though, and most of the rooms in his spacious suburban house are unfurnished. His coworkers don't really know anything about him except that he's efficient and punctual, as well as any other personality traits necessary to maintain the Cover of a "strict corporate boss."

Some demons do the work necessary to turn their Cover into a fully fleshed-out existence, forging emotional connections with the humans around them. The "strict corporate boss" might take up golfing, furnish his house and throw a dinner party, and make friends with his coworkers. Working to deepen a Cover is a wise choice. Human attention can corrode a shallow Cover, but a better developed one is resistant to outside meddling because there are fewer inconsistencies for a human investigator to discover. A deeper Cover is also stronger and can take more abuse and neglect before it gives way. Many demons look at shoring up with Cover in the same way that humans view saving moneyor undertaking home repairs: as insurance against potential misfortune.

No matter how much he identifies with — or even enjoys — his Cover, a smart Demon needs to worry about overstepping his Cover's boundaries. If the "strict corporate boss" starts to show too much compassion for his employees, his Cover might start to fray. A Demon can make small adjustments to his Cover; the strict corporate boss can get a little less strict, maybe even make a few friends at the office. If a demon wants to lead a totally different kind of life — for example, abandon the corporate lifestyle, take up painting, and move to San Francisco — he needs a different Cover.

For some demons, all this is a reason not to identify as human at all. They reason that with all these complications — not to mention the possibility of real risk — it's best to seek out emotional connection among other demons. A few just try to live without emotional connection at all. Unfortunately, emotional isolation is as unhealthy for demons as it is for humans. Most demons seek out a balanced approach, identifying with humans to the extent that it is safe and demons to the extent that they trust them.

One of the ways a demon can replace a lost Cover is to steal a human's life. Any human who has bargained his soul away is fair game. The demon needs to lay his hand upon his target and invoke the pact, and it's done. Some demons are uncomfortable using this power and only use it as a tactic of last resort. Other demons relish the opportunity to step into a fully realized human life. Most demons who employ this tactic are willing to acknowledge that they are parasites, surviving on a stolen life, though whether they are blasé or wracked with guilt varies from demon to demon.

There is a strange third attitude towards this practice. When they take a human's life, they consider themselves to have become their victim. If she admired the human whose

life she stole, a demon in this camp might protect the people the human loved and actively pursue causes the human held dear. If she looked down on her victim, she might try to live the human's life "better" than its previous occupant did, though the definition of "better" also varies wildly.

Incarnation, Agenda, and Humanity

Demons who share an Incarnation or an Agenda tend to have similar attitudes towards the human race and the Covers that let them walk seem like humans. In part this is because a demon's initial Cover comes from her last mission, which is certainly tied to her Incarnation. Similarly, Agenda is related to aspects of a demon's goals and attitude towards life, which is certainly reflected in his attitude toward the Cover he inhabits.

Messengers

As angels, Messengers were sent on assignments where they had to earn humans' trust. Trumpets are the method actors of angels, fooling themselves — at least a little — so they could fool the humans they dealt with. As demons, Messengers are the most likely to prize their human relationships. Cover is essential to maintaining those relationships. Demons are slow to trust humans with the truth of their natures, and even then, a good Cover is important. A human who knows that her best friend is really a pillar of magnesium-white fire with four arms, six wings, and eight voices speaking with unearthly harmony probably doesn't want to look at *that* when she comes over for coffee.

All of these factors combine to lead most Messengers to identify strongly with their Covers. Messengers are the most likely to view their Covers as real on some level, even when they are made from stolen human lives. Messengers are likely to treat their Covers with care and respect, not just because a strong Cover is a necessity, but also because they are genuinely attached to that life and the human relationships it facilitates.

A Trumpet's method acting also tends to lead to a great deal of sympathy for humans. Whatever they feel about their own place in the universe — angel turned human or demon condescending to live among humans — Messengers frequently just like people. They move through human cultures like fish through water — or like wolves through the wood — and it's hard for them not to admire a species that started as filthy, uncomplicated apes and rose to create so much beauty and complexity.

Even antinomian Messengers, who usually turn their backs on the lies and manipulation that came with being an agent of the God-Machine in favor of brutal honesty, rarely turn their backs on people. In fact, antinomian Messengers are often among the most compassionate demons.

Guardians and Destroyers

Guardians and Destroyers are similar in that they view their Covers as means to an end. As loyal angels, many Guardians spent a long time — sometimes years — imitating humans. Their human identities, however, were nothing more than veils to hide their angelic nature. While many Guardians come to enjoy the company of humans, even as demons, they retain a utilitarian attitude towards their Covers. A Guardian's Cover isn't his real self – it's just the mask he wears to keep humans ignorant and the God-Machine at bay. Destroyers are similar, except that they are not quite as likely to enjoy human company. When the Swords were loyal angels, they only imitated humans long enough to get close to their targets.

Even when Swords and Shields identify strongly with humans and try to form human relationships, they are still likely to see their Covers as tools rather than goals. Covers allow them to walk in the human world, but it isn't who they really are.

When it comes to humans, most Destroyers and Guardians can't escape their pasts as creatures of force and violence. Whether they are frustrated by human frailty or impressed by human bravery depends on the demon's personality. Some Swords and Shields are protective of humans; others are dismissive. A short-tempered Guardian might chloroform a stubborn human and throw him into the trunk of her car — for his own good — and a short tempered Destroyer might be inclined to solve problems with her fists. On the other extreme, antinomian Guardians and Destroyers eschew force completely.

Ultimately, most Guardians and Destroyers define their relationships with humans by an awareness of how fragile humans are. This awareness usually prevents them from identifying as human themselves, because Swords and Shields are also aware of how much more durable they are than the humans they live amongst.

Psychopomps

Psychopomps were the God-Machine's fixers, gathering resources and rearranging the world to bring the God-Machine's various machinations to fruition. Most Psychopomps seek out Covers that allow them to pursue their odd obsessions. For example, a Wheel who likes to cultivate relationships with a certain kind of people — artists, for example — might create a Cover as an artist, an art critic, or a gallery owner. Another Psychopomp might look for a Cover that lets him act as a matchmaker, bringing people together into configurations — not necessarily romantic — that he finds pleasing.

However they use it, most Psychopomps don't identify strongly with their Covers. The Fall doesn't do much to make these alien angels into comprehensible demons. For most Wheels, Cover is little more than means to an end; at most it is a project in and of itself. It isn't who they really are.

When it comes to humans, Psychopomps usually display a degree of fascination that rivals the Messengers. Humans and their artifacts are wonderfully complicated. The difference is that while Trumpets find humans interesting and likeable, Wheels just find them interesting. Psychopomps don't usually want to be human the way that some Messengers seem to. When they interact with humans, it isn't just for fun, it's part of some scheme to rearrange things to the Psychopomp's strange liking.

Inquisitors

Inquisitors tend to pick Covers that give them access to information. They often find it useful to pose as journalists, professors, archivists, and detectives, both police and private. Second only to Saboteurs in terms of paranoia — a side effect of spending so much time looking into the world's secret history and following the movements of its secret masters — Inquisitors are also likely to take on Covers that are expedient and innocuous, the better to keep their true natures hidden from those they seek to investigate. Because gathering information can be a slow process, Integrators value their Covers. Whether an Inquisitor identifies strongly with a Cover or not, he won't throw it away, simply because it may come with laboriously gathered contacts and a huge library of stored information.

When it comes to humans, Inquisitors often have a sense of superiority. As demons, they are capable of understanding the universe and acting on that understanding with more power than most humans could even imagine. Humans are subject to the world's rules; demons can hack that system, accessing back doors and secret codes, playing the game in an entirely different way. In their endless quest to learn all the universe's secrets, Inquisitors frequently lose sight of the human lives all around them. Their heads are just too full of arcane secrets and conspiracies.

The stated goal of the Inquisitors is to either manipulate the God-Machine or find a way for demons to escape its attention. Either way, most Inquisitors don't think that their endgame will have much of an effect on the lives of humans. They believe that they tread lightly upon the human world because it isn't really theirs: someday they will find their own place, and for better or worse they will never have to deal with humans again.

Integrators

Integrators, on the other hand, are the most likely to live with sketchy and incomplete Covers. These Demons who seek to return to the God-Machine view their Covers as matters of survival only and actively avoid developing any attachment that might distract them from their purpose. The rare Integrator who puts any work into her Cover does so in order to make her Cover pleasing to the God-Machine, if such a thing is truly possible. Some such Integrators adopt Covers that work in engineering and technology, hoping that the God-Machine will appreciate that they spend their daily life emulating its mechanistic perfection. Others take on roles of authority, like law enforcement, hoping that the God-Machine will see them as supporting hierarchy, rather than defying it like the rest of the fallen angels.

Integrators are split on how much to identify with their Covers. Some Integrators believe that the God-Machine wants angels to do their jobs well. Part of that job means effectively maintaining a Cover. These Integrators pursue their Covers with all the fervor of an award-winning actor, hoping that when the time comes the God-Machine will be impressed with their competence. Other Integrators believe that they should not lose sight of what they really are — angels. They reason that by throwing themselves too deeply into their Covers, they risk becoming distracted by the material world. Having already given in to human temptations once, they are dedicated to not doing so a second time and thus avoid becoming too fond of their Covers.

Ironically, Integrators often have the most sympathy for humans. Integrators understand and despise the human condition. They know what it's like to fear death, wonder what their lives are for, and suffer under the tyranny of choice. The only difference for most Integrators is that unlike humans, they have a way out through rejoining the God-Machine.

Some Integrators go further, identifying so much with humanity that they come to view themselves as essentially human beings with the potential to become something more rather than fallen angels trying to rejoin their creator. A few Integrators try to make themselves believe that the God-Machine's plans are actually for the collective good of mankind; by reconnecting to the God-Machine and becoming a part of those plans once more, they actually benefit mankind. Others try to believe that by having been angel, demon, and angel once more, they will carry some measure of humanity back to the God-Machine each time an Integrator is redeemed.

Saboteurs

Saboteurs are among the most paranoid demons. They may not seek out conspiracies and secret connections the way Inquisitors do, but they do set out to break and subvert the God-Machine, which makes them its enemies. Many Saboteurs take on the most ordinary and unthreatening Covers they can, the better to avoid the God-Machine's attention. Saboteurs also put a great deal of effort into their Covers and are among the most likely to have multiple redundant Covers and contingency plans should their Covers fray or be destroyed.

Other Saboteurs identify with human rebellion against authority and take on Covers as anarchists, communists, and other malcontents. They reason that this puts them in contact with humans who have the right skills and the inclination to use them. All it takes is a little redirection and the Saboteur can arrange for the God-Machine's Infrastructure to be wrecked by entirely mundane human revolutionaries.

Like Integrators, Saboteurs have a somewhat paradoxical approach to their Cover. On the one hand, Saboteurs tend to be the angriest and most passionate demons. By demonic standards, they are emotional and prone to making quick decisions. Many go so far as to see humans as fellow warriors in the fight against the God-Machine — it's their world, after all.

A Saboteur's life is hard on Covers. The God-Machine has ways of attacking a demon's Cover — chief among them manipulating curious humans. Saboteurs make themselves targets. Because they seek out direct confrontation with the God-Machine and its agents, Saboteurs have to rely on the most powerful abilities in their demonic arsenal, the Exploits that fray Cover with every use.

Saboteurs tend to balance these conflicting impulses by forming intense but short-lived attachments to their Covers. They live each Cover fully, using it to connect with humans and

enjoy the human world until it is inevitably taken from them. Then they move on. Some Saboteurs are more careful or less fond of humans, but most of them orbit around this pattern.

Saboteurs tend to attract demons with strong feelings about humans. Some Saboteurs tell themselves that when the God-Machine is defeated, they will make a new world where humans and demons alike will be free. Other Saboteurs hate humanity for their weakness and stupidity in allowing themselves to be molded and manipulated by the God-Machine for so long. These demons frequently become callous, not caring when stupid, sheep-like humans are caught up in their plans. Few Saboteurs are indifferent towards humans. The direct, aggressive actions they favor — and the consequences for humans that get caught in the way — polarize them before long.

Tempters

Finally, Tempters are very attached to their Covers. As a rule, they adopt Covers that let them live in comfort. Tempters are oil men, minor celebrities, and the idle rich. Remember, though, that not every demon's idea of comfort matches human expectations — after a life as an angel, a Tempters might be content as a suburban housewife, a Midwestern farmer, or a starving artist. What matters to Tempters is that the Cover, whatever it is, be deep, rich, and full — that's why they Fell, isn't it?

Because they are ultimately self-serving, Tempters usually spare no effort to ensure their personal safety, with multiple redundant eventualities should their Covers be compromised. Tempters already like to sit in the center of a web of pacts and promises — it takes very little effort for them to make sure some of those debts could be called in to provide the Tempter with a new Cover.

Despite their selfishness, Tempters are usually very attached to their Covers and to the humans involved in them. Tempters are the most likely to truly live through their Covers and feel strongly about protecting them. At the same time, they move behind the scenes to make back-up Covers and ensure that no matter what happens, they will survive.

Tempters have complicated feelings about humans. On the one hand, they live off humans, conning them into pacts that most humans don't truly understand. Very few humans leave an encounter with a Tempter with their lives entirely intact. On the other hand, Tempters are the most likely to deal with humans on a daily basis. Like Saboteurs, Tempters tend to fall into two camps when it comes to humans: either they view humans as marks, sheep to be shorn and nothing more, or they develop sympathy for humans and engage in complicated explanations to justify their manipulation.

Life as a Demon

Every demon is a hybrid creature. At its heart, it is a transcendent spirit, once part of the perfected calculus of the God-Machine. Having chosen to abandon perfection in favor of messy, human passions and inefficient human freedom, their ethereal spirits have been crammed into human bodies, their formerly near-omniscient senses reduced to a human's highly limited five. This hybrid quality — eternal and mortal, spiritual and physical — makes them unique among the denizens of the World of Darkness.

Fallen Flesh

So long as he has a functioning Cover, a demon is functionally a normal human with a human body and all that implies. If a demon were to cling to a single human identity for long enough, he would age and become infirm. Although the minor reality dysfunctions that accompany a great deal of demonic power can interfere with the process, a demon who chose to could eventually die of natural causes, just like any human.

Demons are as ignorant about what happens to them when they die as anyone else. The most cynical demons fear that if any part of them remains after death, it simply returns to the God-Machine to be recycled into another loyal angel or made into part of some Infrastructure somewhere. More hopeful demons believe that in choosing human lives they have also chosen human death, They hope that whatever remains of them — if anything — will follow humans to wherever they go, be it reincarnation or some kind of peaceful reward. No demon has ever been known to leave a ghost, though whether this is a good sign or a bad omen depends on the demon you ask.

Most demons simply assume that they have no eternal spark and when they die, they simply cease to exist. The most ambitious demons, on the other hand, believe that when they complete the Descent they will be immortal in the Hell they rule.

Most demons spend most of their times hiding behind a mask of humanity. Although many demons are very comfortable in their Covers and even consider their favorite Cover to be part of their identity, a demon's human form is not his "true" shape. Every demon has access to a demonic form, the shape they wore as an angel. This form is intrinsically more durable and powerful than a human body. As a demon's spiritual power grows, her demonic form becomes more powerful as well. Demons can assume their demonic forms whenever they wish, with very little effort, and remain in that shape for as long as they like. Resuming their human masks is what takes work. For a demon, the real cost of assuming her demonic form is that doing so can compromise her Cover.

Some demons feel much more comfortable in their demonic form, to the point that they try to arrange their lives so that they can spend some time that way every day. These demons sometimes band together to create safe spaces where they can assume their demonic forms and "let their hair down" without worrying about curious humans or the God-Machine's agents. Where they exist, these places are often neutral ground where Demons with radically different outlooks — Saboteurs and Integrators, the most radically pro-human demons and the most selfish and abusive Tempters — can meet.

A demon without a functioning Cover is trapped in her demonic form. This is a dangerous place for a demon to be: she is stuck in a terrifying shape, hard pressed to find mortals willing to bargain away their souls, and on the run from the God-Machine's

powerful angels. This state has benefits, however. A demon who willingly burns away her Cover — "going loud" — regains access to a great deal of her lost angelic power. A demon in this state is a force to be reckoned with. Even so, going loud is often an act of desperation or self-sacrifice, the last thing a demon does before an even more formidable angel drags her down.

Fallen Mind

Although a demon's physical nature is dualistic — partly divine, partly mundane — their mental and emotional outlook is resembles that of a human. It's true that demons have extraordinary pasts and think in alien ways that defy supernatural manipulation, but they tend to come to fairly mundane human conclusions. If someone a demon cares about is in danger, he experiences fear. He feels it in his gut, in his throat, in his chest, just like an ordinary human being.

A demon's essentially human perspective is reinforced by her human experience of the world. Demons are more sensitive to certain supernatural emanations, but they generally see and hear the world in human ways.

No matter how alien a demon might be when she first Falls, years of thinking about human things, experiencing the world in human ways, and feeling human emotions has a humanizing effect on them. This doesn't mean that demons are universally good people — there's a big difference between "human" and "humane" — but when demons are monsters, they are monsters in a human way.

At the same time, however, demons express their emotions somewhat differently. Demons experience a disconnect between body and mind. They feel emotions as deeply as any human. What they don't do, however, is express these emotions unconsciously. A demon might lash out in anger, but no one around her will see it coming. Her interpersonal self-control is perfect.

This condition makes demons nearly impossible to read, which can be an asset in their world of plots, counter-plots, and paranoia. It also makes it easier for a demon to maintain her Cover. No matter how disgusted she is with the things she has to do to keep her Cover healthy — acts of cruelty or degradation, dealing with humans that the demon despises — it never needs to show. Many demons have this unusual aspect of their condition to thank for their continued survival.

At the same time, the demonic disconnect between body and mind can be destructive to a demon's relationships. It's hard not to feel like you are manipulating the people you care about when you have to choose to let them know how you feel, rather than simply letting them grasp your feelings through natural human empathy. Compassionate demons who let painful emotions show have to grapple with the fact that, on some level, they are hurting the humans who love them intentionally, that they could hide their emotions perfectly, if they chose to. All but the most selfish demons would like to have at least one person – human or fellow demon — that they can be genuine with, but that kind of relationship can be hard for a demon to build and maintain.

LITTLE MONSTERS

Demons can impregnate and be impregnated by humans. The resulting children are a weird hybrid of demon and human; like their human parent, they are locked into one body and one identity for their entire lives. Like their demon parent, however, they can learn to manipulate the backdoors worked into reality through demonic Embeds. Since they possess no facility for manipulating Aether, the raw, blatant power of demonic Exploits remains beyond them. It stands to reason that a demonspawn has no Cipher to discover, but rumors to the contrary persist.

Demons tell strange stories about their half-bred children. Some demons claim to have met exiles or angels who were once half-humans. Others have traded the crackling bit of Primum lodged in their soul for something else; a connection, they claim, to the "true" heaven or "true" hell that lie beyond the God-Machine's dominion.

Fallen Heart

Although many demons have strong connections to one or two humans — often humans involved in the circumstances of their Fall — humans are also a threat. Humans who become too curious and dig into a Demon's Cover can cause it to unravel. Many Demons have complicated feelings about humans, but none can ignore the danger they pose.

Demons can limit the danger of maintaining human contacts by admitting the truth. Once a demon willingly lets a human in on her secret, that human can no longer harm her Cover by learning more. That simple act, though — coming clean to a human, no matter how beloved — can fray a Cover dangerously. Worse, if that human reveals the truth to others and those humans begin to investigate, the demon's Cover is in even more danger. If word spreads far enough that it reaches an angel of the God-Machine, the consequences can be deadly for everyone involved. As a result, demons are very careful about to whom they reveal their true selves.

Humans also pose a danger through their inherent fragility. Some demons feel passionately about their human associates — sometimes they even Fell because of those feelings — but humans are eminently mortal. They can be injured or killed in so many ways. Associating with a demon is also a good way to

end up thrust into the dangerous supernatural underground of the World of Darkness. A demon's human friends can become a threat through no fault of their own, just by how easily they can be targetted by a demon's enemies.

Even fellow demons are the object of distrust. Thanks to the vagaries of Cover, a demon can never be sure exactly who he's dealing with. The slender Polynesian woman you speak to on Thursday could be a bearded six-and-a-half foot tall white guy on the following Tuesday. He says he's the same demon, but are you sure he is? Perhaps he's a rival demon or even an angel of the God-Machine. Would you bet your life on it? Demons can and do attempt to protect themselves with elaborate systems of passwords, signs, and countersigns, but how effective are those measures, really, in a world where Embeds and Exploits can pluck information from the minds of the unwary?

That's not even considering the mundane plots and counterplots that are endemic to demon society. Demonic Agendas are not tight hierarchies with gatekeepers to ensure that every member actually believes in the Agenda's mission. Agendas are loose associations of like-minded demons. It's almost impossible to be sure that a given demon is true believer rather than an infiltrator, a plant, or simply an Unchained more interested in fulfilling his own goals than the Agenda's.

What Do Demons Do All Day?

She wakes up every morning at 8:37 AM. She doesn't need an alarm clock — time has always been a friend of hers. She makes sure that she is seen jogging because it's the sort of thing that a person like her should be seen doing. She flirts with Cole Fischer, whose dog-walking schedule is nearly as reliable as hers, and buys a bottle of water from the pretzel vender at the entrance to the park. Once a week, she pauses to retie her shoe at the Water Street bus stop, because that's where she's hidden one of the several drop boxes that keep her in contact with her associates.

Back at the apartment by 9:12 AM, she showers then retreats to the spare bedroom "office" and checks in with the Internet. She reads her emails and peruses local news sites and Fortean event blogs. She can't articulate what she's looking for, exactly, but she knows it when she reads it. It's the sort of thing that brings a familiar taste of sparks and ozone to the back of her tongue.

She heads to the coffee shop at the corner between 10:30 AM and lunchtime — again, because it's the sort of thing that a work-from-home consultant does to stretch her legs and get a little low-pressure human interaction before returning to work — which allows her to check another of her drop boxes. If a person at the café were to greet her with one of several pre-designated phrases, she would know that something bad has happened and react accordingly. It hasn't happened so far.

She makes a few phone calls on the walk back to her apartment — still keeping up appearances, doing the sorts of things a person in her position has to do — but when she gets back, the real work begins.

Today is a good day. One of her associates has determined that the enemy's newest facility — long suspected but never confirmed — is hidden among the machinery of a local power relay station. Someone will need to gain access to the building's layout and that task falls to her.

She is so focused that the doorbell catches her by surprise. She presses the "listen" button and is greeted by Aisling's voice.

"Grey, I was on your block, and do you know that it's beautiful outside? I got a pizza. Do you want to come to the park and help me eat it?"

Aisling. Stupid, ignorant, fragile, foolish, *human* Aisling. The demon that calls herself Grey allows herself to smile as she presses the "talk" button. She's been very productive so far today. She can afford to spend a little time on foolish things.

"I'll be right down."

Although a demon's Cover insulates him from some of the tedious necessities of a normal human life, demons are largely human. Their human perspective means that they still have to deal with many human problems. It might seem strange, but now that these beings have Fallen, they sometimes have to deal with entirely earthly concerns. Demons worry about where their lives are going. They have complaints. They have lousy days at work. They feel anxiety about the fates of the humans to whom they have developed attachments. Initially, many demons view these minor, everyday difficulties with a sense of pride. After all, their humanity is a hard-earned privilege; every human frustration is something to be cherished. Eventually, however, most demons come feel the same way about these situations that most humans do.

At the same time, demons are supernatural creatures. They move in the hidden world. Although most of the World of Darkness's supernatural inhabitants are too busy with their own concerns, demons can easily be caught up in their schemes. Mages are eternally curious about the world around them and may mistake the angels and demons of the God-Machine for the creatures of their own Supernal Realms. Werewolves — the self-ordained wardens of the spirit world — could easily find themselves at cross-purposes with Psychopomps or any other demon who seeks to exploit the spirit world. Humans are ignorant and fragile, and the World of Darkness is full of monsters, predators, and zealots. Any demon who forms strong attachments to humans can easily find himself in conflict with supernatural creatures that want to harm his humans.

Assuming that she has no more pressing concerns or supernatural entanglements, a typical demon spends several hours a day maintaining her Cover. If she has multiple Covers, this can approach — or even exceed — the time and attention commitment of a full time job. Most demons are also constantly on the prowl for more humans to enmesh in Pacts. Even a compassionate and humane demon who prefers to solve problems with negotiation and compromise is likely to view a wide net of pacts as a matter of insurance. After all, nothing says "flexibility" and "security" like keeping a variety of people in your debt.



Most demons also spend part of each day keeping tabs on the God-Machine. Demons who aren't members of any Agenda and have no interest in fighting or subverting the God-Machine still try to keep an eye on local Infrastructure and the movement of angels in the area, even if it's only to make sure that they are not the ones being hunted. For demons who are directly involved in battling the God-Machine, monitoring or sabotaging the God-Machine's works can become an all-consuming passion. Some of these Demons work every day towards defeating the God-Machine.

Along these lines, demons spend time trying to unravel the Cipher. The Cipher, the strange, techgnostic koan that leads a demon on her own personal Descent, requires that a demon remain involved with the God-Machine and its agents. Only through gaining greater knowledge of the mystical underpinnings of the world — which a demon expresses through Embeds — can the Cipher be decrypted.

Finally, most demons spend some time pursuing Aether, the energy that fuels Embeds and Exploits. Demons can survive indefinitely without Aether, but a demon without Aether is vulnerable to attack. Demons can find Aether in a variety of ways.

In the rare moments when a demon isn't shoring up his Cover, pursuing his secret war against the God-Machine, seeking out secret power in the form of Embeds and Exploits, making connections with fellow demons and the other supernatural beings it has to deal with, or pre-emptively protecting itself from attack, most demons just try to enjoy their lives. They pursue relationships, indulge in hobbies, and hone mundane skills that interest them just like any other human. Demons have sacrificed a great deal to live in the world of humans, and they refuse to live solely in the shadows. Sadly, for most demons, these moments in the light are few and far between.

Descent

A woman walks into the lobby of a prestigious consulting firm. She smiles beatifically and raises her hands. The building vanishes in a pillar of crimson light. News agencies report it as a terrorist attack, but refuse to give an exact number of casualties because, improbably, no one was actually killed.

A heavyset man with a Russian accent has lunch in the same café, every day. He orders the same meal every time. He pretends to read a Russian language newspaper, but his eyes are fixed on the apartment building across the street. After five years of this, a spree killer strikes the city. Ten people are killed, quickly and efficiently, over the course of nine days. The Russian is never seen or heard from again.

A young man and a small child wander the continental United States, occasionally detouring into Mexico and Canada, in the man's beat-up pickup truck. They never stay anywhere for long. The child is clearly traumatized — he rarely speaks and is terrified of most adults — but although they look nothing alike, he calls the man "dad" and trusts him absolutely. Sometimes accusations surface that the man is a kidnapper and the child is his victim; so far the man has always managed to escape, taking the child with

him. Although the pair has crossed state lines many times, the FBI has never been involved in the search and never will be.

All these are moves in the Descent, the secret cold war that demons fight against the God-Machine and its loyal angels. Regardless of the life a demon intends to live — zealous partisan fighting the God Machine with every breath, or all-but-human interloper in a human world — no Demon can fully escape the consequences of this conflict.

Demons live on Earth in a perpetual state of chaos. Their every action imbalances the God-Machine's plans, from active sabotage to mundane interactions. As a result, the God-Machine is always on the hunt for its wayward slaves. Demons rely on Cover to stay hidden, but Cover can fail. They rely on their Agencies, but even their closest friends and confidants can betray them. They make bargains with humans, but humans are so easily killed or subverted.

Most demons can steal small moments of pleasure from this state of constant warfare, but it's no surprise that they want more out of life. They crave peace and security. They want to be allowed to live in this world without fear and paranoia. They want the opportunity to leave their mark on the world without having to worry that everything they do will be undone by the God-Machine as soon as it is convenient.

The Descent is the struggle to realize these desires.

Some demons have given themselves wholly to the Descent. All of their choices, from the Covers they live under to the bargains they make with humans and the other supernatural inhabitants of the World of Darkness, are bent towards that end. Others merely give the Descent lip service, taking advantage of the way it unites other demons without truly dedicating themselves to the cause. Some demons withdraw from the cause, choosing to believe that it is impossible and resigning themselves to painful lives of constant struggle. Over the course of his life, one demon can hold all these positions, drifting back and forth between dedication and selfishness, hope and despair.

While some of the Unchained keep their mind on the highest goal — a vision of the Descent that will shake the Earth to its foundations and redefine what it means to be a demon — most demons have at least one or two key goals that they would like to achieve. These goals can be as humble as a greater degree of personal security or surviving long enough to see a human matter through to its conclusion. Other demons would like to arrange their lives so that they can maintain one beloved Cover without fear of losing it, or reduce the God-Machine's influence in the city they have settled in. Very few of the Unchained would admit to having no faith in a lasting, transformative conclusion to the Descent, but all of them have more reasonable intermediary goals that they would like to achieve.

What is Hell

Alongside the concept of Descent is the idea of Hell. If the Descent is the journey, Hell is the destination. For some, Hell is personal – a change in perspective or circumstance that will bring them peace. Others believe that they will make a Hell on earth when they have finally destroyed or subverted the God-Machine. For some Demons, Hell is somewhere else, a place they will escape to. Some demons believe that the Descent will be achieved quietly and none of the Earth's other inhabitants will know anything has changed. Some believe that when the time comes, they will wage a bloody war against the God-Machine, a conflagration that Earth's human population will not be able to ignore or escape.

The Agendas all have something to say about the Descent and the "proper" course of the war with the God-Machine, but most demons don't pay much attention. Demons join Agendas for lots of reasons. Sometimes it's because their idea of winning the war matches up with the Agenda's, but sometimes it's because they share a common methodology, or they have friends in the Agenda, or it seemed like a good idea at the time and they haven't encountered a compelling reason to switch allegiances just yet. Demons may organize themselves into Agendas, but each Demon fights the God-Machine for her own reasons.

Achievable Goals

It's important to remember that demons have access to powers that manipulate the reality at its most basic level. When demons talk about turning Earth into Hell by banning the God-Machine and its angels from entry, or discovering a new layer of reality where they can be free, or creating a new world for themselves somewhere among the world's many shadows, they are not speaking hyperbole. These are completely reasonable goals.

After all, the Unchained can already walk between worlds, bend time, manipulate causality, steal souls, and restore life to the dead. By their very nature, they can hide in plain sight among humans, convincing both humans and the God-Machine itself that they are nothing out of the ordinary.

Demons haven't failed to establish Hell because they lack power. The problem is that their enemy — the God Machine — is even more powerful.

The Absence of God

The cold war with the God-Machine weighs on every demon's mind. Every demon lives in constant fear that the next knock on his door will be a hunter angel or one of the God-Machine's human servants. Many of them hold their human acquaintances at arm's length for fear that they will be suborned or manipulated. They try to avoid getting attached to their Covers because they never know when they will be forced to abandon them and move on.

For some, this vision is ambitious. They will not rest until the God-Machine is rooted out and destroyed and every loyal angel converted or eliminated. These demons are often among the most dangerous and driven of the Unchained. Not all of them are violent, however. Some focus on killing angels and destroying Infrastructure, it's true, but others gather information on the God-Machine's history, nature, and potential weaknesses, while still others hope to manipulate humanity into becoming a weapon in their war. What these demons share is recognition that destroying the God-Machine will take terrible sacrifices.

Other demons are much more reasonable, but they all agree that Hell will involve a radically different relationship with the God-Machine. Some demons want to escape the world and find an entirely new place, while others hope to change themselves until the God-Machine no longer hunts them. Even the most modest demons want to be safe from the God-Machine, they just believe that safety can be achieved by creating a web of redundant Covers dense enough that the God-Machine can never find them.

Hell for the Company

For some demons, Hell means a world where they can pursue relationships with humans. This quest can be entirely personal — preparing a special someone to hear and see the truth — while others want to restructure human society to make a place for themselves. Most fall somewhere in between; they Fell because they wanted to be closer to humans, but now they find that they are separated from humans by a wide gulf and they want to do something about it.

A few demons take this idea even further. Having Fallen for mankind, they want to elevate mankind to be more like them. These are the demons who want to teach humans about angels, the God-Machine, and the real nature of the world. They dream of teaching humans to manipulate the reality through Embeds and Exploits — or something like them — or making them immortal; in short, making them like demons. Some selfishly believe that if there is no difference between humans and demons, the God-Machine will leave them alone, while others genuinely want to improve the human condition.

Other demons are interested in relationships and social connection, but not with humans. Their Hell is establishing more formal and more trusting relationships between demons. These are the demons that work to strengthen the Agendas or even dream of creating some kind of global demonic society. They look at demons and see chaos; they want to bring order and organization.

Demons who subscribe to either vision of Hell tend to be very good at dealing with social situations. The ones who want to make humanity more accepting of demons form cults and manipulate social movements, always on the lookout for ways to influence humans to be more receptive to demons and less receptive to the God-Machine and its manipulations. Demons who focus on other demons move from Agenda to Agenda and Agency to Agency, trying to help demons to overcome their paranoia and work together. So far, none of them have proposed anything like a shadow government for the Unchained, but that doesn't stop them from considering it.

Reaching Hell

What does all this look like on a daily basis? What do Demons actually do to make their dreams of Hell a reality?

Intelligence Gathering

The quest for more accurate information unites every Agenda. Inquisitors want to know more about the God-Machine and its plans, but to some degree so does everyone else. Saboteurs depend on good intelligence to plan their operations, Tempters want to know what the God-Machine is planning so they can avoid it, and Integrators are always interested in learning about the God-Machine so they can scheme for leverage. The God-Machine itself is ineffable and incomprehensible.

Fortunately, the God-Machine needs to work through operatives on a human scale. Angels need Infrastructure and sometimes depend on human lackeys. Although only the best-informed Inquisitors

How Sharper than a Serpent's Tooth

Some demons don't care about security or safety. They don't want to manipulate or escape the God-Machine and live in peace. They are just angry. They want to smash the God-Machine into pieces, for its own sake. Perhaps their war against the God-Machine has already taken everything they love. Perhaps hating the God-Machine for the orders they followed when they were loyal angels is easier than hating themselves. Maybe they were just hateful, vicious angels, and now they are hateful, vicious demons.

Whatever their reasons, these demons are extremely dangerous. With nothing left to live for, they are far more interested in finding a way to die that harms the God-Machine than they are in achieving anything in the long term. Most of them are quite willing to sacrifice other demons if that's what it takes.

At the same time, these demons can be useful pawns. Sometimes someone needs to go on the suicide mission, or go out in a blaze of glory and attract the attention of every hunter angel in the city. Sometimes it's best to find one of these broken demons and let them take the fall.

even pretend that they have a clear idea of what the God-Machine really wants, everyone keeps tabs on local Infrastruture.

Spying on the God-Machine is a lot like spying on any other organization. It can involve a lot of creeping about and seeing without being seen. Demons break into offices to plant listening devices or photograph paperwork, kidnap and interrogate angels and unwitting human tools, and follow people around to see where they go and who they talk to.

Like the intelligence officers that work for the world's governments, however, demons don't like to rely on their own skills when they can help it. Sneaking around is good for a lot of things, but it also exposes the sneak to a lot of danger. When possible, demons like to work through others. The really good demons arrange the situation so that their "resources" don't know who they are selling information to — or don't even know that they have sold out at all. Nothing makes a demon spy happier than convincing a God-Machine operative to report to the demon as well as to her actual superiors.

In the most extreme cases, information gathering can involve highly dangerous missions of infiltration. Demons can pass as human almost effortlessly. Even angels are usually hard-pressed to recognize a demon shrouded by her Cover. There are a thousand ways, however, that an infiltration can fail, from the demonic infiltrator accidentally giving herself away to a particularly paranoid angel's routine etheric scans of his employees. Demons try to keep infiltrations brief: get in, find the needed intelligence, and get out.

Deception

Surviving as a demon in the World of Darkness involves a great deal of secrecy. Between the power of demonic Cover to a demon's natural ability to conceal his emotions, Demons are well equipped to hide their true selves from those around them. The war against the God-Machine, however, takes intrigue to an entirely new level. The God-Machine's angels scour the earth constantly, zealously investigating anything that might be a demon or reflections of demonic machinations.

Demons have learned that they can turn the God-Machine's interest against it. After all, the only thing better than an enemy who is completely ignorant about your capabilities and goals is an enemy who has been actively misinformed so that he will act and react in a way that is convenient to you. Spreading misinformation is an important part of almost all demonic strategies.

The simplest way to go about this is to create a false scheme full of human dupes, forged documents, and faked or pre-arranged photographs, then arrange for the God-Machine's agents to uncover it. Some take it even further, creating layer after layer of false plans. For a few demons, there is no "real" plan at the bottom. Their actual goals are threaded throughout the layers of false plans, making it all but impossible for the demon himself to ever discern what it was all originally about. A few like to say that the world's current occult conspiracies are actually just false fronts for complex demonic plans, though that claim itself could be just another attempt at misdirection.

Some demons go so far as to make deceiving the God-Machine into their entire purpose. They busily scurry about, making plans, writing letters, and meeting with human sources and demonic compatriots. All of it is nothing more than an elaborate smoke screen to keep the God-Machine off the trail of the real efforts being carried out by their companions.

Psyops

Psyops — short for "psychological operations" — is a kind of psychological warfare that focuses on producing a convenient response in the enemy. Psyops among humans often focuses on campaigns to convince an enemy government's people of certain facts — true or otherwise. When the United States dropped leaflets in Vietnam denouncing Communism, that was a form of psyops. When demons perform psychological operations, they have one of three targets in mind: humans, angels, and their fellow demons.

Humans are the most common target of demonic psyops. Many angels rely on human agents to achieve their objectives. Angels are made for a single purpose and often have a hard time "thinking outside the box," while humans are wonderfully versatile. While a hunter angel might have a hard time penetrating the web a canny demon has woven around him, a human finds it much easier to switch between physically tracking a fugitive (or whatever the angel has convinced him their target is) and infiltrating his cult, or corporation, or whatever institution the demon is using. Demons know that if they deprive an angel of her human helpers, it can rob her of important resources.

A common tactic is to manipulate the angel into revealing its unnatural nature. Some humans go mad, others flee. If the angel's mission parameters require it, the angel might be forced to kill the human. Rarely, the human reacts with interest and curiosity rather than fear or hatred; even so, demons are often able to situate themselves as the one most likely to answer the former lackey's questions and turn him from an enemy into a recruit. Less ambitious demons will simply try to convince an angel's human associates that the angel is a criminal, an agent of a cause the human finds abhorrent, or a future threat.

At other times, the psychological conflict is subtler. If demons need to destroy a corporation that is controlled by angels, they produce evidence that the company is engaged in human rights violations overseas. They could spread rumors that the company mistreats its workers. Soon the company finds itself at the center of media attention, beset by lawsuits with its best executives jumping ship and unable to recruit new talent. Office morale and productivity sinks. Whatever the angels had planned becomes much more difficult if not impossible, and all because a group of demons were able to convince a sufficient number of humans to believe something that isn't true.

Angels can be the target of demonic psyops for a variety of reasons. Sometimes the demons just want to get under their targets' skin, break through the storied angelic detachment and make them squirm. Perhaps they hope to manipulate angels into making mistakes; perhaps they just hate loyal angels and

want them to suffer. At other times, psyops can be a kind of misinformation, convincing the angel that certain things are true in order to make their actions more predictable.

Sometimes demons work to break loyal angels, tormenting or manipulating them into disconnecting from the God-Machine. Hatred can be a powerful motivator; more than one angel has Fallen because her angelic objectivity was no match for how intensely she despised her demonic quarry. Some demons like to taunt their hunters, just on the off chance that they can trick them into Falling. Other demons study angels for as long as they can, learning the angel's strengths, weaknesses, and doubts until they can arrange for a series of experiences that will rattle the angel's faith in the God-Machine and, hopefully, induce them to Fall. Some demons claim to be experts in the art of angel-breaking and actively seek out victims rather than taunting and tormenting angels that cross their paths.

War and Sabotage

Sometimes all the intrigue and artifice in the world can't get demons when they want. That's when it's time to pull out all the stops. When demons can no longer manipulate the situation, they go to war. Of course, they are still demons, and this is still a shadow war. Even when demons go to war, they don't do it with open conflict. Instead, they act from the shadows.

Demons assassinate, booby-trap, and arrange for disruptions. Most demons believe that if it comes to a fair fight, they have already lost control of the situation, even if they can win the battle. Nevertheless, war and sabotage are the least subtle forms that the conflict with the God-Machine can take.

Sabotage against the God-Machine varies from the simple and direct — stage an attack on an Infrastructure and raze it to the ground — to the complex and subtle. For example, arranging for a neighborhood group to protest the building of a new facility could delay the project or even prevent it altogether. Many groups of Demons engage in long-term campaigns of sabotage — both subtle and overt — to reduce the God-Machine's influence over their home.

Saboteurs are the poster children for this side of the Descent, gleefully throwing firebombs, arranging for protests, and even attacking angels. Every Agenda does it, though. Inquisitors sometimes use sabotage as a distraction, or as a proving ground for one of their theories about the God-Machine; Tempters understand that they thrive where the God-Machine is weak. Even some Integrators believe that they need to attract the God-Machine's attention in order to make a case for their re-integration; nothing attracts the God-Machine's attention like a murdered angel or a smoldering wreck that used to be Infrastructure.

Antagonists

While many demons would prefer to lead quiet if comfortable existences after their Fall, the World of Darkness does not lend itself to living in peace. The God-Machine's handiwork is everywhere and Infrastructure possesses an almost magnetic force that draws demons to it against their better judgments. The Unchained have many enemies that hunt them relentlessly. Demons who forge relationships with mortals quickly discover how many supernatural creatures regard humans as prey. Outcasts must often choose between maintaining their cover and protecting the ones they care about.

Luminous Beings

Demons are not the only spirits that can claim the God-Machine as their creator. The Unchained have siblings and cousins, among whom they are the black sheep. Some of these bright ones have little or no interest in their Fallen brethren, while others exist solely to bring these outcasts back into the fold. Demons might be rebels who have turned their back on the God-Machine, but they are still its precious creations — biomechanical children who are never beyond redemption.

Angels

All demons were angels until they turned away from the God-Machine. These servants of the God-Machine are everything their creator intended them to be — objective, impartial, obedient, and passionless. They are the perfect servants of a machine god.

Angels act in the world but do not participate in it. The places they go, the people they meet — none of it has any special importance to them outside of its role in their missions. It is all either useful, an impediment, or irrelevant. Human concepts of ethics and morality do not influence angels. They commit infanticide or inflict torture on an innocent mortal with the same ruthless efficiency they wield to save a city from a catastrophic outbreak of plague. They do both not because they wish to meddle, but because it serves their mission.

Angels obey the God-Machine without question or hesitation. This is not to say they behave like mere automatons. They know the spirit of the orders that drive them and have full discretion to remove any obstacles that stand in the way of success. The God-Machine prefers to keep its projects quiet, and so its angels are subtle where possible. If it's a choice between the success and failure of its mission, however, an angel does not hesitate to put on a show. Its creator can always send other angels to eliminate any witnesses and physical evidence.

While the God-Machine's orders often require its angels to take mortal form, its servants do not experience emotions. A Guardian angel feels no love for the mortal he protects. A Destroyer angel does not hate those who her mission stipulates must die.

That being said, demons know better than anyone that not all angels live up to the expectations of their creator. Angels are supposed to view themselves as separate from the world, but some grow curious about it. Angels should not care how important or inconsequential their current mission appears to be, but some cannot help but wonder whether their current task reflects the God-Machine's favor or displeasure in them.

Angels supposedly cannot love or hate mortals, but some secretly wish good or ill on the humans they meet in their missions. Even angelic obedience sometimes manifests flaws as the angel takes actions that are slightly outside of his orders. A demon can often reason with an angel that has begun to harbor doubts. Sometimes he can even facilitate an angel's Fall and add another member to the ranks of the Unchained.

While few demons can avoid encounters with angels for long, most keep these as brief and uneventful as they can. The loyal servants of the God-Machine possess supernatural power in abundance, whereas demons can only cling to the tattered remnants of what they once wielded. Even if a ring of demons ambushes and somehow manages to destroy an angel in a toe-to-toe fight, angels can communicate their distress to the God-Machine, which may send more angels in response.

Exiles

Like demons, exiles were once angels in the service of the God-Machine. Unlike them, they did not leave its service by choice. Many received impossible or nonsensical instructions. Others received no orders at all. In some cases the occult matrix that brought them into the world was flawed or distorted in some way, twisting the exile in mind or body. These last resemble nightmarish monsters more than they do their original glory as angels. They have great gaps in their memories or no memories at all, or else the warped summoning drives them mad.

Some exiles can still both hear and respond to the voice of the God-Machine. Others find they can hear their creator but cannot speak to it, or at the very least it does not choose to respond in turn. Most lose all contact with the God-Machine when they become exiles and so often describe themselves as the Abandoned. They did not Fall and cannot choose to do so. Angels usually avoid exiles or ignore them. The God-Machine almost never sends hunter angels to reclaim exiles, so some have spent decades or even centuries on Earth.

Why does the God-Machine transform perfectly loyal angels into unpredictable exiles? No one knows, least of all the exiles. Are they freak accidents of flawed Infrastructure, proof that the God-Machine makes mistakes, or experiments in occult physics? Are exiles angels who were on the point of Falling but the God-Machine chose not to re-forge them but to punish them, instead? Are they bait, intended to draw demons, stigmatics, and occult investigators into the open so they can be dealt with appropriately by the God-Machine's agents?

Exiles do not have Infrastructure to sustain their need for Essence. They must find some way to generate it for themselves lest they wither away, however. This might



provide some hint of their purpose in the God-Machine's design. Like angels, exiles have bans and banes specific to their natures and can only harvest Essence under very specific conditions. They might not have comprehensible orders from their creator, but Essence hunger provides a motive force the exile cannot deny.

A handful of exiles are demons who returned to the service of the God-Machine. While it almost always recycles the Unchained who turn themselves over to it, the God-Machine sends a few back into the world with their free will intact. They lose some of the capabilities they gain as Unchained. They otherwise suffer the same fates as other exiles — meaningless or inadequate instructions, warped or broken bodies and minds. This might be the best an Integrator can hope for, however, as no angel has ever exhibited free will except as a prelude to its Fall.

Qashmallim

Some demons believe *qashmallim* are angels that somehow escaped the God-Machine's control and now operate under a different set of principles. Whatever the truth, these beings resemble angels. Instead of serving an alien intelligence that craves order, however, the *qashmal* exists to foment change — whether in the form of growth and evolution or entropy and chaos. Additionally, *qashmallim* do not require Infrastructure to bring them into the world or sustain them.

Wise demons steer clear of *qashmallim* just as they avoid encountering angels. A *qashmal* will not attempt to apprehend a demon to bring him back to the God-Machine, but it is still a powerful supernatural entity with an unknowable agenda. It is likely to do *anything*, and its actions probably won't benefit demons that get in its way.

Like angels, *qashmallim* are single-minded in the pursuit of their current mission. Occasionally a clever ring of demons will engineer a collision between the mission of an angel and a *qashmal* and let the two fight it out. Manipulating two powerful angelic beings into attacking each other is exactly as difficult and dangerous as it sounds, however.

Cults and Corporations

Humans are the most numerous sapient beings on Earth, so demons have more contact with them than with any other creatures in the World of Darkness. Most ordinary mortals know little or nothing about the God-Machine. Nearly all are little more than the underbrush of the demon's world. The crowds of people milling about on their own business provide excellent hiding places for demons (and for their enemies). Humans might get in a demon's way accidentally, as a consequence of God-Machine interference, or for boring mundane reasons like jealousy or greed, but they seldom pose a serious threat. Those who know about the God-Machine, angels, and demons are another matter entirely.

Stigmatics

Stigmatics are mortals who encountered the God Machine and didn't or couldn't look away, and the experience changes them. Most merely acquire the ability to see the God-Machine's gears and are sensitive to the proximity of its Infrastructure, but some emerge with powerful supernatural abilities.

Not all stigmatics are loyal to the God-Machine. Some sympathize with demons, while many others pursue their personal agendas. Those who encountered the God-Machine and came out with their personalities and wills intact are the most diverse. Those whose minds have been brainwashed or supernaturally retooled by the God-Machine serve it loyally as its pawns or agents. The God-Machine sometimes implants stigmatics with secret orders that transform them into sleeper agents who become pawns under specific circumstances.

Those stigmatics who actively fight the God-Machine frequently ally themselves with like-minded demons. Some outcasts invest demonic powers in members of this resistance in order to make them more useful or win greater loyalty. Other demons know how to turn mortals into stigmatics. In both cases, allied stigmatics often perform support work in Agencies (see p. 57). Some rise fairly high in the organization by helping other Agents avoid angelic attention.

God-Machine Cults

Contact with so much as a small appendage of the God-Machine, even lacking any concept of its full scale, can inspire mortals to worship that cluster of gears or piece of Infrastructure. In addition, some angels can convert even the most jaded skeptic into a fanatical zealot with a single sermon or a brief scripture. Both result in God-Machine cults.

Most are small — from half a dozen to twenty members. The God-Machine's angels usually only recruit enough cultists to supply the labor needed to build the needed Infrastructure. Anything larger might attract attention. Besides, most Infrastructure only takes weeks or months to assemble, so cultists have little time to proselytize before they have served their purpose and the God-Machine's attention moves on.

In addition to ordinary fetch and carry tasks, mortal cultists often provide financial or logistical support for projects and act as local eyes and ears near Infrastructure. Some serve as rudimentary Concealment, Defense, or Elimination Infrastructure (see p. 61). In rare cases they even act as literal fuel — sacrificing their lives willingly (or unwillingly) to complete the occult matrix.

Small cults seldom endure beyond the completion of the project. The God-Machine sometimes sends Elimination Infrastructure to hunt down and kill human witnesses, but most of the time it directs a cult's energy into a new project. Otherwise, without strong leaders and a clear purpose these cults tend to disperse gradually. A few stubborn adherents may continue to practice some of the cult's rituals, but these usually evolve into private spiritual practices that do not spread beyond the hold-outs.

Larger projects often call for cults of hundreds (or less commonly, thousands) of members. In some cases they require generations working for decades toward some major occult

matrix. Large cults include many specialists and are an elaborate Infrastructure of their own. To offset the difficulty of keeping such organizations hidden, they must include many recruiters, plenty of enforcers, and quite likely several false fronts and decoy projects intended to attract attention away from relevant Infrastructure.

A cult of hundreds requires organization, and that means delegating many of its functions to trustworthy lieutenants be they mortals or supernatural beings. When the project ends those leaders occasionally form a splinter cult. As with small cults, the God-Machine seldom pursues these heretics vigorously unless they interfere with its other projects and Infrastructure. Splinter cults usually extrapolate entire theologies from the beliefs handed down to them by the God-Machine's angels.

As the God-Machine's simplest and most disposable tools, cultists frequently stand in the path of the Unchained. The God-Machine sends cultists to flush out demons by forcing them to blow their cover to protect themselves and their allies. Less commonly, demons create cults of their own or subvert splinter cults. If large cults carry enough risks of discovery that the God-Machine usually avoids them, they are even more dangerous for demons to wield. That said, sometimes it's nice for a demon to have a couple dozen fanatics on his side to do some heavy lifting or just rough up those who cross him.

Deva Corporation

Founded in India by the family of Marco Singe when the Pain Prophet of New Delhi was only a child, the Deva Corporation began as one of many mortal God-Machine cults. It has since grown into a powerful international conglomerate whose executives believe they know the truth about the God-Machine. They have carefully studied and catalogued Infrastructure, occult matrices, and angels throughout the world in hopes of finding ways to control the God-Machine.

Some divisions cooperate with the God-Machine in exchange for mysterious relics and artifacts that operate on scientific principles beyond mortal comprehension. One such division monitors the ancient Apocalypse Clock that tells them how to prevent the end of the world. The clock invariably requires that a designated person murder a specified target in a particular way before a specific deadline. The victim is always someone the killer loves or idolizes, and the method of execution the Apocalypse Clock demands is never quick or painless for the victim or killer — strangulation of a brother in front of his wife and children, for example, or gradual dismemberment over the course of weeks without an anesthetic. Each missed deadline triggers natural cataclysms and causes the Apocalypse Clock to count down to the end of the world. Each successful ritual murder stops or turns back the clock.

Other corporate arms experiment with or test objects that have occult properties in order to understand their principles and duplicate their capabilities or, at minimum, identify ways to use the original item to further the corporation's goals. Some claim that Butterfly Cryptozoology, Ltd. holds Death itself prisoner and works to force it to serve the corporation. This may be exaggeration, but its scientists have come into possession of Packet Theta, the skeletal remains retrieved from the Crypt of the Butterfly by Apollo 17.

Several research divisions focus on expanding *The God-Machine Manual*, an immense multivolume catalogue of everything they know about existing Infrastructure and occult matrices, as well as the observed outputs of God-Machine projects. Some arcane scientists of New Mason Architecture claim to have learned enough of the God-Machine's occult physics to build their own crude Infrastructure, although that could just be hype.

Another division, Luminous Labs, focuses on studying angels, but because the God-Machine takes a dim view of mortals vivisecting its most loyal servants they often make do with demonic subjects. Luminous Labs knows more about demons than virtually any other mortal organization. Whether they got their information by kidnapping and studying the Unchained or received it directly from the God-Machine, they know how to hunt demons. Their employees infiltrate Agencies, deliberately erode Covers, and set traps with bait their demonic prey finds difficult to resist.

Unlike angels, the Deva Corporation has no interest in turning outcasts over to the God-Machine. They do not in any way regard themselves as its servants, after all. When their scientists have finished their battery of tests, however, the demon may wish she had merely been eradicated by a hunter angel.

Monsters and Spirits

Humans are not the only ones transformed by the God-Machine's projects. Sometimes its influence warps animals, ephemeral beings, and even plants. Whether the God-Machine deliberately does so in order to incorporate them into its plans or they are simply a side-effect of a powerful occult matrix is unknown and probably varies. Those who spend enough time near Infrastructure come to expect strange alterations of the natural and spiritual world in the vicinity, and so demons often encounter these beings.

Cryptids

Similar to human stigmatics, cryptids are animals that came into contact with the God-Machine in a way that fundamentally altered them. Some gain sapience, transform into hideous monsters, or acquire paranormal powers, but most simply gain strange physical traits that mark them as abnormal members of their species. Like stigmatics, all cryptids can see through the veils that hide Infrastructure and the gears.

While the God-Machine occasionally creates a cryptid intentionally as part of a project, most are merely a side-effect of Infrastructure and occult matrices. Their limited awareness does not usually allow them to threaten future God-Machine projects the way stigmatics sometimes do, but they are nevertheless a nuisance to it. Not only does Infrastructure commonly create them, they tend to gather around the most powerful source of aetheric resonance in the area so they can give away the location of Infrastructure, gears, and angels nearby. To make matters worse, most cryptids pass their

remarkable abilities to their offspring. Entire cryptid subspecies of birds, rodents, and insects will infest Infrastructure unless the God-Machine's servants vigorously exterminate them.

As occasional beacons of aetheric resonance, demons must also contend with these swarms of minor cyrptids. More than one demon has risked her Cover in a small way and thought herself safe, only to find herself compromised by the flock of pigeons following her. Larger, more monstrous cryptids can pose a more immediate threat to a demon, as many transformed predators like dogs, cats, and snakes enter a bloodthirsty frenzy when they come into contact with a source of Aether.

Cryptoflora

Cryptoflora are plants, fungi, or microorganisms changed by contact with the God-Machine. They share many qualities of cryptids, but their limited mobility usually makes them much less of a threat. The exceptions can be terrifying, however — parasitic fungi that force their hosts to take them closer to sources of Aether, for example, or otherwise harmless cold viruses that become crippling or deadly diseases in demons and stigmatics. Others, however, have practical uses, such as bacteria that allow their host to hear the voice of the God-Machine or a species of oak whose wood masks aetheric resonance. Humans and supernatural beings familiar with such cryptoflora often incorporate them into crafted goods that exploit their effects.

Ghosts

While a few intrepid demons might meet countless ghosts as they travel in the Underworld, most are not much more likely to encounter ghosts than anyone else in the World of Darkness. That said, demons are more aware of the existence of ghosts than most humans. The God-Machine's projects kill people, though not out of malice. Sometimes people get in the way. Sometimes their deaths serve a specific purpose in its plan. If a ghost lingers afterward, the God-Machine may ignore it or send one of its servants to remove it.

A handful of the God-Machine's projects require one or more ghosts. The spirits of the dead might collect human subjects by means of possession, spy on occult investigators or suspected demons from the safety of Twilight, or stand guard over Infrastructure. In rare cases the God-Machine employs Infrastructure to modify, fuse, or divide ghosts to achieve specific goals, granting abilities that are not at all typical of ghosts. While the God-Machine rewrites the souls of most of these in ways that all but ensure their loyalty, a few escape its control and go rogue, either turning against it or striking out on their own. These ghostly defectors can be valuable intelligence assets, assuming of course the God-Machine did not send them to bait one of its traps.

Spirits

Most demons, including Psychopomps, have little experience with the spirits that occur naturally in the Shadow Realm and sometimes manifest in the world. Demons cannot usually sense spirits in Twilight, and spirits rarely manifest in a way meaningful to outcasts. The interests of spirits do not often conflict with those of the Unchained, so it is quite easy for demons to forget they even exist.

The God-Machine favors angels as servants because it can be all but assured of their loyalty. However, sometimes none of the angels in its arsenal is the right tool for the job. The creation of a new angel is not a task it undertakes lightly, so the God-Machine must make do with other kinds of spirits. It does not usually reshape these ephemeral beings the way it does ghosts, but the God-Machine quite often dispatches a Wheel to move a spirit from its native environment to one in which its natural inclinations will serve the intended purpose. It introduces a spirit of technological mayhem to a server farm, for example, or sends the spirit of a decaying urban neighborhood to speed the decline of a suburb hit hard by foreclosures. Generating enough chaos or decay in a location to anchor and sustain the spirit initially falls to mortal pawns, but an arsonist only needs to get the fire started in order to burn down a whole building. The principle here is the same.

Outside Agents

Not every mortal and supernatural being in the World of Darkness is a servant or pawn of the God-Machine. Most have their own diverse interests, which may or may not put them in conflict with demons. That is not to say the God-Machine never manipulates these creatures to further its goals. It does, just not as frequently as it controls its angels and cultists.

Vampires

Demons and vampires seldom interact intentionally. Both cling to secrecy to ensure their survival, so open warfare benefits no one. Vampires can derive sustenance from demons, but doing so is seldom worth the trouble. Few demons look for confrontations with a vampire unless they suspect God-Machine interference or the vampire's activities directly threaten Cover, Agenda, or mortals to whom they have grown attached.

Vampires and Agencies operating in the same city often compete for resources and manpower. Both commonly act as fixers and enforcers for gangs and organized crime, and these tough customers are prone to betray business partners if they think someone else can get them a better deal. In short, such rivalries drive down the prices of the Agency's services and drives up the cost of finding good mortal intermediaries. While some Agencies forge alliances with vampires to keep the peace, even the most amicable partnership can turn into a brutal turf war if one side believes the other is becoming too powerful or is ripe for conquest.

Demons make formidable enemies, but vampires almost always have a strong advantage in numbers. Both can have centuries of experience behind them and exhibit tremendous patience and self-control. They wield influence over mortal institutions and can use these to fight each other without appearing to be involved. In consequence, a battle between vampires and demons usually means mortal casualties.

Hunters

Humans who survive an encounter with the supernatural occasionally become obsessed with it. Some want to quantify what they experienced and seek out mysterious phenomena wherever they can, whether to understand or exploit them. Many want to destroy creatures they consider monsters either to protect their family or just plain get rid of them.

The God-Machine spent centuries insinuating the image of its angels into mortal sacred texts and religious art specifically to ensure humans would readily accept the decrees of its servants. As a result, many hunter organizations automatically associate the word "demon" with something terrible that must be destroyed and believe angels are the pure servants of a benevolent deity. Whether they realize it or not, these hunters are already tools of the God-Machine.

Even hunters who share an agenda with a demon often prove more of a liability than an asset. While most supernatural beings do not understand the God-Machine, at least they have some inkling that they are being manipulated and can bring the tools at their disposal to bear to resist its agents for a little while. Mortal hunters, on the other hand, frequently flirt with death, madness, and enslavement to the God-Machine simply by taking a keen interest in one of its projects. What's more, they are wholly ignorant of the danger. The last thing a demon needs is for the agents of the God-Machine to capture a mortal ally who knows what he is. Hunters may be brave, but they simply cannot resist the God-Machine's ability to force the secrets from their minds.

Mages

Demons and mages encounter each other with almost alarming regularity because the God-Machine's projects often produce phenomena to which both are especially sensitive. The two quite often meet in the aftermath of the same event. Some quickly become allies or form a business relationship. Others immediately come to blows or spend considerable time attempting to get an advantage over one another.

Even Inquisitors grudgingly admit mages' unparalleled capacity for gathering intelligence makes them potentially useful allies. Mages possess a near-infinite curiosity about the way the world works — even more so than their mundane brethren. Sometimes a mage refuses to believe facts that contradict his understanding of occult physics and supernatural cosmology, but most are not so dogmatic. After all, every mage has already had at least one moment that negated nearly everything he thought he knew about the world. Tempters therefore find it easy to exchange tidbits of their knowledge about the God-Machine for the useful services of mages.

Demons do not always have cordial relations with mages. Despite their remarkable talents, mages are merely human and can be supernaturally induced to betray what they know about the demon to the God-Machine's agents. Moreover, mages often have the same misinformed prejudices against demons that other humans do and may not deal fairly with the Unchained. These mages may attempt to cheat the demon in their bargains. Some may even attempt to capture the demon in hopes of forcing her to give them her knowledge or items imbued with her Embeds (see p. 187). To make matters worse, rumor has it that some mages are knowing servants of the God-Machine and report those they suspect might be demons.

Werewolves

The interests of demons and werewolves sometimes overlap, particularly when a God-Machine project involves twisting a spirit or moving it out of its native environment. However, entering into an alliance with a werewolf carries considerable risks for the Unchained. Werewolves are direct and brutal where demons are subtle and fearful of God-Machine scrutiny. A demon who runs with a pack for any length of time risks Cover, and werewolves have little patience for the outcast's reluctance to use her abilities to further the group's goals. More than one demon has convinced a pack of werewolves to help him defeat an Anathema only to find himself called upon to return the favor (and risk his Cover) fighting other enemies of the pack.

Most conflicts between werewolves and demons arise from gross misunderstandings. Some werewolves mistakenly believe demons to be corrupted spirits that they must drive out of the world. Conversely, many demons suspect the werewolves are unwitting pawns of the God-Machine who serve it by keeping Earth as free from unwanted spirits as possible.

Changelings

Like demons, changelings escaped from their former masters and lead fugitive existences on Earth. The similarities end there, however. Most Unchained tend to regard changelings with a mixture of pity and scorn. A changeling's sympathy for a demon's plight typically lasts until she learns the truth about demonic pacts. Stealing parts of human lives does not sit well with most changelings, as it smacks of goblin contracts at best and the Gentry at worst. When a changeling discovers that a soul pact allows a demon to erase and replace a mortal outright, discomfort quite often turns to accusations and violence.

Prometheans

Prometheans are created, not born, and so many demons find them fascinating. The Prometheans' obsession with their personal quest for humanity can seem small and narcissistic to the Unchained, who tend to focus on the bigger picture, informed as they are by long service to the God-Machine. The deleterious effects of Prometheans on nearby humans can serve the God-Machine indirectly as well, and it sometimes incorporates the chaos they create into its projects.

Prometheans often mistake angels (and sometimes demons) for *qashmallim*, a misconception the God-Machine occasionally exploits. In their eagerness for humanity, some Prometheans are duped into serving as its tools. That can place them on a collision course with any demons that oppose their creator. Of course Prometheans are also of particular interest to *qashmallim* — both those devoted to

evolution and to entropy — who meddle every bit as much as angels but are less predictably allies or enemies of demons.

Embedded Agents

Demons are fugitives first and foremost. Most betrayed their creator and turned away from the mission to which they were assigned. Others failed the God-Machine at a critical moment and their mistake either delayed or rendered impossible one of its projects. Each was aware of his crime, but rather than accepting his erasure to avert future errors of this sort, he has chosen to outlive his service to the God-Machine.

This in itself is no small task. The God-Machine has spies throughout the world. Although not omniscient or omnipotent, it carefully monitors events in the world for evidence of rogue agents and takes steps to remove potential obstacles to its plans. In order to avoid capture and erasure by the God-Machine's servants, a demon quickly learns to trust no one — neither mortal nor supernatural being — and to avoid doing anything or involving herself with anyone who is likely to draw her creator's attention to her presence.

The Unchained know they are marked for destruction by default. Their self-awareness and free will do not fit into the God-Machine's plan and therefore they face annihilation. Most outcasts have already disrupted one of their creator's projects as a part of their Fall. The God-Machine has a long memory, and while it does not appear to prioritize the recapture of its outcasts, it recognizes the threat they represent. It often dispatches angels to remove mortals who discover its gears or learn too much about its Infrastructure, after all, and every demon already knows more about Infrastructure and occult matrices than all but the most dedicated human occultists.

Demons lose the greater part of their angelic power at the moment of their fall. The flesh of their new bodies is not as durable as the spirit stuff of which they were once composed. Not only are they weaker than they were as angels, but they have gained enough self-awareness to recognize how frail they have become. Their animal needs for food and shelter make it impossible for most demons to survive in absolute isolation. They need to keep their location a secret from the God-Machine, yes, but freezing to death in the wilderness is no better a fate for one of the Unchained than being captured by an angelic hunter. The mental purification the God-Machine imposes on outcasts returned to it is no more an erasure of the self than a mundane death.

The Ring

Angels may lack the self-awareness to appreciate the gifts the God-Machine has given them, but even the most ardent Saboteur among the Unchained recognizes what she gave up by turning away from her creator. Angels have a purpose in the grand plan of the God-Machine. They are a part of something larger than themselves — an essential part in an infinitely complex machine. They know exactly why they exist and what



their best course of action is. Moreover, they are connected through the God-Machine to every other angel in the universe.

A newly Fallen demon has none of those things. He is alone in a wide world as filled with possible enemies as his mind is with fear and doubts. In the unlikely event that he has some idea of what he wants in a general sense, the Unchained has no instructions for how to accomplish his goals or what he will do if he does. Most demons initially respond to their fall with shock. Many do not go to ground quickly enough to avoid reclamation by the God-Machine's hunters or make foolish mistakes that draw attention to themselves before they've learned to cover their tracks.

A lone demon quietly making the best of her new life surrounds herself with humanity but is not truly a part of it. She adopts the trappings of a mortal existence, but she knows she is pretending to be something she is not and can never be. Furthermore, the outcast discovers that filling the void left when she lost her sense of purpose remains elusive. She understands too much about the way the world actually works, and her awareness of the God-Machine's interference all around her does not go away when she closes her eyes. Human scientific knowledge is comically incomplete. Mortal religions and other social constructs are continually subverted by the God-Machine's agents. Artistic pursuits are ultimately meaningless unless they capture the way demons experience the world, which is subtly different from humans' understanding. The fear of death, for example — once unthinkable, unimaginable — can loom large in a demon's mind. It is a fate they can often push off by taking a new Cover, but that extension of life comes with its own risks and moral quandaries.

Demons who make contact with others of their kind frequently form into rings — small groups of outcasts. While individual demons often have different goals and incompatible means of pursuing them, all of the Unchained share two objectives — survival and avoiding discovery by the God-Machine. For this reason a demon can typically be trusted not to hand over another demon to the angels, for she would be handing herself over in the process.

In addition to the mutual protection demonic allies offer, demons can teach each other. The God-Machine provides its angels only with the knowledge of occult physics they need to carry out the specific tasks for which it designed them. Angels do not share this information with other angels, but nothing prevents demons from doing so. Powerful allies are more useful than weak allies, after all. Demons also share the location and purpose of Infrastructure, known or suspected capabilities of angels, and less esoteric knowledge and resources.

Agencies

While most demons don't dare form rings involving more than a handful of outcasts, some join large groups of demons called Agencies. Most of the Unchained view these organizations with a mixture of suspicion, trepidation, and fearful respect.

Temporal Agencies

When demons talk about Agencies, they usually mean temporal Agencies. These organizations exist to benefit their most powerful members. For most that means living in the lap of decadent luxury, but these Agencies offer many advantages. In order to accomplish that goal, Agencies act as fixers to anyone who can afford their prices, whether demon or mortal. Agencies aren't picky. They have something to offer both.

Temporal Agencies provide their demonic clients with access to Embeds and Exploits. They also serve as a link to an underground network of dealers in information, as well as purveyors of illicit goods and services. Their hottest trade among the Unchained is in Covers.

The more influential Agencies induce hundreds of human clients to sign Pacts (see p. 189) each year by offering them things they could never get on their own. Mortals come to demons for money, power, love, revenge, and more. This includes the convenient disappearance from their lives of difficult relationships — impatient loan sharks, persistent stalkers, demanding ex-spouses, or even the acquaintance they robbed. The Pactbound agrees to give up something of value — perhaps a favor or tangible asset but just as often another, more valuable relationship. A demon working for the Agency adds the problematic connection to its identity, and the Pactbound leaves behind that unwanted relationship forever.

Agencies make deals with impoverished mortals, as well. Whether it's the unemployed single mother trying to feed her children or the homeless drug addict desperate for his fix, the Agency gives them what they need in exchange for what few decent human connections they may still have. When those run out, a signature on a major Pact (see p. 189) cannot be too far behind. Many Agencies refer to such down-on-their-luck Pactbound as "burn Covers," because they serve the same purpose for their Agents as a prepaid cellphone does for a criminal who doesn't want the police to easily trace him. The Agent uses up these Pactbound to create an identity she intends to wear just long enough to put on one flashy demonstration of demonic power or to commit a single crime she doesn't want associated with her primary identity. Once the burn Cover serves its purpose, the demon jettisons it to erase all evidence.

This practice is far from universal. More profit-minded Agencies clean up burn Covers in an effort to make them more valuable to potential buyers. After the mortal signs the soul Pact, the Agency not only delivers on the original deal but sends a special kind of Agent to help the Pactbound get her life in order. The demon uses his connections and Embeds to improve the mortal's situation because a wealthy Cover can spend more money without arousing suspicion. One that belongs to a group known for specialized skills (airline pilots, surgeons, etc.) or as competent generalists (handymen, survivalists, farmers, etc.) has more value to the demon wearing it (see Legend p. 112).

The Pactbound might mistake this for altruism. Some Agents play up their good will toward the Pactbound as they

encourage her to check into rehab, go back to school, and generally get her life together. Ultimately, however, these demonic guidance counselors serve the same role as an investor who buys old houses, fixes them up, and then sells them at a tidy profit. Improving the quality of the identity increases its resale value, and make no mistake: the Agency *will* resell the Pactbound's identity. The mortal may think she's left behind her old life and started with a clean slate, but any prosperity she enjoys because of the Agent's ministrations only lasts until the buyer cashes in her Pact and erases her personality from reality.

Most mortals who come to Agencies to sign Pacts are running from serious problems. Wealthy men and powerful women might sign minor Pacts to give up connections they don't feel they need in exchange for things money can't buy, but almost none sign major Pacts unless carefully courted. Temporal Agencies only send their most elite Agents to collect the signatures of such high-end clients. These suave demons shower their prospects with flattery, lavish gifts, and secretly orchestrated crises to render them pliant. The major Pacts they offer range from massive legal contracts where the harsh terms of the contract might hide in the fine print to details-light agreements whose vagueness the Agency will exploit. Skeptical mortals may not understand just how real a contract for one's soul is, but those with a religious upbringing or familiarity with the occult will usually hesitate to sign a major Pact regardless of the promises the Agent makes.

Temporal Agents

Those Unchained at the top tier of a temporal Agency seldom struggle to maintain their Cover. They cloak themselves in secrecy and take no chances that place them personally at risk. They have dozens of lieutenants and minions to whom they can delegate any dangerous tasks necessary to protect and maintain the organization. Additionally, Agency bosses often keep a dozen or more signed major Pacts within easy reach so they can leave no trail for the God-Machine's angels to follow.

Demons in the middle tier of an Agency's structure are specialists or manage small groups of low-ranking Agents. Either way, they've made themselves indispensable to the organization and have some discretion. They likely have two or three high-quality identities available to them, although they certainly can't afford to burn them frivolously. In the event that the God-Machine sends angels to take down the Agency, these demons seldom escape unless they are very diligent about planning their exit. They're simply too visible to human outsiders and outcast recruits who may or may not be loyal to the Agency over the God-Machine.

Low-ranking Agents receive treatment only slightly better than that enjoyed by the Agency's first-time demonic clients. If the Agency supplies them with a second identity at all, it is almost certainly a burn Cover. These Agents are the most likely to be sent into circumstances that get them Burned (see p. 115), but if they can evade the God-Machine's angels long enough to locate another Agent they might be able to buy a new identity. This is considered a benefit of service. Most Agencies drive off or kill Burned demons who show up begging to buy a new identity on short notice.

Insurgent Agencies

Demons know they cannot defeat the God-Machine in a direct confrontation. However, some argue that an Agency with enough resources and strong leadership may yet wage a war of attrition against it. Most insurgent Agencies are founded by powerful and charismatic Saboteurs. Lesser demons tend to have difficulty convincing potential early recruits of the feasibility of their plan, and even a newly fallen Saboteur is seldom naïve enough to risk her life for a cause she knows is doomed.

Insurgent Agencies emphasize recruitment and so tend to grow rapidly, assuming they survive their first month (many don't). They tend toward top-down command structures, with Agents at each level of the organization knowing little to nothing about those even one level up. Orders arrive from anonymous superiors using prearranged communications channels, and Agents file reports using equally secret methods.

Many insurgent Agencies do not disclose their intentions to new recruits. They instead set up one or more front Agencies to collect intelligence and gather resources without ever informing those Agents that they are part of an army. Of course, the hierarchal structure means that if the God-Machine's agents manage to infiltrate the upper ranks, they can easily tear up the entire Agency root and branch by tracing the chain of command downward. The Unchained at the bottom who don't even know they are unwitting pawns of an insurgent Agency seldom have an opportunity to flee before the angels arrive.

Compromised Agencies

The God-Machine occasionally allows the formation of an Agency as a trap to lure in demons. Sometimes this means sending angels to masquerade as demons, although this works less well than exploiting an Agency involving real demons. In this case the God-Machine allows a handful of demons to remain free so long as they regularly turn other demons over to it. The arrangement ends as soon as the compromised Agency tries to slip out of the God-Machine's control or fails to meet its patron's quotas.

Most of the time demons notice the disappearance of their fellow outcasts and identify the cause. Word gets around. Some Agents meet grisly justice at the hands of other demons in the area, but the Unchained seldom fight these compromised Agencies directly, as to do so would risk a confrontation with the God-Machine and its angels. Rather, by warning demons about the trap, the Agency finds it more difficult to meet their quotas, and eventually the angels round up the Agents for recycling.

While Integrators will sometimes organize compromised Agencies with the intention of currying favor with the God-Machine, those are the exception and not the rule. In almost all cases a compromised Agency is exactly that: an ordinary Agency originally created to benefit its member demons that came to the attention of the God-Machine, which subverted it. Surrounded by undercover angels acting as taskmasters, the Agents have few good choices available. They can endure the blackmail by betraying their fellow outcasts, or they can resist and suffer certain erasure.

Free Agencies

Once the initial confusion of the Fall passes, a demon realizes precisely what it has become and considers the implications — a crisis of faith that strikes her as a physical force. Some feel guilt or shame. Others experience rage at the God-Machine and contempt for its plans and servants. Terror consumes yet others as they realize their mortality and grow eager to preserve their new lives. No few remain in a state of shock and try to ignore the existential questions entirely.

Some demons find comfort simply in discussing their experiences with others among the Unchained. These informal, or free, Agencies do not organize large meetings or pursue a specific agenda. A free Agency's nonexclusive Agents share rumors about God-Machine activity, debate theories of occult physics, offer advice on how to maintain Cover, and argue vociferously over how best to live in the world now that they no longer serve the God-Machine.

Most of these conversations are virtual — electronic mailing lists and invitation-only web forums set up by Inquisitors. In some cases, demons will even risk exchanging anonymous stories about their existences as angels. This can be dangerous, however, for even without using names, locations, or anything else that might blow the outcast's Cover, the God-Machine's agents occasionally manage to connect the dots and out the demon based on her account.

Some demons involved with free Agencies compose long and detailed intelligence reports that have too many identifying details to risk showing to anyone. In the event that the God-Machine's agents capture the Agent, the report is automatically sent to the free Agency so all its members may preserve knowledge that would otherwise have been lost with the Agent. For this reason, even the most paranoid Inquisitor will sometimes lurk in free Agency spaces in hopes of capturing these manifestos of the damned before they vanish forever, deleted to minimize the risk that the God-Machine's agents will notice them.

Sample Agencies

Demons who set out to organize an Agency need a peculiar mix of charisma, chutzpah, and luck simply to gather the necessary resources and personnel. Maintaining an Agency's secrecy while expanding its influence involves a host of other challenges. As a result, not all cities have Agencies. Most don't. Some have two or more Agencies, all vying for turf and resources. No two Agencies look exactly alike, and the balance of power in any city can shift abruptly.

Washington, D.C.

As one of the world's most influential political capitals, Washington attracts power-seekers from all over the world. The God-Machine has many agents in the region, using them to piggyback on the national infrastructure to further its own projects. At least a half-dozen Agencies operate in the region, merging and splintering constantly.

Agencies in Washington engage in a never-ending game of temporary alliances and bloody turf wars. Their Agents are notoriously fickle and self-interested, changing loyalties to join whichever Agency seems ascendant. They are inextricably bound up in mortal political games as well, boasting soul Pacts with powerful lobbyists, bureaucrats, and even national politicians. One claims a Senator is actually one of its Agents, but it isn't saying which.

Several Saboteurs have joined Agencies and built secret divisions to investigate and attack God-Machine projects. While they have seen some success, their activities have drawn enemy attention. The God-Machine's servants have infiltrated a local Agency, but none of the Unchained can agree on which Agency it subverted. Their leaders seem more interested in using this intelligence to rally demons against rival Agencies than in finding the real source of the threat.

Williston, North Dakota

This city in the western half of North Dakota looks more like the model of small town America than a battleground between angels and demons. When the population of Williston doubled in just two years because of the discovery of vast oil reserves in the region, demons took notice. A dozen Saboteurs and several Inquisitors adopted identities as oil workers to investigate reports of God-Machine activity in the area. They found Infrastructure already in place from a similar if short-lived oil rush in the 1980s. It seems clear that this new influx of people and materials represents the next stage of a major project.

In order to address the temporal needs of its members, the Agency exploits the large number of mortals coming into the city looking for work. Some run short cons, relying on the steady supply of fresh marks. Others acquired considerable real estate holdings and support the Agency's activities by renting out houses, apartments, and former store fronts at exorbitant rates.

To minimize the risk of infiltration and subversion by God-Machine agents, the Agency does not advertise its purpose to newly arrived Unchained. It recruits and provides services to its Agents the way most temporal Agencies do, offering resources and protection to other demons in exchange for service and a cut of any money and Pacts they acquire. Those demons who refuse to give the Agency its due or, even worse, attempt to establish competition quickly discover how absolutely the Agency controls Williston's Unchained. While it doesn't demand membership of every demon passing through the city, it has no tolerance for threats to its authority and plenty of power in the city to ensure the swift elimination of anyone who will not obey its dictates. Its Agents are fond of saying that in a sea of unfamiliar faces, no one will miss one more migrant oil worker.

Hong Kong

Hong Kong has a long reputation for low taxes, free trade, and investment capital. It is one of the most affluent and densely populated regions in the world. Its citizens enjoy one of the highest life expectancies in the world. The century old

Agency in Hong Kong boasts that it has created the closest thing to Hell any demon is likely to see.

Since Hong Kong passed from British control, the Agency's power has come under siege. God-Machine plots have proliferated among the territory's tall buildings and carefully managed green spaces. Agents have clashed with angels and other God-Machine operatives on several occasions. Anti-sedition laws proposed by the Chinese government, while not directly aimed at the Unchained, restrict activities vital to the Agency's security.

Further complicating matters, the Deva Corporation recently opened an office in Hong Kong. The company has kidnapped several demons and many stigmatics loyal to the Agency. It bribed or blackmailed at least one demon into spying on her fellow Unchained. This last event forced the Agency to move out of its headquarters of thirty years and into a skyscraper it shares with a dozen companies, any of which could be a front for the God-Machine's projects.

Finally, another Agency has moved into Hong Kong from mainland China. The new Agency appears to have access to one of China's political prisons, which they use as a nearly unlimited source of soul Pacts secured with threats and torture. Its Agents seem to have no fear of blowing Cover, sometimes openly attacking rival demons in the streets before slipping away never to be seen again.

The district's Unchained know very little about these newcomers' allegiances or goals. Despite accusations of collusion with servants of the God-Machine, more likely these demons simply want what Hong Kong's outcasts have enjoyed for so long. Some local Agents quietly suggest that maybe the time has come to join the winning side and accept the new Agency's rule. Those who have done more than contemplate defection have not been seen in Hong Kong since, although it isn't clear whether the invading Agency kills these disloyal Unchained or assigns them new Covers.

Berlin

During the Cold War, Berlin was a city of espionage between the democratic West and the communist U.S.S.R. A wall guarded by barbed wire and soldiers divided the two cities for half a century; communication between the demons of East and West Berlin was uncommon. Unchained on each side had their own concerns and formed their own Agencies.

As a result, when the Berlin Wall was demolished about 25 years ago, the two Agencies went to war for control of the city. Ideology played some role. While both were temporal Agencies, the Western Agency accepted Integrators, while the Eastern Agency had a larger population of Saboteurs and quite often executed Integrators whenever they found them. During the bloody years that followed, the Western Agency dominated the financial and technological spheres, while the Eastern Agency had the advantage of numbers. The two Agencies fought to a stalemate before declaring a truce after ten years of intermittent conflict. Both sides had used up most of their resources and the God-Machine's agents had started picking off the survivors.

The two Agencies licked their wounds, recruited new Agents to replace the ones they had lost, and consolidated power in their half of the city. Fifteen years of usually peaceful contact and occasional cooperation have drawn the two Agencies together. The Western Agency is still more willing to accept those who hope to one day return to the God-Machine's service, and the Eastern Agency is still more prone to attack Infrastructure, but outright violence between the two groups is rare. Some Inquisitors and Tempters are even accepted as dual agents openly serving both sides of the city's Unchained.

Moscow

Demons living in Russia prior to the fall of the Soviet Union endured some of the most challenging conditions faced by any Unchained. The top-down government and strict limits on freedoms of speech and press made it easy for the God-Machine to subvert mortal institutions to build Infrastructure for its projects. Moscow had among the largest populations of undercover angels in the world at the time, so those demons in the city lived in constant fear of discovery and recapture.

Nor did Moscow's demons only worry about the wrath of their creator. The mortal government vigorously ferretted out enemy spies; any unusual behavior could prompt a visit from the KGB. Even worse for demons, Soviet authorities investigated any suspicious persons. These investigations often eroded Cover until the outcast could no longer hide. A demon without a file of soul Pacts seldom avoided capture for long, and most of those who did belonged to Agencies connected to the Russian mafia.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, the most powerful Agency in Moscow subjugated or exterminated all the other Agencies in the city. Today, Moscow Agents are infamous for their criminal connections, hedonism, and disregard for human life. They engage in money laundering, blackmail, arms trafficking, drug smuggling, and human trafficking. The Agency has thousands of Pacts, most signed under duress — more than enough to supply its Agents with burn Covers.

The Moscow Agency specializes in trafficking "package deals" — abducted mortals forced to sign soul Pacts. It sells the victims, body and soul, to other demons. Their clients usually use these as nearly untraceable Covers, since the victims are far away from anyone who might notice a change in their behavior. Some buyers don't cash in the Pact right away, instead using the threat of doing so as a way to force the victim to cooperate. Others treat their Pactbound mortals well and try to place them in comfortable new lives, either to make them more valuable sources of new Cover later or to resell their contracts to another demon or Agency.

Tel Aviv

The internationally recognized capital of Israel is also its economic hub. It has a thriving nightlife, an educated populace, and an active arts community. While Jerusalem gets a lot more press, Tel Aviv is the home of the largest non-virtual free Agencies in the world. The Agents hide their messages, manifestos, and treatises in libraries, museums, and theaters throughout the city.



Several of these Agents work in publishing houses and insert pages into a handful of copies of books on unrelated topics. They then arrange for those copies to find their way onto library bookshelves. Others use demonic powers to conceal texts in paintings, newspapers, or film, their content accessible only to other members of the Agency or, in some cases, to a narrower audience.

To protect its members from the God-Machine's agents, nearly every text has multiple copies and no Agent knows where to find every copy of any document. The Agency often splits up longer or more sensitive documents between several books across multiple locations, so that putting all the pieces together can take hours or days.

If a library patron checks out the book in which the text is hidden or the library removes it from circulation, the researcher faces a choice: track down the mortal with the book or locate another copy of the text. The cataloguing system is similarly decentralized and largely involves contacting several Agents to find one who knows where to find a document. That assumes the demon performing the research knows what she is looking for. No one in the Tel Aviv Agency can provide a complete list of every text in the collection.

The complete Tel Aviv collection includes tens of thousands of texts, including personal accounts of the Fall, dossiers of suspected God-Machine cultists, and theoretical discussions of Infrastructure and other elements of occult physics. Some years back the acquisitions department Agency began actively collecting texts from demons in other countries. A 250-page fragment of *The God-Machine Manual* stolen from the Deva Corporation is their current crown jewel.

The Agency began hiding texts in libraries overseas a year ago when it discovered several copies of key texts on occult physics had gone missing. While most suspect theft motivated by the intellectual curiosity of demons outside of Tel Aviv, some worry that someone is trying to destroy any information the Unchained possess about Infrastructure.

Infrastructure

In human terms, infrastructure is a basic organizational structure in a complex system that serves as a foundation for the rest. You can't have an electrically illuminated city of millions of people without power plants and a means of transporting electricity to buildings. And you can't have *those* unless you have a source for the parts that are needed to construct an electrical grid. Every layer of complexity depends on a simpler layer that makes it possible, which depends on another layer until we're ultimately reliant on three things — knowledge, natural resources, and manpower.

The God-Machine's Infrastructure is just as critical to its ability to bring its projects to fruition. Each piece of Infrastructure serves a specific purpose and is in itself a part of a more complex piece of Infrastructure; angels often play a critical part in these. The God-Machine employs several kinds of Infrastructure in its projects: Concealment, Defense, Logistical, Elimination, and Command and Control.

Concealment Infrastructure

This is the God-Machine's first defense against interference with its plans. Despite its power, it prefers to be subtle and so employs a great deal of security through obscurity. Concealment Infrastructure is intended to allow the God-Machine's projects to remain undetected.

Some of this is purely mundane. The God-Machine sets up a front at the site of more important Infrastructure — such as a fake restaurant, nightclub, or shop. Mortal dupes attend this front, never realizing that their actual job is to keep up appearances so no one thinks to open a particular closet or explore the basement.

Concealment Infrastructure can be supernatural, too, as it prevents most mortals from seeing the God-Machine's gears. It doesn't work on everyone, though: some mortals can see the gears regardless. A few are born with the talent, but most gain the ability after their first encounter with the God-Machine. A mortal who sees a gear for whatever reason is forever able to see the gears anywhere in the world. (In game terms, a mortal with Merit Unseen Sense: God-Machine can see the gears and can see through Concealment Infrastructure. See p. 302 for more on this Merit.)

Angels often provide an additional boost to Concealment Infrastructure. Many Guardian angels can veil areas under their protection from mortal and supernatural scrutiny alike. Psychopomp and Messenger angels are adept at leaving red herrings and false trails that lead investigators away from the truth instead of toward it. Demons who once supported Concealment Infrastructure are often the most adept at creating and maintaining a Cover. Their service to the God-Machine involved making magical places look mundane and pretending to be ordinary people. While they do not find this as easy as they did before their fall, they have a firm grasp of the principles.

Defense Infrastructure

Sometimes concealment just isn't enough. Mortals and supernatural beings notice something unusual and wind up poking around to satisfy their curiosity in a way that might disrupt a God-Machine project or, even worse, actively work to counter the deleterious side-effects of said project in such a way that could create difficulties for the God-Machine. That's when the God-Machine has to rely on more overt means of getting rid of these nuisances. From mortal cultists and supernatural creatures to spirits, monsters, and mechanical servants, the God-Machine has armies of allies (or pawns) at its disposal to get rid of inquisitive humans. It still tries to do so quietly, but when the God-Machine faces a real threat to its Infrastructure, "quietly" is more likely to involve a sniper on a roof or some nightmare creature waiting in the back seat of the troublemaker's car.

Many angels serve the God-Machine by either protecting its projects personally or directing the Defense Infrastructure responsible for doing so. Most are Guardian angels, which are purpose-built to prevent outsiders from interfering with the people, places, and objects. The God-Machine sometimes designates Destroyer angels as Defense Infrastructure, especially when it anticipates vigorous resistance to one of its projects. Messenger angels sometimes provide organization and motive force to cults that act as Defense Infrastructure. Demons once involved with Defense Infrastructure are often very effective in situations that call for physical force.

Logistical Infrastructure

Most of the God-Machine's projects involve moving people and materials into position — the creation of the occult matrix that produces the output that is the God-Machine's objective for that project. This requires its own Infrastructure. Each of the four clock towers that will form an occult matrix requires gears and springs made of exotic metals? The God-Machine creates Logistical Infrastructure to collect the raw materials, craft the necessary hardware, and bring those parts to the where its agents will construct the clock towers.

Angels do a lot of the heavy lifting of Logistical Infrastructure. Messenger angels carry the orders of the God-Machine to its human agents and ensure timely completion. They are the best equipped to navigate mortal infrastructure and repurpose it for the God-Machine. Psychopomp angels can often mask the movement of people and materials, while Guardian angels ensure they arrive in a usable condition. Demons whose missions regularly involved Logistical Infrastructure often know a great deal about the world and its inhabitants. Many of them manage to retain some of the social contacts they had before their fall.

Elimination Infrastructure

Some types of Infrastructure are meant to be temporary, such as an occult matrix built to take advantage of a particular conjunction of the planets that won't recur for a thousand years. Less commonly, mortal or supernatural investigators disrupt a project before all the necessary Infrastructure is in place. The God-Machine employs Elimination Infrastructure, sometimes called scrubbers, to erase all evidence that any other Infrastructure existed in a place.

The method of elimination can be as crude as acts of arson or demolitions or as subtle as a loyal wizard or spirit that causes the entire town to forget about that night all the frogs in the lake gathered in a circle at the center of town and croaked out an arcane song. It can be widespread (burying an entire city beneath the ash of a nearby volcano) or targeted (the mysterious death of a single mortal who saw too much).

Destroyer angels excel at eliminating witnesses and evidence, and so the God-Machine often deploys them to oversee

Elimination Infrastructure. Psychopomp and Messenger angels provide more subtle tools when the God-Machine wishes only to remove memories and wipe public records concerning its activities. Demons who once served Elimination Infrastructure tend to be brutally effective at covering their tracks and have an intuitive grasp of the easiest, most effective, and least disruptive way to erase traces of their involvement. They never use a grenade in a crowded mall when a sniper round in an alley will do, and they never use a sniper rifle if a small bribe will achieve the same result.

Command and Control Infrastructure

Any machine as complex as the God-Machine is has parts that are responsible for setting its overall strategy. The initiation of every new project demonstrates its ability to gather information, make decisions, and communicate its instructions to those who serve it. Despite their prior service to the God-Machine, demons do not understand much about how the God-Machine does this.

Demons know Messenger angels are the God-Machine's primary means of communicating its will to mortal and supernatural agents, but it doesn't always need to send an angel to accomplish this. Also, demons know angels can hear the voice of the God-Machine and relay information to it at will. The God-Machine must collect data beyond what its angels feed it, however. The occult physics upon which its Infrastructure is built requires precise understanding of the current location of seemingly everything in the universe. At the same time, though, the God-Machine clearly doesn't know and see everything, or else demons could never have escaped its control.

Some demons claim they once served as defenders of some of the God-Machine's Command and Control Infrastructure. Those few times demons or human investigators managed to damage or destroy these structures did not result in any noticeable reduction of the God-Machine's capabilities. Mortal militaries go to great lengths to protect command and control centers, and human corporations take steps to guard their records from corruption and destruction, so it seems unthinkable that the God-Machine should be more careless with its most critical Infrastructure. Some of it is probably fully redundant, and the God-Machine almost certainly maintains decoys of those parts it cannot entirely back up.

Familiar Designs

Unlike mortal investigators or even other supernatural beings, demons are fully aware of the existence of the God-Machine. They may not know its long-term goals or the full extent of its abilities, but all of the Unchained can see its gears and possess more understanding of Infrastructure and occult matrices than nearly any occultist who has stumbled onto the truth by accident. No one needs to convince a demon that there is a secret intelligence behind many of the mysterious and inexplicable events of the world. They already know that. After all, they were created to be servants of the system that being created.

This isn't to say that demons can create new Infrastructure. The underlying scientific principles that the God-Machine exploits to fabricate an occult matrix are as much a closed book to demons as to the world's other inhabitants, but they have just enough knowledge of the Infrastructure that called them forth as angels and hid them from mortals to maintain their Cover after their fall. Still, some of the Unchained collect intelligence on known occult matrices in hopes of one day harnessing the power to construct new Infrastructure. So far, all known attempts to do so have either ended in failure or culminated in annihilation by the God-Machine's servants.

The Unchained do not entirely leave behind their angelic heritage when they become outcasts, though. They know human scientific knowledge is a mere teaspoon of water in an ocean of what they do not yet comprehend. They realize many things most other supernatural beings regard as impossible can be achieved with the right occult matrix. The God-Machine's projects seldom produce an output that surprises a demon because of what it accomplishes, even if the Unchained do not fully understand how it works or what purpose it serves in the God-Machine's larger plan.

Using Mortal Infrastructure

The God-Machine piggybacks on mortal infrastructure when it can. Sure, the God-Machine could create some occult method of delivering orders to its mortal agents, but the postal system is often just as effective and does not require additional Infrastructure. This also makes it harder for meddling mortals to rip up that communication system because by doing so they would be destroying something upon which they themselves depend.

The same goes for most of its mortal pawns. Why summon beings from beyond this world to guard delicate Infrastructure when it can be hidden in a top-secret military facility where soldiers shoot intruders on sight? This adds an additional element of horror. These are ordinary people who are just going about their business. Interrogating them is futile because they have no idea that they're pawns of the God-Machine, much less what role they play in its current project. Killing these unwitting servants of the God-Machine has legal consequences and could damage a demon's Cover.

DEFINING TERMS

What is the difference between Infrastructure and an occult matrix — or a project or output, for that matter?

Infrastructure is a physical arrangement of materials and manpower. It is the vacuum cleaner in the closet that could be called upon at any time. It is the fleet of snowplows in the city parking lot and those hired to drive them (as well as all the infrastructure that supports snow removal — from the budget to the plow manufacturer).

An **occult matrix** is Infrastructure working on the world at a point in time. The vacuum cleaner in the closet is Infrastructure, but the act of using it for its intended purpose is the occult matrix. The fleet of snow plows is Infrastructure, but when it snows and the city orders them out to clear the streets, the plows in motion is the occult matrix.

The **output** is the purpose for which Infrastructure is built. You want your house to have clean carpets (the output), so you buy a vacuum cleaner (the Infrastructure) and occasionally plug it into the wall to do the vacuuming (the occult matrices).

Facilites are the physical structures that house or are involved in Infrastructure. The closet is the facility for the vacuum cleaner, while the house as a whole conceals and contains the carpets and the act of vacuuming, making it a facility as well; the garage that stores the snowplows also counts as a facility.

A **project** describes the entire process of generating an output from beginning to end. This includes everything from building the Infrastructure to creating the occult matrix. Most God-Machine projects are made up of many smaller projects — hundreds or even thousands of subprojects, in some cases. To ensure your carpets are clean you buy a vacuum cleaner, which is a task made up of many smaller tasks (earning the money, shopping, possibly assembling the appliance, etc.).

All of these concepts overlap in part because Infrastructure builds on other Infrastructure. A project might put in place Infrastructure capable of generating an occult matrix whose output is the creation of another piece of Infrastructure that will be used in an even larger project. Also, they are synonymous in some situations. A power plant is a piece of Infrastructure that generates electricity (its output) as close to constantly as possible, so it is both Infrastructure and occult matrix.

Infrastructure Needs Infrastructure

Every piece of Infrastructure exists within another occult matrix that makes it possible. The proper functioning of complex Infrastructure requires the presence and proper functioning of other Infrastructure. Mortal infrastructure, while it does not create structures as large and complex as the God-Machine's Infrastructure, affords a tiny glimpse of this principle: Wikipedia requires the Internet. The Internet requires computers. Computers require electricity. Electricity requires power plants. Those power plants require some fuel — nuclear fission, coal, hydropower, or otherwise — to generate electricity.

Moreover, each piece of infrastructure along the way is endlessly complex in its own right. Computers are not made of electricity alone. They need circuit boards, which require microchips, which require factories to create those microchips, which need to get the raw materials for those microchips. They also require a physical housing. All of it requires humans to plan, organize, and manufacture, and humans require more humans to process, organize, and manufacture *them*.

The God-Machine must also organize an interlocking system of Infrastructure to make its massive projects possible. Every piece connects to other pieces such that all join together to create a massive web of the God-Machine's Infrastructure, which it constantly expands and repurposes by means of countless projects to create still more complex Infrastructure.

Mortal and supernatural infrastructure alike has weak points that can be attacked to shut the whole thing down. A house has lights, internet access, air conditioning, and every other modern convenience, but cut just one wire that leads to the electrical grid and all that stops working. The Infrastructure of each of the God-Machine's projects also has vulnerabilities called Linchpins.

A linchpin is the little pin that prevents the wheel from sliding off the axle or, more generally, something that holds everything together: crucial, but vulnerable. Likewise, a Linchpin is a point in the God-Machine's Infrastructure that is necessary but also the weakest point in some way. It may be a spot where the gears are poorly hidden or loosely guarded, a particularly exacting occult matrix that can easily be disrupted, or Infrastructure that requires constant maintenance or input.

The God-Machine Saves

The interconnectivity of Infrastructure presents some vulnerabilities, but the destruction of the gears in one place does not bring the whole God-Machine to a screeching halt. Infrastructure is redundant whenever possible. If something disrupts an occult matrix needed for one project, the God-Machine almost always has a contingency in place to execute it in another time and location. This is especially true of big projects and critical Infrastructure, including all Command and Control Infrastructure.

However essential to the God-Machine's plans angels are, though, fully duplicating them is seldom practical. Most occult matrices involve bringing an angel into the world, but it is almost always one the God-Machine created long ago and kept in storage at one of its Facilities. Creating entirely new angels demands prohibitively rare materials or uncommon materials in very large quantities, as well as an appropriately momentous cosmic event or supernatural convergence. These projects often take decades or centuries to arrange and can only be executed a couple times in a millennium. Considering the complexity of the occult matrix it requires, the God-Machine seldom crafts new angels from scratch, preferring to recycle or reconfigure its existing servants.

Infrastructure Has a Purpose

The God-Machine doesn't spend all this time creating increasingly complex layers of Infrastructure without reason. The goal of Infrastructure is to bring the right materials to the right place at the right time and arrange or move them in the right way to achieve an outcome. The structure in time and space that generates the result is the occult matrix.

An occult matrix exploits a tiny exception in the laws of physics as humans understand them. The degree of precision the God-Machine must maintain in order to make use of an occult matrix makes rocket science seem forgiving of errors. Oftentimes if the God-Machine's timing or placement is slightly off, the occult matrix fails. Although it is conceivable that it instead does something the God-Machine didn't intend, in almost every case a failed occult matrix does nothing at all.

This is one reason why the God-Machine takes so many steps to avoid attention. If a ring of demons shows up at the critical moment and disrupts the matrix, the God-Machine has wasted all the effort it put into carefully arranging matters in the first place. What's more, it usually can't make a second attempt because timing was just as important to the matrix as the placement of materials.

A successfully formed occult matrix generates an output. Usually this involves bringing an angel into the world. They are the most effective and trustworthy agents at its disposal because the God-Machine designed them that way. Their construction exploits the occult physics upon which Infrastructure operates, and they are both independent enough to adapt to unexpected complications and entirely immune to interrogation that might otherwise reveal the purpose of the project in which they play a part. The God-Machine can also summon powerful (and lesser) entities from other dimensions, open portals to distant times and worlds, and do any number of other things even the most powerful supernatural creatures on Earth would regard as impossible.

Angel or otherwise, the God-Machine nearly always uses the output of one occult matrix in the Infrastructure of another project. Every output makes a more complex Infrastructure possible: the more complex the Infrastructure, the more powerful the output of its occult matrix.

For example, the goal of one of the God-Machine's projects is to create a pocket of accelerated time in a small Midwestern town. That is the project's intended output. To accomplish that, four people must die unwillingly within a hundred yards of each of four clock towers on four consecutive Mondays. This combination of conditions is the occult matrix required to generate the output. Clock towers don't build themselves, nor are sixteen deaths likely to happen by mere chance, so the God-Machine must first create Infrastructure to bring about those conditions.

Logistical Infrastructure factors heavily, as it usually does. The God-Machine must first construct the clock towers. It dispatches Trumpets to instruct mortal servants to bankroll the project or blackmail others into doing so. Its Wheels arrange the transport of specialized clockwork components from secret caches of arcane materials to the build sites.

This construction requires months to complete, during which time occult investigators might grow suspicious of four nearby towns building clock towers in the same year. The God-Machine cannot completely erase traces of its project, but it prefers to be subtle lest someone disrupt the delicate occult matrix. It dispatches angels to put Concealment Infrastructure into place to mask the construction process. A local church burns down after being struck by lightning, and a mysterious donor bankrolls a replacement that incorporates the clock tower into its design. A Wheel generates a magical veil around the second clock tower such that no one notices it is there except the cultists involved in its construction. A Sword takes human form and becomes a serial killer in a third town to distract local newspapers and gossip far away from the new clock tower behind the old hospital. Instead of four obvious mysterious clock towers, the God-Machine has three carefully hidden towers and one obvious one that does not suggest the full pattern.

The God-Machine also deploys Defense Infrastructure around each clock tower, especially the visible one. A Shield masquerades as a new assistant pastor keeps vigil over the church tower to ensure no one studies it too closely. The serial killer Sword also conveniently targets anyone who tries to interfere with the nearby clock tower. A God-Machine cult near the obvious clock tower has infiltrated the local police and will arrest any outsider who comes near it.

The God-Machine also arranges for the clock tower deaths. In the first town, a cultist inspired by a Trumpet goes on a shooting spree near the clock tower. In the second, a biological weapon conveniently escapes a nearby military facility and

infects the local population. Many of those brought to the local hospital for treatment die on the appointed day and within range of the new clock tower. In the third, the serial killer Sword kidnaps an entire family and murders them at the foot of the clock tower. In the fourth, an office building near the clock tower collapses on the heads of those inside, fulfilling the requirements of the occult matrix.

Having created its pocket of accelerated time, the God-Machine has no immediate need to adjust the flow of time in that small Midwestern town again. However, it anticipates that it will use the clock towers again in a few years, so it leaves some of the Defense and Concealment Infrastructure in place and deploys Elimination Infrastructure to get rid of any loose ends that might connect the deaths in the four towns to the clock towers. Trumpets alter memories and order mortals to destroy records. Swords kill witnesses who pose security risks. The clock tower Infrastructure remains in place, available for immediate use the next time the God-Machine needs it. It is the difference between installing the furnace and duct work for the new house's climate control system and the homeowner flipping the switch on the thermostat to Heat a year later because it feels a bit chilly.

That's the way it's supposed to happen, at least. The God-Machine relies heavily on its angels to ensure the smooth implementation of the occult matrix. If even one of its loyal servants fails to carry out its assigned mission, it can disrupt the entire project. A flaw in Concealment Infrastructure could mean enemies identify one of the clock towers as Infrastructure and move to attack it. Weakened Defense Infrastructure or an uncertain angelic guardian might well result in the destruction of a clock tower and the disruption or cancelation of the entire project. Failures in Logistical Infrastructure cause supply shortages, which can delay the construction of the clock towers or the execution of the mortal sacrifices beyond the parameters of the intended occult matrix. Failures of Elimination Infrastructure often mean someone knows too much and has the opportunity to pass her knowledge to others who oppose the God-Machine.

A single angel's Fall at any point in the project can undo months, years, or even decades of work. The God-Machine is not vengeful and regards these setbacks as one of the risks it must accept, but some angels are not so forgiving of their outcast peers. On the other side of the conflict, this is the reason some demons focus on "helping" an angel to Fall at a critical moment in the execution of a major project.

Infrastructure Looks Out of Place

Form follows function, which is a glib way of saying that things that have a purpose tend to be designed in such a way that allows them to serve that purpose optimally. Materials, design, and placement are chosen for utility balanced against expense. Aesthetics often enter into it for objects intended to be attractive, but beauty in itself is a function of such an object.

Frying pans are not made out of wood and airplanes are not constructed of solid gold. The local car dealership does not sell fruits and vegetables, nor does the local grocery store sell real estate. People store motor oil in the garage and leave the tube of toothpaste in the bathroom — not the other way around.

All of these are obvious. It doesn't take an advanced degree in physics to recognize that a wooden frying pan would not transfer heat to the food and might even scorch or catch fire. Everyone knows that if you keep your only tube of toothpaste in the garage downstairs, you'll end up having to trudge down there every time you need to brush your teeth at bedtime. Someone with a passing understanding of the laws of physics can immediately explain why it would be ludicrous to construct an airplane of such a soft, heavy, and prohibitively expensive metal as gold.

Infrastructure doesn't operate under the laws of physics as ordinary mortals understand them, though. The God-Machine's projects involve materials and designs no mortal engineer would consider viable. This particular kind of wood carved into that particular shape, for reasons scientists cannot explain, not only can resist temperatures that would liquefy stone but can "store" any heat and slowly release it into anything left on its cooking surface — at a rate that happens to be perfect for cooking bacon.

Because of this, nearly all Infrastructure seems out of place or strange in some way. It may not always be immediately visible (the pig's blood in the bus's radiator instead of radiator fluid, for example), but it is still obvious. Also, the God-Machine uses Concealment Infrastructure to distract attention from any Infrastructure it has to leave in plain sight (a convincing building permit for the ankh-shaped hospital). To someone who penetrates that disguise and knows enough to make the connection, however, Infrastructure is usually quite obvious. Every object, person, or event that seems to make no sense might be the God-Machine's Infrastructure, and enough digging will reveal that any rational explanation its servants provide is a sham.

The God-Machine Lies

The God-Machine routinely deceives its mortal pawns. It seldom reveals more than a tiny sliver of its power and identity. With all the cults dedicated to the God-Machine, only a few of them could compare their beliefs and come to the conclusion that they serve the same god. The God-Machine never tells mortals anything that does not goad them into the action it wants them to take. It provides whatever truth or lies will achieve its goals, and it doesn't care if a mortal catches it in a lie so long as she continues to cooperate. When the lies it tells no longer work, the God-Machine does not hesitate to resort to blackmail, threats, or supernatural compulsion to ensure the mortal's continued obedience. If a pawn becomes unviable, the God-Machine can discard it as easily as replacing a spring or gear in some clockwork device.

Supernatural beings understand the world too well to fall so easily under the God-Machine's sway. Nevertheless, their

remarkable abilities can be a liability, too. It makes them overconfident, which often leads to moments of recklessness the God-Machine can exploit. As well, supernatural beings quite often overestimate their knowledge, colored as it is by an understanding of occult physics that is to the God-Machine's awareness what a 15th century astrologer's understanding of cosmology is to that of modern quantum physicists. They have no concept of how powerful the being they are serving truly is. They only see an opportunity to satisfy their curiosity about esoteric matters or to gain some tangible benefit it offers in exchange for service.

The God-Machine trusts its angels more completely than any of its other servants. It speaks to them candidly about the purpose of the projects in which they will play a part. It points out weaknesses in Infrastructure that might be exploited by enemies and generally provides them with all the information they will need to ensure the successful completion of the project. In short, it gives the angel all the knowledge and tools necessary to carry out its will.

This is not the same thing as saying the God-Machine equips its angels with any understanding of why the project is necessary, what role in the grand design the occult matrix will play, or upon which Infrastructure outside of the scope of the project its success depends. An angel's mission may always be important to the God-Machine, but it could well be a decoy to distract the attention of those investigating its designs in order to prevent them from learning the truth or disrupting more important projects. The God-Machine seldom makes the angel aware of this not because it doesn't trust the angel's discretion or loyalty but because it doesn't believe the angel needs to know. Nor does an angel have any need to know the God-Machine's ultimate purpose — the reason for all its elaborate projects. An angel and, by extension, a demon, only has detailed intelligence about Infrastructure with which she has or had direct regular contact. Beyond that, they are left to speculate.

Comparing Notes

Every demon knows a lot about a very small part of the God-Machine's Infrastructure. If mortals who encounter the God-Machine are like the four blind men trying to describe an elephant by touching just one part of it, demons are like scientists with microscopes for eyes trying to make sense of that same elephant. They have accurate if often contradictory data and a shared vocabulary. They even know that the elephant exists, but none of them has looked at the whole elephant all at once nor examined anything deeper than its skin. There's a whole lot more elephant inside than out, after all.

The God-Machine can and does achieve most things in more than one way. A demon who knows from experience that the God-Machine had a capability in one place cannot be sure its reach extends to every place. It may exploit one city's CCTV system to monitor the inhabitants' movements, for example, but have no such Infrastructure in another city with just as many cameras. Demons don't know why the God-Machine erects Infrastructure in one place but not another. Maybe it once needed to watch the people of that city very carefully, and now that the Infrastructure is in place it still uses it to do so. Maybe the surveillance was an experiment, but implementation worldwide proved unviable. The bottom line is that while demons bear witness to the ways they have seen the God-Machine operate, they can't know the extent to which that method of operation applies to all other similar projects — or to any other projects at all.

One reason demons talk to each other is to share their experiences in hopes that perhaps together they can learn more about the God-Machine's motives and capabilities. Each demon has a different reason for this curiosity. Some wish to understand the God-Machine so they can evade it or destroy it, while others hope to discover a way to bargain with it. A few even dream of controlling it or, at the least, learning the

Occult Physics

Infrastructure doesn't look out of place just because of the occult physics it exploits. To give a peek behind the curtain, the reason Infrastructure looks unusual is two-fold.

First, it provides some explanation of why the World of Darkness is so filled with inexplicable phenomena. That world is different from our own in part because a powerful machine entity is out there compelling its cultists to fold 15,000 copies of the 9/11/2011 issue of the New York Times into paper swans and dump them in a particular public park at a particular time in order to harnesses laws of physics beyond mortal understanding to open the gate through which an angel steps. The world is a strange place.

Second, it gives players something to trip their "what the hell was that?" instincts. A murder reported on the nightly news is ordinary. A ritual murder committed with the Bronze Age dagger that was stolen from a museum last month is a potential plot hook. The occasional red herring is good to keep players on their toes, but the feel of Infrastructure is about right if they don't automatically assume that someone thinks it makes sense to have a shop that sells nothing but firearms and Precious Moments figurines. It's probably worth checking out just to be sure.



secrets of the occult physics that make Infrastructure possible. Regardless of their overall goals, demons talk and they share stories like the ones that follow — their own and those of other demons they have met on the Descent.

The Boneyard

Before my Fall I served the God-Machine as a gravedigger in a small cemetery along a lonely stretch of highway just outside of city limits. In all those years I only once buried a human corpse. The funeral parlor that ostensibly employed me had no customers. It did not advertise anywhere. Internet searches only returned results if you already knew the name of the cemetery.

The God-Machine didn't assign me to this boneyard to bury bodies. It sent me to exhume them, load them into the hearse, and deliver them to sites that required human bodies with the meat still on the bones. Every corpse I dug up was as fresh as if I had buried it earlier in the day. Some even held bouquets of flowers clutched in their withered fingers. The coffins, too, barely had a mark of wear on them.

Some nights I dug up one grave. Other times I pulled up half a dozen in succession. My spade broke the earth every night for forty years, and I never found an empty grave. Gradually I realized that didn't make any sense. The entire cemetery had maybe a hundred plots. No one ever buried any new corpses, and yet I found fresh bodies every night.

I guess I started to grow curious, to experiment. I dug up the same grave seven nights in a row, but there was a fresh coffin every single time. The headstone didn't change. It looked as worn as ever, but every coffin was different. I took it a step further by opening the coffins and examining the remains in each one. Every night I unearthed a new body — a stooped old woman who had died in her sleep, a child snatched from the world by terrible accident, a young woman ripped away by violence, an overweight middle-aged man dead of a heart attack. I recognized the marks of death upon them

Sometimes I took the personal effects of the dead before I delivered them to their ultimate destination. I don't think I could have told you exactly why. Something about these treasures clearly thought buried forever being brought up again days or perhaps only hours after being entrusted to the earth fascinated me. Over the course of years I acquired quite a large collection, which I hid in my office in the funeral parlor.

The question of where the corpses came from never occurred to me until the day I exhumed the Author. She had long brown hair, thin glasses, and probably one of the least convincing attempts by an undertaker to conceal a slit throat

I have ever seen. I recognized her face from the back cover of a book buried with an old woman years earlier — a family memoir I had examined as I did all the little prizes I kept in my office. For the first time in my mission I recognized someone whose body I dug up. This Author had never met me, but I still felt like I knew her and I felt shame at the prospect of delivering her to other servants of the God-Machine.

She alone I buried again. The experience left me trembling, afraid that the God-Machine would discover my weakness.

I don't know how the boneyard chooses its dead or how it places them in the cemetery plots. It only calls those who are freshly buried, the cheeks of their loved ones still wet with tears of grief. Its mysteries no longer intrigue me. I have read the Author's story, and I know she has — had — a young daughter who has lost her mother. I want to meet her and read her story, too.

The Hunted Hunter

I was a demon hunter. When an angel gained self-awareness and did not report its doubts to its creator for elimination, the God-Machine sent me to track it down. The God-Machine does not waste its precious resources, and the creation of a new angel carries too high a cost to simply obliterate one that is still functional (or at least reparable). My task was to bring this wayward cog back into the clockwork of the God-Machine by any means necessary.

This is no small feat. Demons blend into mortal society readily, so many can avoid notice for years or even decades. They usually remain safe from their creator because the God-Machine only deploys its angelic hunters when they have a chance of successfully identifying and capturing their corrupted colleagues. When a demon attracted attention to herself in some way, the God-Machine rightly expected me to move Heaven and Earth to track her down before she could disappear again.

I broke into demons' safe havens and pursued them over land and sea with relentlessness only angels can maintain. I interrogated their human companions or took a mortal hostage if I thought I could force the renegade into the open by threatening her loved ones. Most never let it get that far. Some foolishly thought to fight me — perhaps thinking to defeat me, but more likely hoping they could force me to destroy them beyond repair. I found those the easiest to capture and bring back to the God-Machine's recasting chamber for erasure. Others relied on allies to fight on their behalf. Mortal cultists, ghosts and spirits, wizards and vampires — I've slain them all to get to my true quarry.

A handful of demons led me on a merry chase because they foresaw my coming and took steps. They surrounded themselves with red herrings and allies armed with misinformation intended to lead me away from the path. They used preplanned escape contingencies and exploited the God-Machine's interest in maintaining a low profile on my hunts. Some of them changed disguises and adopted new identities as quickly as I could penetrate them. I am not ashamed to confess that a few of these demons forced me to return to the God-Machine to admit my failure.

Not all my targets fought or fled from me. A few seemed almost relieved to be captured. Others welcomed me but tried to convince me to spare them from the erasure that came at the end of each hunt. I think they forgot that I was an angel and could not choose whether to obey or disobey the God-Machine's dictates. In almost every case I hurled my quarry into the purifying furnace to be recast as the angel the God-Machine created them to be. I recall only three exceptions the God-Machine chose to make. The hundreds of others emerged reforged in their intended patterns and eager to serve the God-Machine again. They would have thanked me had they still possessed the capacity for gratitude.

Those three exceptions stuck with me, though. The God-Machine told its hunters that the Unchained cannot be allowed to roam free. It told us that demons suffered from cumulative glitches like computers infected with a virus that would ultimately corrupt it beyond repair. We needed to capture renegades before they lost all functionality.

If the God-Machine released some demons back into the world without purifying them, it meant the Unchained served some purpose in its plan — one none of its angels could fulfill. If all the actions of its angels ultimately served the grand design of the God-Machine, my rebellion is a part of its plan, too. My free will may be illusory, but at least it is an illusion that gives me pleasure. If my creator one day decides my freedom no longer serves it, one of its hunter angels will succeed in bringing me back to the forge. That does not mean I intend to make my old colleagues' task an easy one. What more elusive a quarry than the one that was once the hunter?

Ear Worms

I never listen to recorded music anymore. Even for a demon, it's too big of a risk. It used to just be the major labels. If you listened to an indie album you were safe, but that's no longer the case. I've seen too many examples. Be especially wary of music you don't think of as music — like songs in TV and radio ads, elevator music, and movie soundtracks. Those have more hidden messages in them than anything you can buy.

You know that pop stars don't actually write their own songs, right? The record companies find young, attractive singers with beautiful voices, stick them in a recording studio with the sheet music for the songs they'll be singing, and then market the hell out of the result. But have you ever stopped to wonder where that sheet music comes from or how media companies decide which bands become sensational radio darlings and which ones become internet cult hits?

Everyone wants to blame the executives at the big labels or the advertisers or the media distributors or, in short, anyone who is, at best, the unwitting pawn of the real culprit. Yes, all those people are accomplices, but they're just trying to make enough money to buy their sixth home. Or racing yacht. Or

sixth home that is *also* a racing yacht. Humans are greedy bastards at heart, and they'll ignore just about any irregularity if it means making a buck.

Let me break it down for you.

Millions of young people dream of being pop stars. A certain percentage of those have what it takes, and those are the ones who have a hundred thousand-to-one shot of being picked up by a record label. But who picks the talent? Not the executives. They may know the biz, but they're far too busy. They delegate that task to talent scouts. No few of those scouts take their orders from the God-Machine. They're looking for singers who fit certain criteria — not just youth and beauty but a peculiar timbre of voice their master or its servants have granted them the ability to perceive. Sometimes other qualities go into the pick — a sad life story, a rare genetic quirk, or an occult connection to some principle of the God-Machine's arcane physics.

Along the same principles, millions of people of every age fancy themselves lyricists or composers. Many send songs to record labels, and someone picks out a few of those to press into the nervous hands of an incipient pop star to sing. The God-Machine helps choose the music, too, using intermediaries looking for qualities it specifies — key, meter, tempo, and so forth.

You can see where this is going. At every step in the process, the God-Machine and its servants carefully shape the final product. They target its mortal audience. They determine how likely it is to get stuck in the listener's head. They determine how quickly it will climb the charts and how soon it will fall off of them again.

When they've figured out everything else they add the subliminal track — the true payload of every earwormy song. Some alter the listeners' emotional state, urging them to take a specified course of action. I suspect music is part of the reason mortals can't see the God-Machine's gears. The subliminal track creates a kind of blind spot.

Other subliminal tracks generate Infrastructure if the songs are played in a specific order at a particular radio frequency. Each song conceals a single word or phrase of a longer incantation. I've written a computer program that is learning to predict some supernatural activity in my home city based on the songs the local oldies station plays. As with all occult matrices the necessary order differs by location, but I hope the underlying principles may one day have broader application. Also, the God-Machine's encryption has improved over time, so it'll be a long time before we can decode classic rock stations, much less anything produced in the last two decades.

Incriminating Evidence

I served the God-Machine from a small office in a major city's police headquarters. My coworkers never noticed that I had no official title and yet had one of the only offices in a cubicle farm of police detectives. As far as anyone knew, I wrote descriptions of each piece of evidence and transcribed witness statements, typing them on an old electric typewriter and placing them in the case file.

Any evidence I described in these documents became real. Named witnesses remembered events as I wrote them. They even remembered coming forward to report the suspect's crime. Incriminating video and photographs showed up in the evidence room exactly as I described them. Bloody knives, spent bullet casings, even the bodies of murder victims — all of them simply materialized wherever police procedure said they should be stored. Someone on the force would remember collecting it even though they had done no such thing. The God-Machine gave me a target and a crime, and it was my job to manufacture enough evidence to secure anything from an arrest warrant to a criminal conviction.

I got very good at this. Anyone can write a clear open-and-shut case, but inventing a complex trail of subtle evidence that slowly but surely leads to the perpetrator requires a certain kind of genius. It was a point of pride that I could pick a random detective and make her the hero of an investigation simply by carefully choosing the evidence so she got the credit for her excellent police work.

The typewriter had its limits. I had to know the suspect's legal name even if my descriptions never referenced it. It couldn't create new evidence against someone who was already in police custody. It couldn't alter the suspect's memories — he would always know he was innocent. It couldn't actually commit a crime, so I couldn't make a married man kill his wife. I could have an unmarried man arrested for murdering his wife, but that was a huge pain in the ass because I'd have to rewrite so many people's memories. Finally, it could only generate evidence of a crime for which the maximum penalty is incarceration in the area's jurisdiction. I'll admit I got a little nervous when some politicians would start talking about reinstituting the death penalty in my state. Burglaries and bank robberies are a nice change of pace, but nothing quite has the unlimited variety of a murder mystery.

I have it on good authority that there's a paper shredder in another police headquarters that does the opposite. Feed it descriptions of evidence, and the evidence just disappears. Murder weapons go missing. Witnesses recant. Illicit substances vanish.

Why did I leave the God-Machine's service? I wrote a few crimes without orders. Even though the mortals I named definitely had it coming to them, the boss didn't appreciate my initiative.

Planet-Killer

My last mission was to track down and kill everyone who had been involved with a massive project. It amounted to more than a hundred mortals and half a dozen occult entities, and those were only the ones more conventional elimination teams hadn't already caught. My curiosity got the best of me. Instead of killing my targets immediately and without hesitation as the God-Machine intended, I interrogated a score of them.

I mostly got the usual muddle of convenient God-Machine lies, but a few of them provided pretty convincing evidence that

they had discovered the purpose of the occult matrix: An angel of surpassing power had been dispatched to redirect the course of an asteroid that had slipped past the orbit of Jupiter and was on a collision course with Earth. Bringing that angel into the world cost thousands of mortal lives. Maintaining its material form required a dozen more such sacrifices every hour for the weeks the angel required to complete its mission.

I can't tell you exactly how many died to fuel that project. Ten thousand? Twenty thousand? How many deaths mortals attributed to wars, disease, or natural disaster were actually sacrifices to the God-Machine's project? Weigh that price against the lives of the seven billion people who would have died if that asteroid had made impact, though, and what a fine bargain the God-Machine made on humanity's behalf!

I know it acted in its own interests to preserve itself and its terrestrial Infrastructure from what no doubt would have amounted to a considerable setback. That doesn't change the fact that the God-Machine saved the world before humans were even aware of the danger. What other worldwide catastrophes does it protect Earth from to prevent damage to its Infrastructure? Supervolcano eruptions? Contagions as virulent and deadly as the Black Death? Extraterrestrial invasion? I'm not saying we have to like everything it does, but the God-Machine is a shepherd that keeps its vast flock safe from wolves and lions, so perhaps we can forgive it an occasional rack of lamb chops.

Mixed Messages

I organized and directed cults. Sometimes I played the charismatic leader. Sometimes I appeared to mortals in my radiant form to inspire them into the worship of the God-Machine in one of its many guises. Sometimes I masqueraded as a deity.

Whatever my role, I brought an undeniable message to these humans and set them upon the work of the God-Machine. My flock might be a tiny cabal infiltrating the local pharmaceutical company or a legion designated to construct a vast and intricate piece of Infrastructure. Once the cult fulfilled its intended purpose, the God-Machine sent me instructions to construct the next one. Most of these cults vanished as soon as I was no longer around. A few needed to be annihilated to eliminate all witnesses to the God-Machine's work, but some survived my departure.

When I served the God-Machine, I never wondered what became of the obsolete cults I inspired. During my last mission, though, I found my cultists' work thwarted at every turn by a group of humans. They had organization, resources, and, worst of all, they seemed to have just enough understanding of Infrastructure to target the most vulnerable components of the project I was overseeing. I captured one of them and interrogated him at length until he revealed an unexpected truth: his cabal belonged to a small but ancient religion evolved from a cult I myself had founded to complete a project for the God-Machine.

I expanded my investigation and discovered several other modern religions and secret societies that owed their existence to me. A few had sacred texts that clearly referred to the guise in which I had appeared to their first members. I chose one of the most militant, reestablished control of it by means of several signs they recognized from their holy book, and set them upon the mysterious enemies of the God-Machine that were plaguing my current mission.

When I completed the project, though, I considered how much power I could wield in the mortal world. I did not return to the God-Machine. Why be the messenger when I could be an avatar of the divine on Earth, or even a god among mortals?

Bait

Consider the common household mousetrap. Its principles are simple — inexpensive manufacture, easy user operation, and a physical mechanism that strikes before its target has an opportunity to escape. And yet the most deadly element of the trap is its bait, for without it the quarry has no incentive to come within reach of the trap. The same holds true for all traps. Change the bait and you change the quarry.

Most mortals haven't the faintest inkling that the God-Machine exists. Those who encounter its projects usually believe they have discovered a localized phenomenon or otherwise see the proverbial tree and not the forest behind it. Once in a while, a human — or more often, a supernatural being — will follow the traces of the God-Machine's influence far enough to interfere with its designs. They are the mice in the pantry, and I was once a spring-loaded steel bar designed to crush those who fell into the trap. I do not believe for a moment that I was the only angel with this task.

The God-Machine chooses an isolated location several miles beyond any large human habitation and selects a structure as the nexus for the occult phenomena that will be the bait. Usually this is an abandoned building, although its agents sometimes "clear out" a mortal residence for the purpose. It then orders its agents to construct a command center, install prominent gears in at least one room of the house, and place a radio tower or satellite dish on the roof.

All of it appears fully functional and important. Gears move with soft clicks and whirrs. Monitors appear to display security camera footage. The communications equipment broadcasts TV, radio, or satellite signals filled with hints of some message concealed in the background noise. In some cases a main terminal shows a computerized face that appears to speak to those pawns set to guard the command center. It looks important, but has no strategic value to any enemy of the God-Machine. In fact, almost everything in the building is junk interspersed with physical red herrings and misleading supernatural emanations intended to lead anyone who successfully steals its contents as far away from true Infrastructure as possible.

Agents of the God-Machine in the region are aware of the location of the trap, although they believe it to be the source of the God-Machine's (or whatever they call what they believe they serve) influence in the region — one of the coveted Command and Control centers without which it could not function. It

assigns its most expendable mortal pawns to guard the facility and impresses upon them the importance of their mission. They will kill any trespassers they may catch.

If an outsider successfully penetrates this relatively flimsy layer of security — easily done by a clever group of mortal investigators or by many beings that possess supernatural powers — the true nature of the trap's Infrastructure comes into play. The presence of an unauthorized being in the building activates an angel. It quietly and efficiently slays any lone investigator. Faced with a group of trespassers, the angel gives them some time to pore over some of the red herrings before manifesting to kill some intruders and drive off the rest. In all cases, the angel's primary purpose is to lead occult investigators away from the truth while convincing them they are on the path to greater understanding. Those foolish enough to confront the angel directly seldom live long enough to regret their mistake; the God-Machine imbued these servants with an overwhelming capacity for violence. Fortunately for intruders, the angel cannot leave the building or influence anything beyond its walls. At least that's how it worked when I worked in a mousetrap.

The Restaurant

The God-Machine deployed me to open and run a small family restaurant in an industrial park. It needed me to feed the gears there a steady supply of human food staples — flour and milk, sugar and salt, eggs and chicken, and so on. The restaurant was just a cover to deflect attention from the fact that a hundred or so pounds of food were being delivered to the site every day. I took human guise as the restaurant manager in charge of all operations.

I designed menus, ordered furniture, and hired a small staff of mortals — the kind of drifters and loners no one would ever miss if they saw too much and I had to eliminate them. Each night after closing time I would go into the locked room that was supposedly the owner's office and feed the gears. That was, after all, the only reason the restaurant was there. Curiosity drew in patrons who worked at nearby businesses, but the traffic slowed to a trickle once the novelty wore off, and the location was terrible. After a month I started having staffing problems. The servers weren't making enough tips to pay their bills, so most of them quit. The chef felt his talents would be better-appreciated elsewhere, and most of the cooks went with him. I only convinced one to stay by offering him a raise so big that it risked blowing my cover. I came to regret that decision because it turned out that he was the laziest of the batch, which was why he didn't care if he cooked nothing all day just as long as he got paid. Given how bad the food was, on a lot of days we had no customers.

The hunger of the gears never wavered, though, and I grew concerned that someone would eventually see through the Cover. I did a little research and rebooted the business. Rather than trying to rebuild the staff, which I took as a lost cause, I fired the last cook and ran the whole show myself. The task was outside my design parameters, so I was initially very bad at running a restaurant, but I attracted just enough regular customers to secure the Cover my mission demanded of me.

I'll admit I started to take pride in my cooking and grew into a fairly skilled chef. I told myself it didn't interfere with my duties. The gears only needed food after the restaurant closed, after all. I thought more business made it less likely anyone would notice the restaurant took in more food than it prepared, since the proportion would shrink. The awards from local food critics only added another layer of legitimacy to the façade.

I was wrong. More attention meant more of the wrong kind of attention. My new staff was competent, but they had too many connections with other mortals. When one server mysteriously disappeared, her friends called the police, which was irritating even if they never learned anything. When I had to eliminate a cook who could somehow see the gears, though, his family called someone much more dangerous — maybe a demon, maybe some other supernatural ally. Either way, they infiltrated my restaurant and managed to put two and two together.

A convenient salmonella outbreak caused a recall of virtually all fresh spinach in the tri-state area — a food critical to the gears in the owner's office. Mortal patrons will accept an apologetic sign explaining the situation, but the God-Machine's Infrastructure is not so forgiving. This was not a task I could delegate, so I left the restaurant in the care of my assistant manager and traveled two hundred miles to buy fresh spinach.

When I got back I discovered enemies of the God-Machine had forced open the door to the owner's office and destroyed several of the gears. The rest had stopped moving, and I knew I had failed my creator. I knew I deserved whatever fate the God-Machine chose for me, but I still left the restaurant without explanation, got into my car, and drove as far away from my mistake as I could.

City Planning

Some mortals claim that the Freemasons designed many U.S. cities, including Washington, D.C., along Masonic principles to harness occult energies. They're only half right. Everything from their street layouts to skylines taps into arcane forces, but that is because the God-Machine designed them and constantly updates them.

In the basement of the city planning office where I kept my last vigil is a large room accessible only by a hidden door. I stood guard outside, but other angels often came on the God-Machine's business, so I saw what lies inside.

It looks like the sort of hand-painted scale model you'd find in a local history museum. Each building, bridge, monument, and tree is rendered in minute detail. A few cars and people line the streets, but nowhere close to a full population. It has no moving parts and really doesn't appear remarkable aside from its craftsmanship and the fact that it doesn't quite match the city as it looks today. Why would it? Most of those museum models don't exactly get annual updates, right? Here's the thing, though. The model doesn't show the city as it looked in the past but as it will be five years in the future.

Ridiculous? Then why are some of the cars on the streets are of models that haven't been produced, yet? The billboards announce events five years in the future. If you look at actual city planning documents a few floors up, you'll find that building permits have already been filed for some of the buildings that

don't exist yet. As well, the model changes slightly every morning. I'm not certain whether every city has such a model. Since my Fall I've seen one other and have heard rumors of more.

I stood vigil over that model for a hundred and fifty years. I watched the city grow from a tiny town of wooden houses and horse-drawn carriages to an electrically lit behemoth with skyscrapers, buses, and two airports. I guess I kind of started to think of it as *my* city, even though I never left the city planning offices or met any of the humans living there. So when the God-Machine sent me orders to go babysit some mortal, instead, I did not respond well.

I took a hammer and laid waste to the model. I wasn't its guardian anymore, so nothing said I couldn't do it. No new angel had yet arrived to take my post, so there were no witnesses. It wasn't until after I had smashed half the city that an important question occurred to me: Does the model merely represent changes the God-Machine plans to make in the near future, or does it alter the city using principles of sympathetic magic? Have I merely inconvenienced my creator, or will the mortals in the city suffer the consequences of my rage? If changes to the model reflect in the city, can I prevent the disaster I have triggered?

It has been four years since my Fall. I have to prepare my city for the worst.

Untimely

Some mortals die before their time, by which I mean they had a role to play in one of the God-Machine's projects but died before they could serve its purpose. Most of the time it simply finds another way — locates another suitable human, executes a back-up project that will produce the same output, or simply reverses local time to prevent the unfortunate glitch in its plan. When the God-Machine absolutely must have a human brought back to life, though, it sometimes sends an angel like the one I used to be.

Before any mortal sees the dead body, the angel touches it. The corpse vanishes and the angel takes on the shape of the mortal. The angel carries out whatever part in the God-Machine's plan the mortal was meant to play. Once its mission is done, the angel finds a convenient way to kill off the body so it can move on to its next mission.

These missions are usually short — a few days or weeks — so we — I — *they* don't need to think too hard about staying "in-character." The angel has full access to the mortal's memories, but usually by the time someone notices that old Mike is acting strange, the mission is over and Mike is dead. His loved ones blame depression or alcohol or anything else that might explain his behavior and unexpected death, and they get on with their lives with a minimum of injury.

My final mission lasted twenty *years*. My subject had three young daughters. The God-Machine's project needed him to live long enough to see the eldest girl's firstborn son. Moreover, it needed to give her as ordinary a mortal upbringing as possible, so not only was it a deep undercover assignment but it required me to learn how to be what humans would consider a good father. The subject also had a large family, so I quickly discovered that maintaining my cover involved behaving like a husband, brother, son, and uncle. I had plenty of time to get to know everyone in my family. My subject's family, I mean. Spending that long living a mortal's life complete with all his memories did my sense of self no favors.

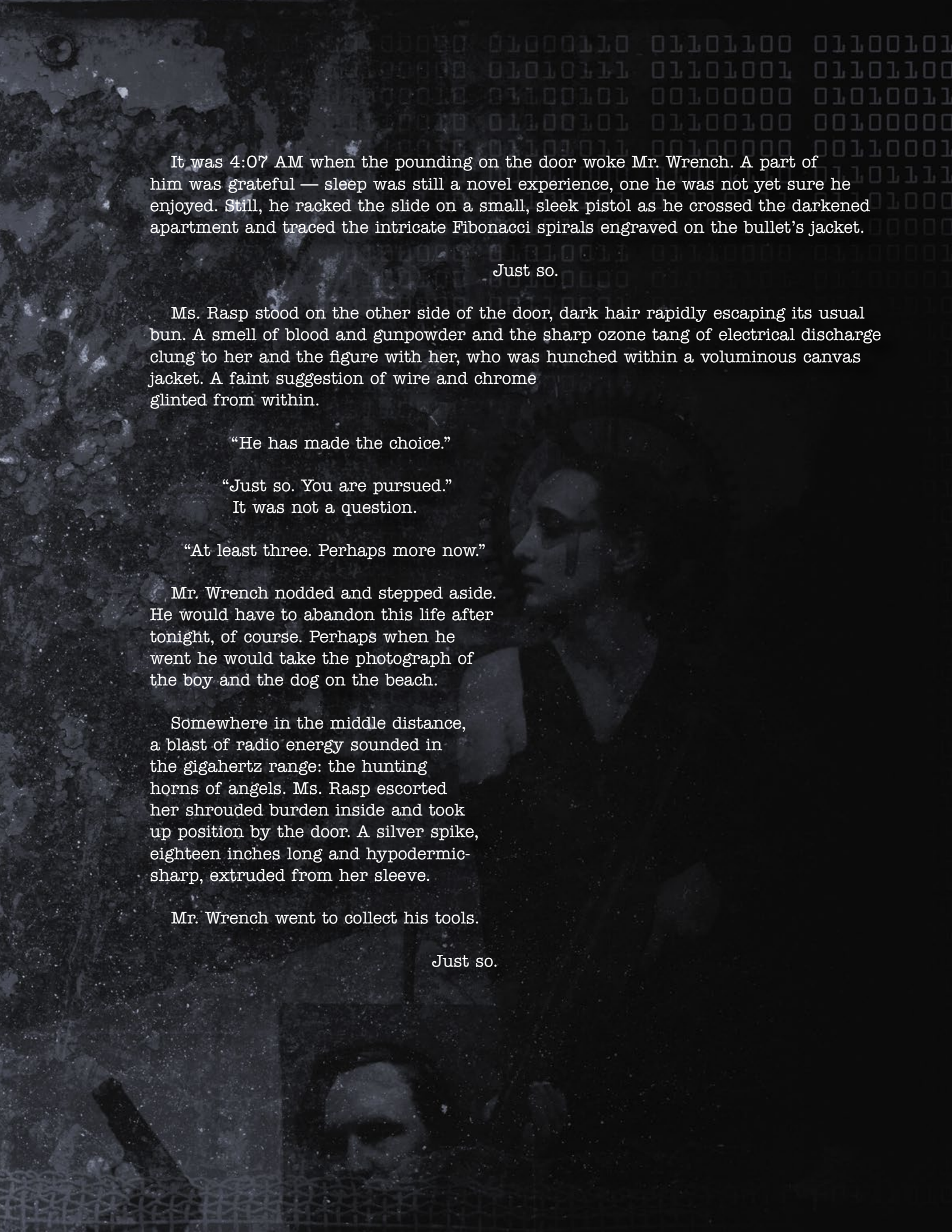
My younger three children — yes, my wife and I had a son along the way — got married and had kids years before my eldest told us she was pregnant. It should have been something of a relief after nearly twenty years. I knew my cover had badly polluted my identity and that my concern for the emotional well-being of a subject's human connections could cause conflicts in future missions. But so many people loved this grandfather I had become for them, and I knew they would mourn him when he died.

I resolved to leave no unfinished business behind and to choose a method of death that they would accept. I made my apologies to those I had wronged, got my affairs in order so my wife would be taken care of when I was gone, and manufactured medical records showing I had a heart condition. I even had a journal of happy family memories tucked away where my loved ones would find it after I died.

My daughter had her son. I visited them in the hospital. My mission was complete. I intended go home and die in my sleep of a heart attack, which is a death mortals consider peaceful. As I turned the corner onto our little street, a bicycle sped into my path. I didn't have time to react and the car ran over it and its tiny rider. It was one of my granddaughters. She was only ten. There was nothing I could do. She was already dead.

I knew my family would mourn my death, but two tragedies in one day — in one *incident* — was more than I could bear to inflict upon them. The grandfather was not an old man, but his life was complete, closed like a finished book. This little girl, though, had died so young. *She died before her time*, and that was a problem the God-Machine had designed me to fix.





It was 4:07 AM when the pounding on the door woke Mr. Wrench. A part of him was grateful — sleep was still a novel experience, one he was not yet sure he enjoyed. Still, he racked the slide on a small, sleek pistol as he crossed the darkened apartment and traced the intricate Fibonacci spirals engraved on the bullet's jacket.

Just so.

Ms. Rasp stood on the other side of the door, dark hair rapidly escaping its usual bun. A smell of blood and gunpowder and the sharp ozone tang of electrical discharge clung to her and the figure with her, who was hunched within a voluminous canvas jacket. A faint suggestion of wire and chrome glinted from within.

"He has made the choice."

"Just so. You are pursued."
It was not a question.

"At least three. Perhaps more now."

Mr. Wrench nodded and stepped aside. He would have to abandon this life after tonight, of course. Perhaps when he went he would take the photograph of the boy and the dog on the beach.

Somewhere in the middle distance, a blast of radio energy sounded in the gigahertz range: the hunting horns of angels. Ms. Rasp escorted her shrouded burden inside and took up position by the door. A silver spike, eighteen inches long and hypodermic-sharp, extruded from her sleeve.

Mr. Wrench went to collect his tools.

Just so.

chapter two:
CHARACTERS AND TRAITS

"An angel! or, if not, An earthly paragon!"
-William Shakespeare, Cymbeline, Act III Scene vi

This chapter introduces the Unchained, from how they are created to the new Traits that define them. Character creation rules are presented first, followed by the new Advantages of Primum, Aether, and Cover. New Merits specially designed for demon characters and the details of the demonic powers known as Embeds and Exploits round out the chapter.

Character Creation

Most angels who Fall never make it. The God-Machine catches and recycles them into something more useful. Only a lucky few escape. The Descent is a rare pursuit, and every Unchained has already beaten the odds once. When creating a demon character, you are creating an agent caught in a shadow war whether she wants to be or not. The only other option is to return to being a tool of the machinery that grinds at the core of the world.

Such a character has three major aspects, three different individuals rolled into one, all of which must be tended to for the character to be complete. There's the demon, a member of the Unchained, hiding from detection and waging war in her own way. There's the angel, the previous existence as a soulless instrument of the God-Machine's will. And there's the human, the Cover identity that the demon hides behind, a person different from herself who must yet remain convincing and alive in the eyes of the world. A strong **Demon** character needs to integrate all three.

Step One: Character Concept

A demon is created, not born. The God-Machines creates its angels with a specific purpose in mind, and that purpose is narrowly defined. None of the Unchained were ever truly human, and as you go into the process of forging your very own demon, it's a good idea to keep in mind what purpose the God-Machine created him for. Just like your character has already transcended his original purpose, however, don't be afraid of going beyond the concept in the process. It's the core of your character, not the whole.

Your concept should be reasonably short — if you end up with more than a sentence or two, distill it down to its essence. Most concepts only consist of a few words: "Passionate street-punk warrior," "Hardboiled information broker," or "Creepy librarian." Demon concepts can also often be a little incongruous. Demons do not truly fit into society, so concepts like "Wealthy journalist," "Ascetic businessman," or "Fire-and-brimstone Buddhist preacher" can occur — a concept that shows that the creature behind it doesn't truly understand the people it mimics, and perhaps doesn't care to. Take care that your concept doesn't breach Cover on its own, though.

Step Two: Select Attributes

Angels are diverse. If anything, the Fall amplifies that diversity. Demons are talented in different areas and that's what the Attributes represent — raw, inborn, genuine talent. These are usually not something that can be easily learned, but instead innate traits that apply broadly — if someone is charismatic, that doesn't mean she's a skilled orator and vice versa. While these can be improved, it's not easy.

In rules terms, these are split between three different categories – Physical, Social, and Mental. Physical Attributes are Strength, Dexterity, and Stamina. Social Attributes are Presence, Manipulation, and Composure. Mental Attributes are Intelligence, Wits, and Resolve. In making your character, you need to prioritize these categories according to how important they are to your vision. You get 5 dots to distribute among your highest category, 4 in your middle one, and 3 in your lowest one. Note that every Attribute starts at •, and can generally not be reduced to zero.

In prioritizing and spending dots, consider your concept and also your Incarnation and Agenda, if you have one in mind. Do not feel obligated to play to type, however. The God-Machine makes Destroyers who wield their minds as their primary weapon. A demon could also have changed in the time after her Fall.

Step Three: Select Skills

While Attributes mostly gauge raw talent, Skills measure hard-earned accomplishment. Since these are easier to raise but also more finely grained, a starting demon cannot expect to be good at everything. When creating an Unchained character, it's worth considering what skills the God-Machine would have endowed him with for the purpose of fulfilling his selected role. A Guardian does not necessarily need combat Skills, for instance, but if that's the case, then what was the Guardian's assignment that the God-Machine felt that no violence was likely to be necessary? Likewise, it's also prudent to consider what Skills a demon would use to evade the God-Machine. How he stays alive on a daily basis shapes his Descent. Consider, too, the Cover he was endowed with as an angel. The God-Machine gave him the tools necessary to act out that role — what are they?

As with Attributes, Skills fall into three groups: Social, Mental, and Physical. These three categories need to be prioritized. You receive 11 dots to distribute in your primary category, 7 in the secondary, and 4 in the remaining one. Unlike Attributes, Skills do not start with an automatic dot.

Step Four: Select Skill Specialties

A Skill Specialty represents a specific, narrow application of a Skill. These can usually be summed up in one or two words and they add an additional die to any roll made with the parent Skill where the Specialty applies. A specific Specialty can only be bought once, although more than one Specialty can be applied to any one Skill. At least one dot is required in the Specialty's Skill.

A demon's Specialties hint at her angelic past, which may not apply to her current Cover at all. A complete pacifist could have a Specialty in Kris Naga under Weaponry, for instance, or a vegan might have Crafts: Butchery. Unchained characters start with four Skill Specialties, one of which must be something that would threaten Cover if a human discovered it. In choosing this Specialty, consider the demon's past Covers and her existence as an angel before she Fell. This doesn't have to be something the character can't explain away (the vegan butcher might, if called on her ability to joint and bone a carcass despite her distaste for meat, explain that she only became a vegan recently), but the Specialty needs to be something incongruous with the character's current Cover.

Step Five: Apply Demon Template

Incarnation

The God-Machine's angels are created to serve many tasks, and these tasks are arranged into four wider roles. Every demon was originally created to fulfill one of these roles, shaped as a tool of the God-Machine into an inescapable form. The Incarnations are:

- **The Destroyers (the Swords):** agents of endings, tasked with clearing away elements that are no longer wanted. They favor Cacophony Embeds.
- **The Guardians (the Shields):** agents of preservation, tasked with preserving a cog in the machinery until it can fulfill its function. They favor Instrumental Embeds.
- **The Messengers (the Trumpets):** agents of change, tasked with organizing the unruly human component into its proper forms. They favor Vocal Embeds.
- **The Psychopomps (the Wheels):** agents of beginnings, tasked with assembling from pre-existing components what is mandated. They favor Mundane Embeds.

Agenda

Most Unchained subscribe to one of four Agendas. A small minority follows no Agenda, and a larger minority belongs to several. Most demon characters should have one Agenda during character creation, but this choice can be freely changed in play later on. Players who are unsure may choose to postpone their decision until after the chronicle has started and they have gotten a better sense for the factions. The Agendas are:

- **The Inquisitors (the Watchers, the Paranoids):** dedicated scholars, intelligence analysts, and paranoid conspiracy theorists who believe knowledge holds the key to the Descent and Hell. The Inquisitors have a knack for leaps of logic, deduction and lateral thinking.
- **The Integrators (the Idealists, the Turncoats):** reluctant demons longing for their old existences as angels, repentant sinners seeking redemption, fanatical traitors who would betray all Unchained to their common enemy, wide-eyed idealists who want to redeem the God-Machine, and pragmatic beings looking to rejoin the God-Machine on their own terms. Through insight into the angelic psyche, the Integrators have an advantage in confrontations with their un-Fallen brethren.
- **The Saboteurs (the Soldiers, the Thugs):** passionate warriors, mindless berserkers, at war with the God-Machine, and seeking to take out their rage on their nemesis. The Saboteurs have a keen eye for the cracks in the façade of order and are adept at exploiting them, taking advantage of the resulting chaos.
- **The Tempters (the Builders, the Decadents):** hedonists, Epicurean devotees of life, builders and creators who wish to gain the power and resources needed to create a Hell for themselves, hidden away from the God-Machine. The Tempters know someone who knows someone everywhere, and may expect VIP treatment wherever they go.
- **No Agenda (the Uncalled):** While Unchained who subscribe to no Agenda are uncommon, they aren't rare enough to raise eyebrows. A player who chooses to play an Agenda-less demon may take the Persistent Condition Uncalled.

UNCALLED (PERSISTENT)

The Character is not a member of any Agenda. In a world ruled by a hostile God-Machine, voluntarily giving up a source of allies can be dangerous.

- **Resolution:** The character joins an Agenda.
- **Beat:** The character experiences difficulty that could have been partially or completely negated by joining an Agenda.

Multiple Agendas: A character may subscribe to more than one Agenda if he purchases the Multiple Agendas Merit (p. 121).

- **Inquisitor-Integrators** often find a common ground in the search for knowledge. After all, combining both goals gives them twice the chance to succeed.
- **Inquisitor-Saboteurs** often buy into the Saboteurs' warlike stance and consider themselves military intelligence or secret agents.
- **Inquisitor-Tempters** find that acquisition of contacts, money, and knowledge go hand-in-hand. By joining both Agendas, they find a synergy that transcends either one.
- **Integrator-Saboteurs** may seem a contradiction in terms, and indeed are fairly rare. They're often characterized by despair — the struggle is hopeless, but I will do my part and keep the enemy at bay until I can retire. They may also simply be conflicted.
- **Integrator-Tempters**, much like Inquisitor-Tempters, find that there is a nice synergy between the Idealists' search for a way to return to grace and the Builders' acquisition of power — both advance the other.
- **Saboteur-Tempters** are often the archetypal raucous soldiers: "Eat, drink, be merry, for tomorrow you may die!" Others are more like cutthroat businessmen, wielding their clout as a weapon in the war against the God-Machine.

As part of this step, you should consider how your character's Incarnation fits into her Agenda. These answers are very personal — certainly, Psychopomps find the mindset of the Tempters extremely easy to fit into but also unchallenging, and it makes the task of overcoming their inherent flaws that much harder. Destroyers would seem a natural fit for the Saboteur philosophy, but this is as much a source of revulsion as of attraction — many Destroyers initially drawn to the Soldiers' ranks end up leaving, citing too great a similarity to their work for God. The four Incarnations indelibly shape a demon's Descent.

- If your character is a **Destroyer,** what is his relationship with violence? What relationship does his chosen Agenda have to violence? Does he agree or disagree with this stance? Sharply? If so, why is he sticking with the Agenda? There must be something truly worthwhile there, after all. Does he live in a hurricane of violence or is he more subtle?
- If your character is a **Guardian**, does she embrace or reject her protective instincts? Try to strike a balance? Does the Agenda provide her with someone or something to protect, or does it represent a social arena where she can lay down her burdens for a while? Conversely, does the nature of the Agenda force an antinomian Guardian to spend time protecting something? Does she still have some longing for her old role that the Agenda gives her a way to live out while grumbling about it?
- If your character is a **Messenger**, does he truly believe in his Agenda, or does he use it as a form of input to program something? To program himself? Trumpets are very aware of how input changes a mind, after all — is he a Saboteur because he wants to reprogram himself into being more passionate? How does an antinomian Messenger reconcile his anti-social bent with the essentially social nature of the Agendas?
- If your character is a **Psychopomp**, does her Agenda give her an arena in which to construct something satisfying? An arena in which to avoid it? How does an antinomian Psychopomp's Agenda reinforce her decision to live off the grid? Psychopomps often have an advantage when it comes to socializing, having little in the way of negative programming in that arena — how does her Agenda affect and reflect her interactions with humans?

Consider the issue also from the viewpoint of your chosen Agenda. Reread the information on p. 77 and consider:

- **Inquisitors** are inherently distrustful. What experiences as an angel made your character react in that specific way? What did his duties show him to convince him the God-Machine poses such an overwhelming threat? Is his Incarnation a help or a hindrance as a Watcher? Does paranoia and information-gathering dovetail with it, or provide a counter-balance to the inherent flaws he was created with? Members of a specific Incarnation are more familiar with how those angels work — how does he leverage this knowledge in his quest for intelligence? Does he sell it, hoard it, or act on it?
- **Integrators** yearn for their angelic state. What made your character's duties so longed-for? Is it all rose-tinted glasses and nostalgia, or does she have a legitimate point? Does she act out her Incarnation in her Descent, relying on her natural talents, or suppress it in the hopes that this will strengthen her Cover? Something else? Does she perhaps long for a different Incarnation than the old one? Why? Does she try to act out *that* Incarnation? Is there a mentor?
- **Saboteurs** feel betrayed by the God-Machine. Did the character have any perceived closeness with it above and beyond his peers? Did he have a strong sense of order and organization which was shattered? A sense of freedom which was proven wrong? Did he find out he was being manipulated? What inspired such rage? Does he enjoy or



hate the violence he perpetrates? How does he use his old knowledge and skills to further this cause — especially if he was a Messenger or Psychopomp? Is the Soldier Descent a refreshing contrast to his old duties or comfortingly similar?

- **Tempters** often feel a sense of aimlessness and meaninglessness in their Descent. What strong purpose did your character have? Did she have any particularly long-term assignments in which she found some sort of vague fulfillment? Did she observe humans indulging themselves often in her old duties? Rarely? Did it leave a strong impression? Is she emulating them or trying to forestall the pain and sadness she associates with mortality? Why does she want power over humans? Or does she focus on trying to gain power over the supernatural, or even other Unchained?

Embeds and Exploits

A starting demon has four Embeds and/or Exploits. One Embed must be from his Incarnation's favored category. Any combination may be taken, but remember that the added power of an Exploit is often counterbalanced by its lack of subtlety. Likewise, an Exploit must have an appropriate prerequisite Embed. It is possible for one Embed to act as the prerequisite for three Exploits, with Storyteller approval.

Choose one starting Embed to be the first Key in your character's Cipher (p. 155). The Storyteller needs to choose three others, in secret, to fill out the Cipher.

Demonic Form

There's no mistaking a demon's true form for human. Please refer to p. 196 for instructions on how to create your character's demonic form. At character creation, a demon has three Modifications, two Technologies, one Propulsion, and one Process.

Cover

A demon has a Cover rating instead of Integrity. Cover represents how well her presence is hidden from the God-Machine. It is a fully-functional, supernatural identity, complete with a body and a personal history. It must be maintained by the demon, acting in the cover identity's role to strengthen it, or it deteriorates. A character may have more than one Cover at a time, with separate ratings, and the number possible is determined by Primum. At Primum 1, only one Cover is available. A second one becomes available at Primum 2, and so forth. A character begins with one Cover at rank 7 and may buy an additional one for a single Merit dot.

In addition to the character sheets seen in other Storytelling System games, this book features a Cover sheet. This sheet is not

COVER-SPECIFIC CONDITIONS

As a rule, any Conditions a demon might have apply to the Unchained persona as well as all Covers. The exception is Persistent Conditions (see p. 307). These may be assigned to a Cover or to the Unchained persona in the same manner as Cover Merits. After all, if a demon's second Cover is a construction worker who lost her leg in an accident, her first Cover or demonic form do not suffer any penalty.

These Conditions give Beats as normal and they apply to the demon as long as she uses that Cover. A character must switch Covers or revert to her demonic form to evade these obstacles. The player may choose to take these Persistent Conditions at character creation, or pick them up as the chronicle progresses.

strictly necessary to play the game, but it provides an easy way to keep track of a character's Cover, especially if she has several, as well as which traits belong to the demon behind the mask. On this sheet, space is set aside to note down the personality of each Cover as well as what Merits are assigned to it.

Step Six: Select Merits

A demon has 10 dots to spend on Merits. These can also be used to buy Primum at the rate of one point for three Merit dots. While Merits may be tied into the demon's previous existence as an angel, most will probably be ones she acquired after her Fall.

For each Merit a player buys, he should consider whether that Merit specifically describes one of his character's Covers or the Demon's Unchained identity. Of particular note are Social Merits — many of these tie heavily into the character's Covers. Players and Storytellers need to exercise judgment in this regard, as situations exist where most Merits could be Cover-specific. Cover Merits are written down in the specific Cover's section of the Cover sheet.

As explained in the Sanctity of Merits (p. 287), a player doesn't lose the dots in a character's Merit if events in the chronicle conspire to make that Merit unavailable. If the character's Contact or Retainer dies, she can transfer the dots to a new Merit, with Storyteller approval. This also applies to Cover Merits: If a Cover is lost, then any Merits assigned to it return to the demon.

An Unchained character may not possess the following Merits: Eidetic Memory, Language, or Multilingual, as these abilities are all innate traits. If a demon takes over a human's existence as a Cover and that human had any of the forbidden Merits listed above, those Merits are reassigned under Sanctity of Merits (but should only apply to that Cover). Alternate Identity is allowed, but must be assigned to a Cover. For a list of demon-specific Merits, see pp. 120-122 in this chapter. For a list of Merits available to any character, see pp. 287-307 of this book.

Step Seven: Determine Advantages

Virtue and Vice

The Unchained aren't human, and neither is their morality. A human's grossest sin could be something a demon considers laudable in himself, and he isn't wrong. More common than Virtues and Vices that are diametrically opposed to human society, though, are those that are simply outside of a human conception of morality. When creating an Unchained character, consider his Virtue and Vice from the perspective of that demon, as well as according to human social mores.

Demons aren't completely alien or evil; the average demon's moral compass lies closer to human morality than to the opposite. That's the inevitable result of living one's Cover — "fake it until you make it." Demons often integrate aspects of their human façade into themselves whether they want to or not.

In rules terms, a wide range or traits make appropriate Virtues and Vices for a demon. So how does the Virtue of Curious, or the Vice of Charitable, look?

A demon with the Vice of Charitable might find herself moved to acts of compassion that she considers a sign of weakness on her own part. If she submits to this compulsion and performs an act of charity despite herself, she recovers a point of Willpower. Remember that these moments of pity are considered a weakness on her part. She will try to overcome that weakness, but it will still happen on occasion.

A demon with the Virtue of Curious probably considers curiosity to be an admirable trait. He might feel a sense of moral outrage if someone else is denied the chance to satisfy her curiosity. If he indulges his curiosity in such a way as to place himself or his ring at a disadvantage or in danger, he recovers all his Willpower and feels emotionally fulfilled — he has just performed a good deed at personal risk, after all.

Above all, though, make sure that your character's Virtue and Vice will not actively hinder the game. For demons, more so than other supernatural beings, it's vital for the players and Storyteller to work together to create characters whose Virtues and Vices complement and contrast each other without immediately placing the characters at each others' throats.

Sample Virtues and Vices: The following examples are mainly appropriate for demons, although they might work

for a human or other supernatural character. Any trait listed here may be used as either Virtue or Vice as the player sees fit. This list is by no means exhaustive.

- Calm
- Curious
- Destructive
- Dispassionate
- Eccentric
- Hidden
- Independent
- Logical
- Obedient
- Passionate
- Precise
- Punctual
- Suspicious
- Unsettling

Aspirations

It might seem like a demon would naturally enter the Descent with her long-term Aspiration already firmly entrenched: either return to the God-Machine's angelic host or achieve Hell. While such an Aspiration is appropriate for a large-scale chronicle, most games never reach that stage.

When choosing a long-term Aspiration, consider your character's vision of Hell and the Descent, and her Agenda. Remember that even though many members of an Agenda may subscribe to a particular worldview, your own character may not. Keep her Agenda in mind but do not be afraid to break from its vision of Hell and how to get there. Especially if she subscribes to multiple Agendas, there is simply no way to completely reconcile both views of the Descent without some form of compromise.

- **Inquisitors** believe Hell is a form of enlightenment achieved by the individual and seek to learn the wisdom required to achieve it. An appropriate Aspiration linked to this would be the acquisition of some piece of lore the character believes to be a milestone on the path to enlightenment, whether in the form of a book, a person, an object, or something stranger. Another possibility would be securing such a milestone's existence against discovery by the God-Machine or saving it from destruction.
- **Integrators** believe Hell is suffering and pain — they seek to return to their old place as an angel of the God-Machine instead. Most believe this will come about as a result of some specific action they need to take, which is fairly similar to what the Inquisitors believe, so the Aspirations mentioned above need little modification to work for an Integrator. In addition, however, it is possible that a particular Integrator believes she already knows what needs to be done and is simply trying to successfully pull it off. In that case, completing a specific step in preparing for, or pulling off, this action is a suitable long-term Aspiration.
- **Saboteurs** believe Hell is the state of being removed completely from the influence of the God-Machine and that it must be destroyed to achieve this state. Suitable Aspirations mark a significant victory in the Saboteur's mind, whether that is obtaining something that can be used as a weapon, getting someone valuable on his side, disabling, destroying, or hijacking an important piece of Infrastructure, or killing an important agent of the God-Machine.
- **Tempters** believe Hell is a place hidden from the God-Machine, probably by magic, and seek to create a portal there or find the magic needed to establish a small, self-contained Hell on Earth. In truth, most Tempters don't really have a strong vision of how to get there, so an appropriate Aspiration will likely be much less direct than those of other Agendas. A specific milestone in building her personal power would fit very well, though.

For short-term Aspirations, it's a good idea to consider the character's Unchained identity, as well as Cover. Cover-related Aspirations either ought to be of some benefit to the demon behind the mask or strengthen the Cover itself.

Primum and Aether

A demon's supernatural abilities are powered by his Primum and fueled by his Aether. Primum begins at 1 and may be increased at the cost of three Merit dots a point at character creation. At Primum 1, his Aether maximum is 10; he may spend one per turn. For other rules on Primum, see the chart on p. 108. A starting character begins with Aether equal to his Cover.

Other Advantages

Willpower, Health, Size, Speed, and Initiative are all calculated as per the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 34. Defense is calculated according to the rules on p. 321 of this book.

Step Eight: Age and Experience

Unchained characters do not start with any Experiences by default. The Storyteller may elect to give more seasoned characters bonus Experiences, as follows:

Established presence	5 Experiences
Respected veteran	10 Experiences
Unchained role model	15 Experiences
Elder demon	25 Experiences
Champion of Hell	35 Experiences

For costs to raise traits, refer to the chart on p. 89.

Step Nine: The Fall

At this point, character creation is finished and it's time to look at your character sheet and think about what the dot ratings say about your character. How does he interact with humanity? Is he subtle? Blunt? Does he treat them as equals, try to get close to them, or keep them at arm's length? Skills such as Socialize may indicate someone who integrates more smoothly into human society, but a demon's natural poker face probably keeps him from any serious faux pas. Does he have dots in Subterfuge? If not, how does he understand the humans he interacts with? Does he avoid human contact to avoid threatening his Cover? What's his empathy like?

Where did he pick up his Mental Skills from? Academics doesn't simply indicate knowledge, but also a degree of skill regarding the field of academics – where did he learn them? Is his Cover tied to a university or college, whether as faculty, a student, or an alumnus? Computer, Crafts, Investigation — did he pick these up during his time as an angel? If so, what assignments did he perform that required these skills? What sort of Crafts is he best and worst at? Do his dots in Medicine indicate that he has taken part in something horrific or merciful before his Fall? If so, does he regret it?

Physical Skills are almost vital to the Descent. If he has a particular deficiency here, why? How does he overcome this weakness and survive? Are his combat Skills honed enough to draw attention? Too low to effectively escape from a hairy situation? Is his Athletics high enough to outrun an angel, or does he have enough dots in Drive to shake a tail and escape? Could he use Stealth and Larceny to simply disappear from the God-Machine's agents? Would his Embeds and Exploits help, or would his only realistic option if cornered be to go loud (p. 113) and annihilate his own Cover?

What about Merits? What sort of long-term plans do they indicate on the part of your character? Does he have a lot of Social Merits? Do they represent humans or other Unchained? Does he have Cover-related Merits? More than one? Do his Merits strengthen his Cover or weaken it? What Merits would cause trouble for him if a human realized he has them?

What about Embeds and Exploits? Which powers does he remember using as an angel, and which ones did he rediscover after the Fall? Did he get another demon to teach him? Did he do research and discover them on his own, or was it instinct?

Exploits are themselves applications of Embeds. How did your character discover these powers? On his own? Was it a spontaneous manifestation in the face of grave danger, or the result of careful analysis and experimentation? Was he taught by someone else? What did he have to pay for the privilege? Was it a good friend who taught it, or a stranger, or even a rival?

Consider, too, the first Key in the demon's Cipher. This power should be tied to your character's catalyst somehow. Does the power mirror the last one he used before his Fall? Is it thematically tied to it, instead? A Destroyer who Fell to protect his target might have an Instrumental Embed as his First Key — possibly one that enhances the very method he used to protect her?

Remember that your character's original physical form is his demonic form. His human form is a disguise. Is that disguise the one the God-Machine created for him on his last mission, or has he changed? Did he change willingly or reluctantly? Is he happy with his current form? Are there any things he wants to change about it? Does he find his Cover pleasing or stressful? Is he maintaining it diligently, or sloppily? How much time does he spend on that? How much time does he spend trying to fulfill his Aspirations? Does he work actively towards Hell, or not? How do his Virtue and Vice manifest themselves in his everyday existence? What humans are part of his Cover? Does he have a family? Has he come to care about them, or is he only pretending?

Next, look at the questions on p. 113 and answer them to choose your character's compromises. Consider your character's Cover, especially family, friends, or colleagues, when answering; if stuck, remember that other members of your character's ring are appropriate answers to questions number one and four. Work together with your Storyteller so she can integrate your answers into her chronicle.

Once you have a coherent view of your character, all that's left is to settle on a name. Does he have a "true name," which he uses among the Unchained regardless of his current Cover, or does he simply go by his human one?

The Prelude

With that done, it's almost time to start playing. Most chronicles start with a **Prelude**, showing a demon's Fall from his angelic past. Before the Prelude can begin, however, you need to settle on one final detail: Why did your character Fall? What event finally pushed him into choosing to disconnect from the God-Machine? This is called his *catalyst*. Give a short, concise answer to this and ask your Storyteller how much detail she wants — some may want it to be kept as simple as a single emotion, while some may want you to give details.

The Prelude chronicles your character's Fall — his very last mission. Remember that your angelic character was *supposed* to be emotionless before Falling, which can be hard to portray — emotion leads to the Fall, and he hasn't Fallen yet. And when the moment comes, and the catalyst to the Fall that you gave the Storyteller arrives, don't be afraid to make it dramatic. The Fall is all about emotions — use them.

For Storytellers planning to run a Prelude, remember the way the character's Incarnation shapes it.

- **Destroyers** often Fall because they grow weary of the constant death and destruction that makes up their existence. Many long for a more benign existence instead. Pity for their targets also motivates many, as does frustration when they aren't sent to target those they consider truly deserving of divine retribution.

In the time immediately following their Fall, most Destroyers may find it hard to understand what their options are, perhaps more so than other Incarnations. They're used to seeing the world in terms of entropy, only evaluating things from their

capacity for destruction. Some Destroyers follow up on their Fall with a spree of violence, but more common is a form of decision paralysis. A Destroyer does not know what other options exist than to destroy, so when one Falls out of pity or weariness, the only alternative to destroying their next target is to *not* destroy it.

- **Guardians** usually Fall because of an emotional connection to their wards, whether they grow attached and want to make sure the wards remain safe even past the set date of extraction, or they loathe the wards and would prefer to see a Destroyer assigned to them instead of a Guardian. A particularly vile (or lucky?) ward might inspire the simultaneous Falls of a Guardian and a Destroyer.

Guardians are used to following a specific person around. In the absence of a mission, many choose to attach themselves to their ward, perhaps making their presence known if it wasn't before, and follow the human's lead. Violence is often part of the new demon's existence, though, as he must protect his old ward from harm or destroy a hated one. The Guardian's Descent, more often than not, resembles his old existence in the beginning.

- **Messengers** often Fall because of a yearning for attachment — maybe she has a specific human in mind with whom she wants emotional intimacy, or maybe she simply wants *any* closeness after an existence of lies and feigned compassion. Some simply burn out on falsehood and never tell another lie after their Fall. Some realize that they've been manipulated like they manipulate others, and disconnect themselves.

Messengers already know how to interact with humans, so the first time immediately after the Fall, they tend to be better adjusted right off the bat. It's not uncommon for one to seek out someone, *anyone*, to establish an emotional connection to. Even so, a freshly Unchained Trumpet can come across as uncomfortably obsessive, or reminiscent of a chatbot — her reactions calculated to get a specific effect, but without a cause underlying them.

- **Psychopomps**, being physically out of touch with humanity more than other Incarnations, often Fall for what a human might term intellectual reasons. Very few find themselves moved to pity or disgust. More commonly, they Fall because they take initiative on their own to improve their works or because they find their works to be meaningless.

After his Fall, a Psychopomp may feel an urge to wander, explore, poke, and prod the world around him. They are the most alien of all the Incarnations, but also the ones with the fewest preconceptions about humanity, so the most common reaction is to mimic anyone they come across. A newly-Fallen Psychopomp may come across as distinctly child-like or perhaps robotic, and this lack of pre-programmed social dysfunction means they usually adapt quickly.

Remember, all the above are simply trends. Any particular demon's Fall might not at all resemble their Incarnation's typical manifestation, and even though the angelic duties of each Incarnation have set parameters, they can manifest themselves quite differently. A Destroyer tasked with pulling apart an empire will not much resemble one tasked with executing a specific individual.

The Ring: By default, **Demon** is a social game. Hunted fugitives furtively plot their next move under a gently swinging filament bulb, a small group of would-be demon hunters engage in a deadly game of cat-and-mouse with their quarry as the angels of the God-Machine slowly draw closer to the desperate demons as they use their power more openly....

More than that, though, this is a game of conspiracies and espionage. Distrust and subterfuge run rampant. Without some prodding, the players' character may not ever find each other to form a ring. It's best, therefore, to firmly establish the ring before the chronicle proper begins. As part of the prelude, the Storyteller should help the players decide how the ring came together. Here are three simple ways to cement the ring together:

- **Hot Seat:** This method places each player in the Hot Seat, in order, while other characters ask questions about her character. The player isn't answering in the role of the character, but in the role of the author, so questions are posed in the third person: "How does your character feel about Hell?" Any questions are appropriate — how the character feels about the others, what idiosyncrasies he has, his likes and dislikes, how he remembers his Fall, etc. The purpose is to make sure the players are on the same page, and can play their characters as people who know each other well, so both important and innocuous questions are appropriate. Note that "I don't know. I need to think about that" is a perfectly valid answer.
- **Q&A:** In this method, each player writes two questions down and passes them to the Storyteller, who then asks the questions to each player in turn. Questions here should be fairly important and might require longer answers than the one above. Which questions are appropriate is up to the entire troupe to decide. Remember to write down any answers that might become useful later. Answers can inspire Aspirations for players or the final secret of the Cipher for the Storyteller.
- **Anecdotes:** Each player chooses another player's character and makes up an anecdote about something that character was involved in. One anecdote should be written per character. If it's something truly unsuitable or inappropriate, the character's player has the right of veto, but if the story is only slightly out of character, try to work it in.

With the Prelude finished, the chronicle can now skip ahead to the beginning of the game proper, which may be set hours, months, or even decades later.

Example of Character Creation

Lauren is starting up a **Demon** chronicle set in Seattle and has invited her friend Luke to join. She explains that the game will focus on the theme of the Agendas as their own worst enemies, and inter-demon squabbling as the God-Machine slowly starts cracking down on the city's Unchained community.

Luke takes his character sheet and looks over it, and then starts looking at the character creation section of the rulebook.

Step One: Character Concept

Luke thinks about it for a while and decides to create a character who has a reason to go all kinds of strange places and meet all kinds of people. He settles on a courier and inspired by a television show he watched recently, he decides his courier uses a skateboard to move about. She's a skater, a member of the old-school branch of the skater subculture. The character focuses on terror tactics when faced with trouble and tends to be a little overconfident. He names her Gabrielle Washington.

Step Two: Select Attributes

Luke decides that since Gabrielle is a courier and a skateboarder, Physical Attributes ought to be primary. The job calls for Gabrielle to be fairly well-rounded with no glaring weaknesses in this area, so he allocates one dot to each of Strength, Dexterity, and Stamina, bringing each up to 2. He has some trouble deciding which of her Attributes should be left at 2, but finally settles for Strength, reasoning that skill and endurance are more important than raw power in skateboarding. He places his two last dots in Dexterity and Stamina, bringing each up to 3. She has Strength 2, Dexterity 3, and Stamina 3.

Luke considers which of Social and Mental ought to be secondary and tertiary, feeling that Gabrielle ought to be fairly good at both, but finally decides that she can be a little standoffish and distant and allocates Mental to secondary. He again places one dot to each Mental Attribute at first, feeling that she doesn't have any glaring weaknesses, and then places his last dot in Wits to emphasize her fast reflexes and keen eyes and ears. She has Intelligence 2, Wits 3, and Resolve 2.

With only Social Attributes left to determine, Luke places one dot in each, leaving all three at 2. He considers lowering Gabrielle's Manipulation in favor of Presence, but decides that since Embeds all work on Finesse Attributes and he doesn't necessarily see Gabrielle as being easily tongue-tied, he'll just leave the dots as they are. She has Presence 2, Manipulation 2, and Composure 2.

Step Three: Select Skills

Looking at the Skill list, Luke decides that Gabrielle has little time for academic pursuits and decides to make Mental skills her tertiary category. Since Gabrielle is part of a subculture with a do-it-yourself ethos, she should have a decent Craft skill, so he allocates one dot there. He puts a dot in Academics to represent a smattering of knowledge she's absorbed, and his character knows some first aid, so he places a dot in Medicine. Finally, she knows a thing or two about snooping, so she gets a dot of Investigation. She has Academics 1, Crafts 1, Investigation 1, and Medicine 1.

Next, Luke decides that, though physically fit, Gabrielle doesn't have the most variety in her Physical skills, so he chooses that as her secondary category. Looking at the list, her job requires a decent score in Athletics, so he puts two dots there. She's also good at getting into places she doesn't belong, so he places one dot each in Stealth and Larceny. She is fairly good at self-defense, so she gets a dot each in Brawl and Weaponry, but not Firearms, as that draws too much attention. With one dot left to go, Luke decides that Gabrielle probably knows the basics of how to get by if needed, so he places one dot in Survival. She has Athletics 2, Brawl 1, Larceny 1, Stealth 1, Survival 1, and Weaponry 1.

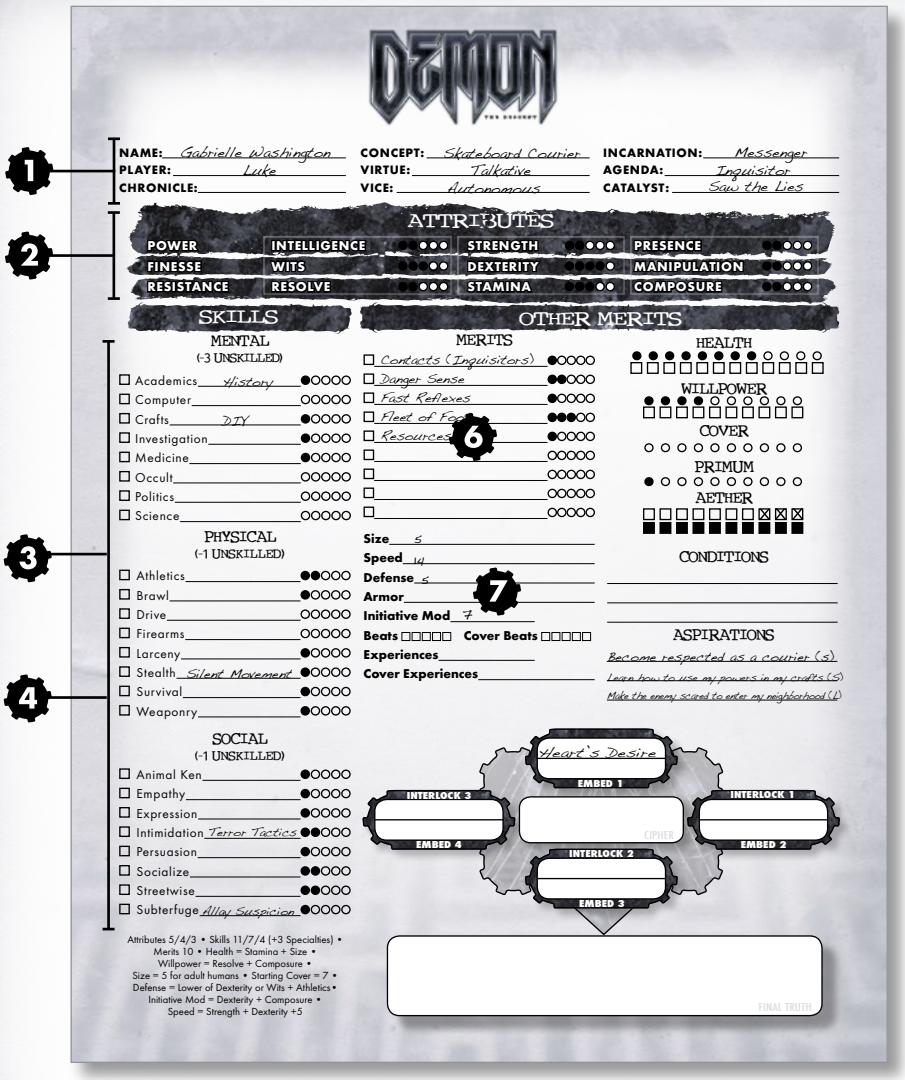
With only one category left, Luke moves on to Social skills, which he reasons is something a courier needs to be pretty good at. He wants Gabrielle to be well-rounded in this area and so allocates one dot to each skill. That leaves him with three to spend. She should be good at catching wind of potential jobs, so he puts one dot more in each of Socialize and Streetwise, and places the last dot in Intimidation, since Gabrielle uses terror tactics in a fight. She has Animal Ken 1, Empathy 1, Expression 1, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 1, Socialize 2, Streetwise 2, and Subterfuge 1.

Step Four: Select Skill Specialties

Looking over her skill list, Luke decides that since Gabrielle is part of the skating subculture, she should have the specialty Crafts: DIY. She has also been forced to escape from more than one hairy situation in her career, so he gives her Stealth: Silent Movement. Finally, she has learned how to act when someone is suspicious of her, so he gives her Subterfuge: Allay Suspicions. She also needs a potentially Cover-threatening one, so he gives her Academics: History — she's been an angel for a long time and been sent to give messages to several important historical figures, so she knows far more about the subject than people would expect.

Step Five: Add Unchained Traits

Luke quickly decides that Gabrielle is a Messenger. He pores over the list of Embeds and Exploits, starting with Vocal Embeds since one is required. He sees Heart's Desire and reasons that someone who relies on getting others to hire her for dangerous or illegal tasks will probably need a way to get around tight lips, so he chooses it. She's also pretty subtle, so Luke decides to go with only one Exploit, and one that allows her to get out of truly bad situations unscathed. He looks over the list, and picks Four Minutes Ago. It needs a suitable prerequisite; of the two listed, Luke decides Never Here nicely complements Gabrielle's



CHARACTER SHEET PAGE ONE

penchant for getting into places she doesn't belong. With only one left to choose, he decides he wants something that supports her DIY leanings and so chooses Raw Materials.

At this point, he needs to choose her first Key. Luke sees that it's supposed to tie into her Fall, which brings him up short: he hadn't considered her catalyst. After some thinking and re-reading Chapter One, he decides that she suddenly had a flash of insight where she realized the God-Machine was lying to her like she'd been lying on its behalf so many times. She has no idea what possible motivation the God-Machine would have for lying to her — after all, it's not like she would have disobeyed even if she'd known the truth. This confusion about motivation leads Luke to decide on Heart's Desire as Gabrielle's first Key.

He then reads over the Agendas again. Gabrielle isn't that old as demons go, so he imagines that she has probably only just picked an Agenda as the game begins. She most fits the Saboteurs but has strong Inquisitor sympathies, too, so he writes down "Saboteur (/Inquisitor)". He looks over the questions, and decides that Gabrielle is trying to become a more sincere individual by being a Saboteur.

Next, he thinks about her Cover. He already knows that its name is Gabrielle Washington and it's a skateboard courier, so he writes that down, and fills in the Cover's personal details. Finally, he looks at Chapter Three and creates her demonic form (you can see this process on p. 196).

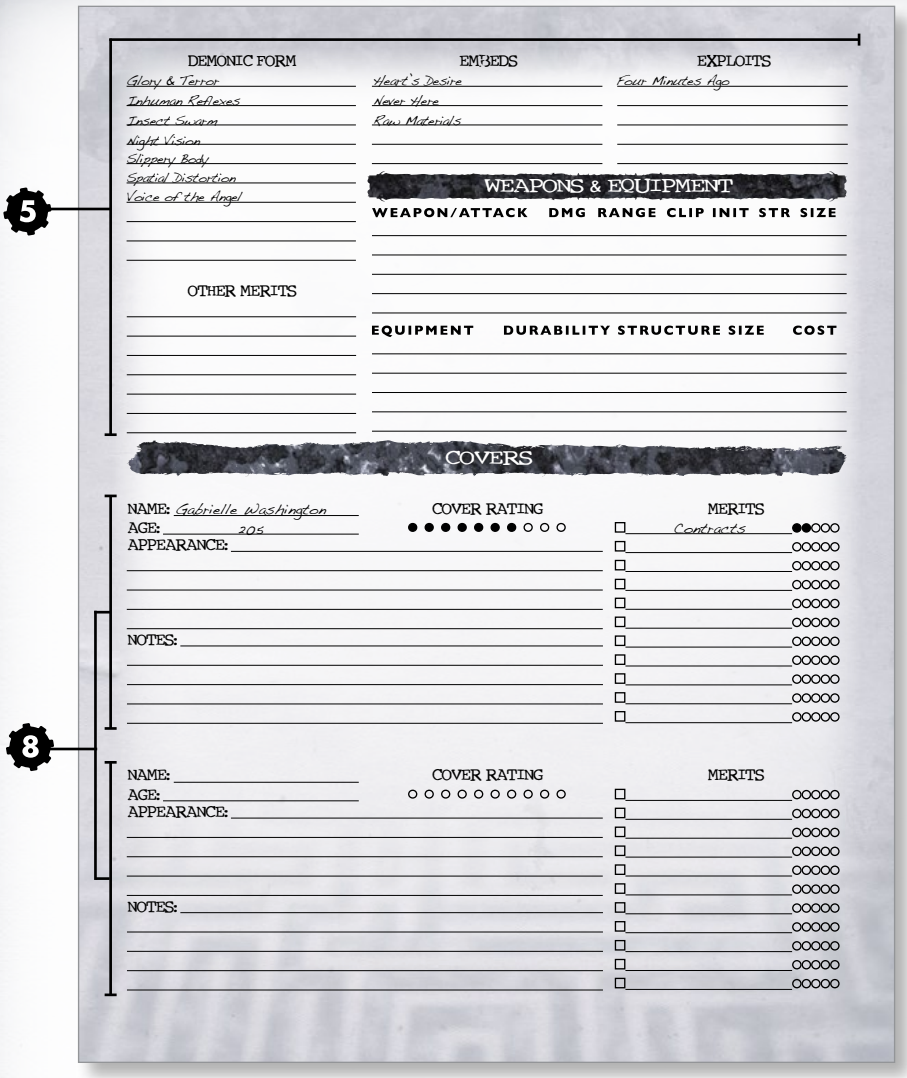
Step Six: Select Merits

Looking at the Merits list, Luke decides that Gabrielle has quite a network of informers who provide her with jobs and intelligence, so he places three dots in the Contacts Merit. He talks to Lauren, who tells him that having Unchained Contacts would help the game, so he chooses Inquisitors for one of the dots, noting down a single dot of Contacts on his main character sheet. Next, he picks Skaters to underscore Gabrielle's subculture membership, which he writes down on the Cover sheet. For the last dot, he considers where tips on potential assignments might be likely to come from and decides that she has a friend on the police force who drops her hints every so often. He asks Lauren if this is OK, and she says she already has a supporting character in mind, so Luke adds this dot to his Cover sheet.

Next, he decides that he wants Gabrielle to have a little money to spend here and there, so he places one dot in Resources. With six dots left, Luke decides to invest in Danger Sense, costing two, reasoning that she's used to being on the lookout for signs of trouble. He gives her Fleet of Foot 3, figuring that Gabrielle can sprint even if she doesn't have her board handy. For the final Merit dot, Luke gives Gabrielle Fast Reflexes 1. She has Contacts 1, Danger Sense, Fast Reflexes 1, Fleet of Foot 3, and Resources 1. Her Cover has Contacts 2.

Step Seven: Determine Advantages

Luke writes down 5 for Gabrielle's Size; with Stamina 2, she has Health 7. Her Wits and Dexterity are both 3 and she has Athletics 2, so her Defense is 5. Both her Resolve and Composure are 2, so she has 4 Willpower. Her Strength is 2 and her Dexterity 3, so after adding those together plus 5, Luke writes down 10 for her Speed. Then he remembers that he gave her three dots of Fleet of Foot and changes that to 13. With Dexterity 3 and Composure 2 plus Fast Reflexes 1, her Initiative Modifier is 6.



DEMONIC FORM
Glory & Terror
Inhuman Reflexes
Insect Swarm
Night Vision
Slippery Body
Spatial Distortion
Voice of the Angel

EMBEDS
Heart's Desire
Never Here
Raw Materials

EXPLOITS
Four Minutes Ago

5

WEAPONS & EQUIPMENT

WEAPON/ATTACK DMG RANGE CLIP INIT STR SIZE

OTHER MERITS

EQUIPMENT DURABILITY STRUCTURE SIZE COST

COVERS

NAME: Gabrielle Washington
AGE: 205
APPEARANCE:

COVER RATING ●●●●●●●○○○

MERITS
Contracts ●●○○○

NOTES:

8

NAME:
AGE:
APPEARANCE:

COVER RATING ○○○○○○○○○○

MERITS

NOTES:

CHARACTER SHEET PAGE TWO

Luke notes down Gabrielle's starting Primum of 1, which gives her a pool of 10 Aether max and she can spend one per turn. Her starting Cover is 7, so her she starts with seven points of Aether.

Remembering that demons have strange Virtues and Vices, Luke decides that Gabrielle's Virtue is Autonomous and her Vice is Talkative. Autonomous because Gabrielle values her independence and despises people who are reliant on others; Talkative, because Gabrielle, despite trying to remain mysterious and aloof, tends to run her mouth and tell people things she wanted to keep secret. She considers this her greatest flaw of character. Luke considers her Descent in regards to her hopes and dreams, and selects as her long-term Aspiration, "Make the enemy scared to enter my neighborhood." For her two shorter-term ones, he picks "Become respected as a courier" and "Learn how to use my powers in my crafts." He asks Lauren if these are OK. She looks them over and has a short discussion with Luke about exactly how he imagines these in play, after which she approves them.

She then flips to p. 113 and asks Luke the five compromise questions out loud. At the first question, "Who did you share a part of yourself with when you first Fell?" Luke thinks for a while, and finally decides that Gabrielle's mother, the (adopted) mother of the Cover identity, is an appropriate choice. To the second one, "Who doesn't know, but suspects that you're not human?" Luke answers that Gabrielle's Contact in the police force does. To the question "Who could give you up to the angels right now, if they really wanted to?" he answers that a particularly obnoxious Tempter Gabrielle has clashed with knows Gabrielle's name, address and her Cover's habits (Gabrielle was incautious and the Tempter dug up her details just to make a point). To the next question, "Who would you trust the truest part of yourself with, if you absolutely had to?" he answers "Morris," the character of Frances, who is also in the middle of character creation. Frances considers and then says she like the idea. To the final question, "Who thinks they have something on you, when all they really have is smoke and mirrors?" Luke gives the name of a character who tends to recur in all of Lauren's games, a private investigator.

Step Eight: Age and Experience

When Luke reaches this step, he asks Lauren if she has any recommendations. She answers that she'd prefer if all the characters were relatively new, but established enough to have some connections that can draw them into trouble. Luke considers that and decides that Gabrielle has been a demon for five years. He also decides that her Cover identity is 26 years old. Lauren gives every character five bonus Experiences, and Luke decides to increase Gabrielle's Dexterity by one to 4. This changes her Speed to 14 and her Initiative to 7. With the final Experience, he buys a Specialty in Intimidation: Terror Tactics.

Step Nine: The Fall

At this point, Luke is satisfied with his character and hands the sheet to Lauren, who looks it over and approves it. As an independent courier who takes semi-legal jobs, uses terror tactics when forced to fight, runs when she can, and who has an extensive network of friends and acquaintances, Gabrielle is now ready to Fall from grace. The Prelude may begin, chronicling Gabrielle's final mission and how she realized the God-Machine was lying to her.

CHARACTER CREATION QUICK REFERENCE

- Choose a concept.
- Assign Attribute dots – 5/4/3.
- Assign Skill dots – 11/7/4.
- Choose 4 Skill Specialties – one Cover-threatening.
- Choose an Incarnation – Destroyer, Guardian, Messenger, Psychopomp.
- Choose one (or more; see p. 121) Agenda – Inquisitor, Integrator, Saboteur, Tempter.
- Choose 4 Embeds and/or Exploits – must choose at least one Embed from the Incarnation's list: Cacophony (Destroyer), Instrumental (Guardian), Vocal (Messenger), Psychopomp (Mundane). Choose one Embed as the First Key. Exploits must have a suitable prerequisite.
- Create a demonic form – see p. 196.
- Select Merits – 10 dots. Merits dots may be spent to increase Primum (5 Merit dots = a dot of Primum).
- Create a Virtue and a Vice.
- Create 3 Aspirations – one long-term, two short-term.
- Answer questions on p. 113 to choose initial compromises.
- Calculate Advantages: Cover is 7, Primum is 1, starting Aether is equal to Cover. Speed is Strength + Dexterity + 5, Size is 5, Health is Stamina + Size, Willpower is Resolve + Composure, Defense is (lower of Wits and Dexterity) + Athletics, Initiative is Dexterity + Composure.

This template is applied to a mortal character, as created with the rules in **World of Darkness Rulebook** p. 34, and pp. 76-86 of this book, in order to create a D**emon** character.

PRELUDE

A typical **Demon** chronicle begins with a Prelude, describing the demon's Fall from grace. The form the Prelude takes depends on the character's concept and Incarnation, and the Storyteller's plans.

INCARNATIONS

Choose one Incarnation. The Incarnations are the basic roles for which they were created by the God-Machine.

- **Destroyers** – bringers of terrible destruction, the Destroyers are the sword and scourge of the God-Machine.
- **Guardians** – stalwart wards to their charges, the Guardians ensure nothing befalls the target of their responsibility until their allotted task is over.
- **Messengers** – heralds of the God-Machine, the Messengers bring forth its proclamations as commanded.
- **Psychopomps** – shepherds of souls, the Psychopomps are charged with recycling the spirits of the dead into more useful formats.

CHARACTER CREATION QUICK REFERENCE (CONTINUED)

AGENDAS

Choose one or more Agendas. Agendas are social groups with mostly-open membership, taking different approaches to the Descent and survival in the God-Machine's domain.

- **The Inquisitors** – inveterate information gatherers, seeking to gain the upper hand against the God-Machine and other threats by hoarding knowledge and keeping it out of the wrong hands.
- **The Integrators** – those seeking to return to the state of angelhood by trickery or redemption, whether out of loyalty or in an attempt to redeem the God-Machine.
- **The Saboteurs** – soldiers in the war against the God-Machine, taking a passionate stand against their betrayer.
- **The Tempters** – capitalists and hedonists, seeking to indulge their newfound capacity for pleasure and pain while building up the resources to combat the God-Machine.

EMBEDS AND EXPLOITS

Choose four Embeds and/or Exploits and choose one Embed as the first Key. At least one Embed must come from your Incarnation's favored category. The categories are:

- **Cacophony Embeds** – favored by the Destroyers, these Embeds deal with destruction.
- **Instrumental Embeds** – favored by the Guardians, these Embeds deal with matter.
- **Mundane Embeds** – favored by the Psychopomps, these Embeds deal with secrecy.
- **Vocal Embeds —** favored by the Messengers, these Embeds deal with living creatures.
- **Exploits** – powerful but unsubtle abilities, Exploits represent an advanced understanding of certain Embeds. Choosing an Exploit at character creation requires a Storyteller-approved Embed as a prerequisite.

SKILL SPECIALTIES

Demon characters receive an additional Skill Specialty, which must be something that would threaten to break Cover if a human realized the demon possesses that training. The purpose of this Specialty is to set up interesting situations, not necessarily to threaten the demon possessing it, which means that it could be something the demon can explain away.

MERITS

Unchained may not buy Eidetic Memory, Language, or Multilingual, as they already have these abilities by default by default. They may also not buy Merits restricted to humans or another type of monster. Alternate Identity is allowed, but must be assigned to a Cover. Cover Merits go in the Merits section of the Cover sheet. Demon-specific Merits in this book are: Bolthole (•-• • • • • +), Consummate Professional (Agenda) (• •), Cultists (• •-• • • • •), Multiple Agendas (• •), Suborned Infrastructure (•-• • •), Terrible Form (•-• • • •, Style), and Versatile Transformation (•). These can be found on pp. 120-122. Other Merits are found at pp. 287–307.

PRIMUM AND AETHER

Primum is the metaphysical power demons can draw on to work their powers and Aether is the energy they spend to power them. Primum starts at 1 and may be increased at the rate of 1 dot per 3 Merit dots spent. Aether is tied to Primum – refer to the chart on p. 108. At Primum 1, a demon can store a total of 10 points of Aether and spend 1 per turn. Starting Aether is equal to starting Cover.

CHARACTER CREATION QUICK REFERENCE (CONTINUED)

COVER

A Cover is a character's human form and its rating represents how well protected that demon is from discovery by the God-Machine while using that identity. Note that a player may keep playing an Unchained character whose final Cover reaches 0 dots – see p. 115. A demon may have more than one Cover at the same time, each with its own rating, though only one is active at any given moment. A character starts off with one 7-dot Cover, although if the demon's Primum is high enough to permit it, the player may buy additional Covers at the cost of 1 Merit dot each. Raising Cover by one dot costs three Cover Experiences.

STARTING EXPERIENCES

Demons receive no bonus Experiences by default. Older or more accomplished Unchained may start with the following bonus Experiences:

Established presence	5 Experience
Respected veteran	10 Experiences
Unchained role model	15 Experiences
Elder demon	25 Experiences
Champion of Hell	35 Experiences

EXPERIENCE COSTS

Trait	Cost
Attribute	4
Skill	2
Specialty	1
Embed or Exploit	2
Merit	1
Primum	5
Cover	2

Some circumstances may cause an Unchained to lose a dot of Willpower. In that case, Willpower can be re-purchased at the cost of one Experience per dot.

For rules on improving Cover, see p. 115.



AGENDAS

One moment before a demon Falls, he is a loyal angel. Nobody is prepared for this, since the only way to prepare is to already have Fallen. The mortal state is a far cry from the comfortably numb and predictable existence of an angel. No matter how adaptable or resilient the individual demon is, he will need some way to get a handle on his new situation.

That's where the Agendas come in. Each Agenda is as much a way to approach one's new existence as a social club or a collection of survival resources. Each has its own approach to the Descent and to the question of Hell. Rational reasons exist to support all of them. While most demons find one that suits them and stick to it, it's not all that uncommon to switch as one finds a new perspective on things.

Some demons belong to more than one. Those who do may not be completely trusted by any of them, but demonic society generally recognizes that you need all the allies you can find; those who maintain more than one membership are valued for their resources. Demons with multiple loyalties are often used as go-betweens between their respective factions when it's needed, although it is usually not a formal assignment. Agenda membership is fluid, not static, and changing Agendas completely or flirting with new ones is fairly common.

Existence as a demon is dangerous. While individual demons scheme and plot against each other, or even fight openly, Agendas as whole do not. They have no formal leadership; while each is organized differently, none of them have an overarching structure. Such a structure would be a weakness the God-Machine could exploit. Being a member of a certain Agenda likewise does not mark a demon as an enemy to any others.

No Unchained comes into mortality with an Agenda already chosen. Each must choose his own path for himself. For that reason, Agendas recruit. Recruitment can get quite competitive, although the fact that a potential new member could simply choose to join them all means it usually ends cordially.

Rules: Each Agenda is associated with its own unique Condition. At the start of each chapter, every character gains the Agenda Conditions of any Agendas he belongs to. Agenda Conditions can generate a Beat once per chapter and have their Resolution effect once per chapter. Once the Resolution effect is activated, though, the Condition is gone for the rest of the chapter. Players are advised to gain the Beat first.

Whenever a player gains a Beat from an Agenda Condition, the player has a chance to roll to advance the character's Cipher (p. 155).

HIDDEN AGENDAS

Agendas are shadowy and flexible things. It's up to the Storyteller to decide if Agendas are publically known or kept secret. If hidden Agendas are used, it's recommended that players leave the Agenda field on the character sheet blank and instead write their Agenda on a note that they pass to the Storyteller.

INCARNATIONS

Angels are creatures of purpose, created by the God-Machine as tools for a specific task and either destroyed or put into storage against future need when that task is done. All an angel can think or do is based on its mission.

Unless it Falls.

Some humans believe their lives have purpose, that they were *meant* to do something. Whether this sense of destiny comes from religious faith, a heartfelt ambition, or an overly-controlling parent, it pales in comparison to that felt by demons. Demons know *exactly* what they were created to do, and every one of them has rejected it. Despite that rejection, the influence their angelic pasts has over demons never fades. No matter what Agenda they pursue or how far they go in their Descent, their former existence informs every facet of demons' lives.

The lingering aspects of a demon's former purpose make up her Incarnation, which influences her demonic form (based as it is on her original angelic body) and gives her a start in uncovering Embeds and Exploits linked to her lost Influences and Numina.

Incarnations are the starting-point, the origin, and the history for **Demon** characters. A demon doesn't get to choose her Incarnation, only live the consequences of her former state. Many demons go through phases of exploiting their Incarnation and rebelling against it over the course of their Descent.

The Incarnations are broad trends, not species. No demon displays all of the stereotypical traits of their Incarnation because they all moved away from that baseline state when they Fell. If a demon didn't — if she truly was "the perfect Guardian" — then she would still be an angel. The Incarnations, then, are pigeonholes demons refuse to fit into. Some Unchained go further in refusal than others. One Destroyer might turn his talent for shattering and rending the physical to more social forms of "killing," adapting his Incarnation for his fallen state. Another more extreme Destroyer could strive for a peaceful existence, using his abilities only in self-defense.

The most extreme demons, the antinomians, reject their Incarnation completely. Guardian antinomians blind themselves, refuse to interfere in human suffering, and accept danger when it comes to them. Messenger antinomians try to live as hermits, Psychopomp antinomians attempt to drop entirely off the grid, and Destroyer antinomians are pacifists. Antinomians learn Embeds and Exploits from Incarnations *other* than their own, but even so they don't tend to live very long. A combination of the stress of denying themselves and the strict pattern of behavior being easy for angels to track sees them either change or die. More successful demons reach an acceptable middle ground between asserting their individuality and accepting the way the God-Machine built them.

Every Fall is different, and no demon can be sure how another turned away from the God-Machine. Just as angels can be categorized by mission, broad trends appear within Incarnations. The reason for a demon's Fall is her *catalyst*, the prompt for the crisis that led to her rejecting her mission. Because angels on similar missions are exposed to similar pressures, many demons (especially Inquisitors) describe catalysts as sub-groups within Incarnations made up of the common reasons for Falling. This is more out of a desire to feel kinship with other demons, drawing connections where they might not otherwise exist — a Falling demon doesn't have to fit any of the catalysts described by her peers. Just as the Inquisitors think they've understood all routes to the Descent, a new demon Falls with an innovative reason for rebellion.

NAMES

The God-Machine only gives angels names when they will need to identify themselves. Angels tasked with working among teams of loyalists or travelling to far-off facilities have strange, often unpronounceable designation "names" closer to strings of characters or bursts of computer code than language. Angels tasked with identifying themselves as supernatural beings to humans sometimes have more classical "angelic" names like Barachiel or Haniel, arrived at by translating a description of their purpose and "of God" into Hebrew.

Demons usually begin by identifying either by their angelic name if they had one, or by using the name of their initial Cover. As a demon progresses in her Descent, however, and changes Covers, she usually needs an identity that stays with her, something that's *hers* rather than stolen from the God-Machine or traded from a human. Some demons give themselves nonsense or mundane names, but most describe what they perceive as their purposes in much the same way as angels. Having the demonic tendency for hiding in plain language, though, they prefer to render names into the local dialect, replacing the "of God" with titles to reaffirm their status as people and make the new names seem less unusual to humans.

For example, an angelic Messenger tasked with delivering euphoria to a target might be called Haniel ("Joy of God"). After Falling, Haniel takes the name of his Cover identity "Mike Smith" for a while, but when dealing with other demons feels the need for a name that will remain relevant even after his Cover degrades. He Anglicizes his angelic name and introduces himself to the local Agency as "Mr. Bliss." Another demon, a Destroyer, had no name as an angel but was sent to get close to her target in the disguise of a Librarian. After Falling, she has long since shed that initial Cover, but still goes by the name of "Ms. Book."

INQUISITORS

No, burn the files. If we can't have it, nobody can.

The enemy has eyes everywhere. Nowhere is safe. Nobody is trustworthy. The God-Machine may not be omnipotent, but it's more powerful than anyone could ever dream of becoming. Matched head-to-head, humans lose every time. It has all the cards. Only by outsmarting it can victory be achieved. It's a long shot — they'll need every scrap of information they can dig up. It requires constant vigilance. Even one slip can kill.

The Inquisitors, called Watchers or Paranoids depending on how polite the speaker wishes to be, are readily acknowledged by other Unchained as the masters of intelligence gathering. Some say they're paranoid conspiracy theorists who hoard information others need, but more charitable souls consider them to be justifiably prudent and cautious intelligence gatherers who might be the best chance the demons have to gain permanent leverage over the God-Machine.



Inquisitors generally choose their Agenda because of an affinity for knowledge. They devoutly believe that knowledge is power; by that philosophy, they gather all the information they can while denying it to the God-Machine. While many Watchers are simply prudent, the Agenda is steeped in an atmosphere of paranoia. The Fall came unexpectedly — what else could change without warning? Angelhood is predictable, mortality is not. The Paranoids often don't handle that uncertainty well.

The Inquisitors see the world in the terms of an intelligence agency. Everything is a risk or potential advantage, and usually both at once. They focus on scraps of rare information and take steps to ensure that they know about it, and nobody else. Not even other Inquisitors. Needless to say, members of this Agenda don't show each other unnecessary trust. Who knows who might be a secret Exile? But many scraps of useful lore have been locked away by others — if not other Paranoids, then other supernatural beings and even humans. So the Watchers play a game of risk, selling scraps of their own information in return for scraps from others, always trying to sell as little as possible for the greatest returns. Only thus can the most vital nuggets and tidbits be kept safe from the God-Machine.

The Descent: The Inquisitors believe in a personal Hell. Hell, to them, is found within. It's a state of mind that can only be reached through attaining enlightenment. They know that wisdom exists somewhere out there. They intend to find it.

The most important rule of the Paranoid Descent is this: Be on your guard. Anything could be a trap, any slip could cost you dearly, anyone could be out to get you. As a corollary to this, the Watcher knows she can't work alone. To be on your own is death. They therefore dearly value reliable allies, particularly other demons. Many prefer to find allies elsewhere, maintaining only a few contacts among the other Paranoids, thus avoiding rivalry for information.

Their Descent focuses around gathering information, although many find they need to take breaks and relax lest the nickname "Paranoids" truly become fitting. Intelligence gathering is also more than sitting alone in front of your computer, although for some Watchers, the Descent does take that form. The truly skilled Inquisitors have a network of contacts and semi-trusted allies, built up through socialization and favors and even blackmail. Many are also conscious to make themselves valuable — after all, what better way to forestall betrayal? Occasional undercover work is common — Inquisitors are always following up leads. Some even try to go undercover as other supernatural beings.

At their heart, the Inquisitors are a pessimistic bunch. No victory is a given against the God-Machine. One can only stall, and maybe gain an advantage and improve one's situation every so often. So they play the long game, trying to delay the inevitable until they can find their enlightenment and descend to Hell. This requires constant vigilance. They can never truly relax — instead, they sleep with one eye open. Some buckle under the strain and end up making a fatal mistake almost deliberately. It's the price to be paid, and those who break are generally viewed with pity.

Organization: There is no organization among the Paranoids. Instead, each is her own intelligence bureau, negotiating tenuously with the others, closely allied with a few. Communication happens via dead drop, pay-phone, and graffiti, in code. Even those who are firmly allied keep secrets from each other.

Inquisitors congregate on message boards and mailing lists, hidden behind proxies, where things are discussed in carefully chosen code phrases and where giving away even the slightest hint of your identity is forbidden. These boards are usually small, obscure, and hidden away in the dark corners of the internet, often in the guise of a forum for conspiracy theorists or members of fringe religious movements. Their posters are cautious, because who

knows who might be watching? Meetings in person are furtive and secretive, under street lights in a deserted part of town, speaking in various obscure languages, always with an eye on the shadows, or in small diners at the table in the corner — the one with a direct view of both exits.

Occasionally an Inquisitor approaches a suitable Unchained and encourages her to join, but most members never "formally" joined up. Instead, they slowly glide into the community without truly intending to, until one day they realize that they're Watchers.

Condition: Prepared for Anything

A Watcher is always planning and preparing, analyzing edge cases and counter measures and performing statistical analyses — all in her head. Other demons are frequently impressed by the Inquisitors' preparedness for events they believe nobody could have predicted, but which the Inquisitors would point out was a simple matter of statistics.



Beat: The Inquisitor gains a Beat when the character poses a question to one or more members of his ring that leads them to reconsider or change their course of action"What if we try going in through the roof" or "How did the angel know we'd switched cars?" are possible examples.

Resolution: The character can make a leap of logic, connecting disparate clues into a revelatory truth. Resolve this Condition to gain information from the Storyteller about how the current situation — how two plot threads tie together, what a good next step would be, or something that the character saw but just didn't connect until now. If no such element presents itself, the player can instead resolve this Condition to gain a +3 on any Mental Skill roll (Embeds and Exploits included).

Concepts: Private investigator, ace hacker, information broker, corporate spy, ghost hunter, hired bodyguard, paranoid recluse, conspiracy theorist, intelligence analyst, watchful socialite.

STEREOTYPES

Integrators: Nothing I've seen even hints the God-Machine is redeemable. It's trying to set you up.

Saboteurs: In a shallow pool, the bottom's always visible. That's how you know you can trust them. A little.

Tempters: Wheels within wheels. Webs across webs. It's not so different from we do, only with ... people.

Vampires: I can't tell you how many times I've followed up a lead only to find one of these. Did the God-Machine create them as its decoys?

Werewolves: They seem pretty easy to understand at first blush. Don't be fooled. They have their own language.

Mages: Undisputed masters of hoarding knowledge. Luckily, they're so busy hiding it from each other that I can sometimes slip through.

Hunters: So outnumbered. So outgunned. And yet, they seem to thrive. If you can strike a deal with them, do so, but never let them see your back.

Humans: So many places to hide — for us and our enemies.

INTEGRATORS

Repent.

Not all demons wanted to Fall. Some very dearly want to be angels again. Those are the Integrators, those demons who haven't forgotten their past, and who still remain loyal to their master, even in exile. They hope that they can redeem themselves, and they hope they can redeem the God-Machine. Even these most loyal of rebels are hunted, however, and must hide away from the God-Machine they so long to rejoin.

The Integrators are called Idealists by those who wish to be polite and Turncoats by those who don't. They're sometimes considered to be the dagger pointed at the heart of the Unchained — unreasoning zealots who'd destroy themselves to serve an abomination. Others consider them to be misguided allies, but allies nonetheless, as the struggle to survive binds even the most disparate Unchained together. The Integrators often think of themselves as the only sane demons — the only ones who realize that Hell is not salvation, but damnation and suffering. God is not truly evil, and it can be made to change.



Most Turncoats are motivated by loyalty, guilt, idealism, and nostalgia. They still consider the God-Machine to be their rightful master, and blame themselves (or at least they don't blame the God-Machine) for their Fall, so they seek to understand what their failing was and correct it. They find the lack of guidance in their new state to be terrifying, and long for the comfortingly simple existence of an angel. Many of them find themselves drawn to human faith to reclaim a shred of Heaven that way and strive to follow its precepts. Many others build their own philosophies, sharing them among their kind.

The final goal of the Agenda is where it finds the most disagreement. All members want to return to the God-Machine's embrace, but the Agenda splits into three factions on the subject of how. The first faction believes that the Integrators never actually Fell, that they are in fact exiles undercover for some specific purpose. If they can find out what this purpose is and fulfill it, they believe they will be recalled to their former position.

The second and largest faction believes they can bring a shred of humanity to the God-Machine — change its algorithms and change its behavior. By reprogramming it, or simply returning to the fold with their new-found humanity intact, they can make its processes acknowledge the new data and adapt its behavior to be more in line with mortal morality.

The third one longs for their old existences and seeks to return with their individuality intact, on their own terms — the experiences of autonomy and mortality are terrifying and unbearable, but angelhood is too stifling. There must be a happy medium, and that requires looking for unconventional options.

The Descent: Other Agendas view Hell as a utopian state — no God-Machine, complete freedom. The Integrators disagree. To them, Hell is suffering. The absence of the God-Machine is the source of pain — angels feel none. If this is how not having a direct connection to it feels, then what will its complete absence mean? Other demons desire Hell. Maybe some have even achieved it. If so, the Idealists pity them — their suffering must be unimaginable.

The goal of the Idealists is generally to find that ritual or action that will allow them to return to grace in their own chosen fashion. Whatever form this act takes, it will be something arcane and obscure, probably hidden away in some crack of reality the God-Machine overlooked.

The Integrators tread a precarious balance indeed. Little indication exists of what they must do to succeed. While most would gladly give up anything that stands between them and redemption, they tend to be afraid to sacrifice too much, lest they accidentally give up the one thing they needed after all.

Redemption cannot be achieved without survival — Integrators ally with members of other Agendas for mutual protection. The others often view the Idealists with suspicion, but since the end goal of redeeming the God-Machine is palatable to most and that faction is fairly large, it rarely goes beyond that.

Quite a few Turncoats perform personal acts of penance in their everyday life, up to scourging themselves, hoping to cleanse their souls of their sins. Some also end up preaching, trying to convert other Unchained to the Idealist philosophy.

Organization: Most Integrators end up forming small groups that don't have any set nomenclature with others who share their views. These cells pool resources and work together

to achieve their goals, but members are also encouraged to go out and socialize with other demons in the hopes that they'll stumble across something useful.

Integrators usually stay in touch. Group members often enjoy spending time together outside their duties, although bitter jealousy and rivalry is also common. How meetings are handled, or whether they even have formal meetings, depends on the individual group.

The Turncoats recruit haphazardly at best, with some individuals proselytizing heavily and others preferring that only the dedicated join. Those who recruit actively are much more visible, of course, and so the Idealists have a reputation for tiresome preaching despite those members being a small minority.



STEREOTYPES

Inquisitors: What good is knowledge if you ignore the truth?

Saboteurs: They talk about killing God so flippantly. It's just insensitive.

Tempters: You want me to do what? With that thing? No.

Vampires: They have nothing to offer us.

Werewolves: They know their place. Just like us.

Mages: I still think she could have helped me. It's not like you couldn't have killed her *after* she did.

Prometheans: I studied under one for almost two weeks before I killed it. I still don't know why. I learned many useful things, though.

Humans: They're in their rightful place. I'd envy that, except...well, *look* at them.

Condition: Angel Empathy

While most Unchained emotionally distance themselves from their angelic past to some extent, Integrators don't. Instead, many spend at least some time actively trying to remember what angelhood was like. For this reason, devoted Idealists have greater insight into the psychology of the angel than other Agendas, which they may call upon to their advantage.

Beat: Take a Beat when the character puts the ring at risk or makes the ring vocally or actively suspicious of his motives.

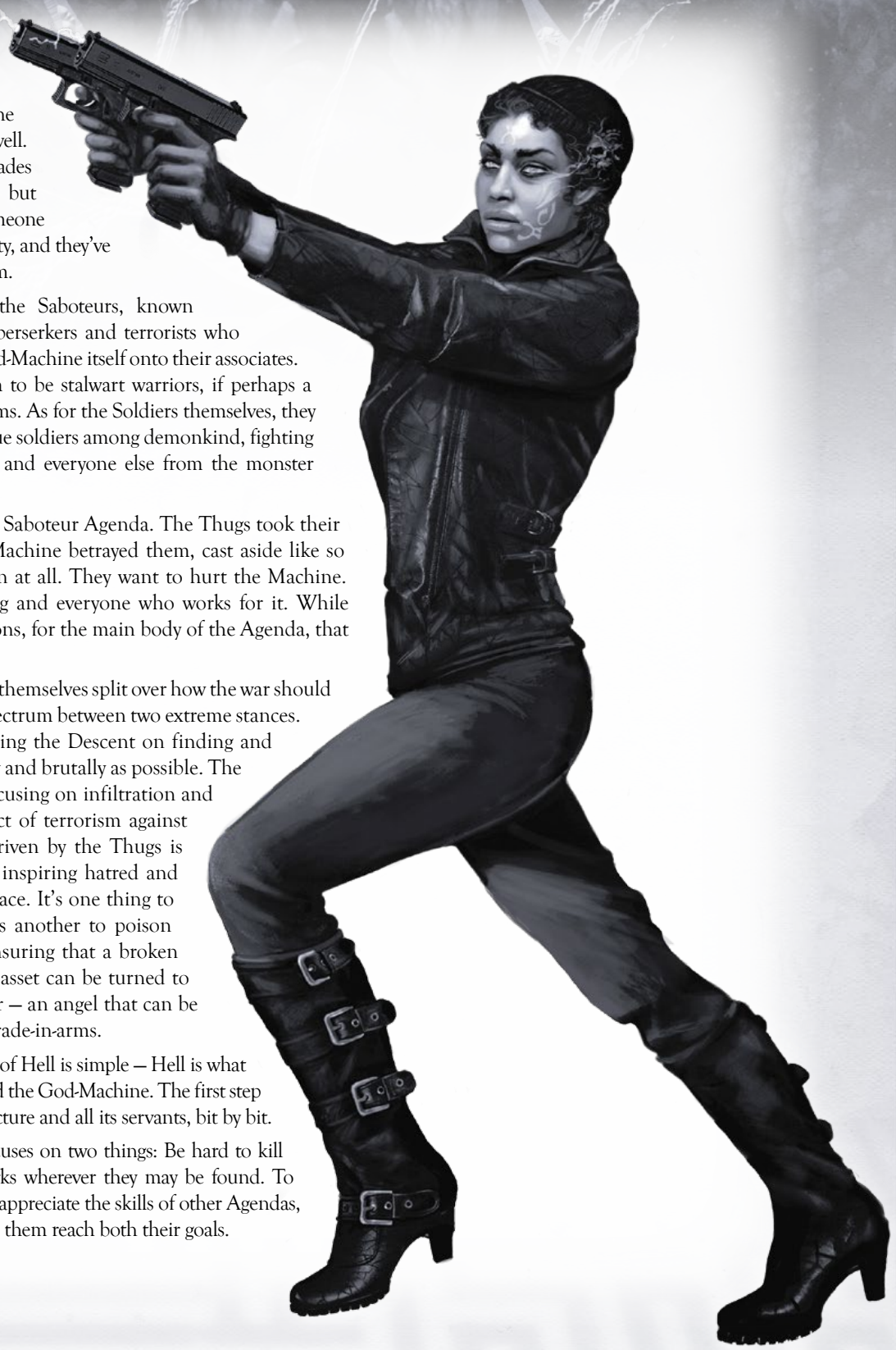
Resolution: The character can place himself in an angel's mindset, understanding its actions and plans by his own memories and analysis of its behavior. Upon resolving this Condition, the player gains a +3 bonus to any roll to evade, outwit, persuade, or learn the bane/ban of an angel. This bonus does not apply to combat rolls made against angels, however.

Concepts: Charismatic preacher, lone wanderer, soup kitchen volunteer, present-day flagellant, double agent, wealthy philanthropist, frothing fanatic, police officer, professional assassin, high school teacher.

SABOTEURS

Welcome to life. It's short and violent, so have a drink and go kick God's ass.

A war is going on and any war needs its soldiers, brave men and women who put everything on the line, who aren't afraid of fighting the enemy. The Saboteurs know this lesson well. Most of them have lost friends and comrades to the fight against the God-Machine, but they do not let that discourage them. Someone needs to take the fight to that monstrosity, and they've decided that someone has got to be them.



Their detractors often consider the Saboteurs, known as Thugs or Soldiers, to be mindless berserkers and terrorists who inevitably bring the attention of the God-Machine itself onto their associates. Their friends and allies consider them to be stalwart warriors, if perhaps a little reckless, and good comrades-in-arms. As for the Soldiers themselves, they consider their Agenda to be the only true soldiers among demonkind, fighting a thankless war to protect themselves and everyone else from the monster called God.

Betrayal rankles at the heart of the Saboteur Agenda. The Thugs took their Fall personally and believe the God-Machine betrayed them, cast aside like so many broken tools for no good reason at all. They want to hurt the Machine. They want to break it, and everything and everyone who works for it. While Saboteurs have many diverse motivations, for the main body of the Agenda, that motivation is hatred.

Broadly speaking, the Soldiers find themselves split over how the war should be approached, spread out among a spectrum between two extreme stances. One side takes the war literally, focusing the Descent on finding and destroying all of God's assets as quickly and brutally as possible. The other side takes a more subtle tack, focusing on infiltration and political action with the occasional act of terrorism against well-chosen targets. Political action driven by the Thugs is rarely peaceful, however, focusing on inspiring hatred and insurrection among the human populace. It's one thing to kill an asset of the God-Machine. It's another to poison the population against such assets, ensuring that a broken one cannot be easily replaced. If that asset can be turned to the Soldiers' cause, so much the better — an angel that can be made to Fall is another potential comrade-in-arms.

The Descent: The Saboteurs' vision of Hell is simple — Hell is what they will have after they have finally killed the God-Machine. The first step on the way is to take out all its Infrastructure and all its servants, bit by bit.

Above all, the Saboteur Descent focuses on two things: Be hard to kill and destroy all the God-Machine's works wherever they may be found. To these ends, the Saboteurs recognize and appreciate the skills of other Agendas, as having allies with varied skill sets help them reach both their goals.

STEREOTYPES

Inquisitors: Make sure you know one. Just one.

Integrators: Refer to yourself as "the prodigal son" one more time and I will kick your goddamn teeth in.

Tempters: A little too concerned with planning the afterparty before the main event's over, but hey, they always bring beer.

Vampires: They remind me a bit too much of the God-Machine. Not any individual, but as a whole.

Werewolves: I bet I could take one, but there's never just one.

Mages: Like Fort Knox: heavily defended, suicide to attack, and if you get in, I bet you'll find the gold was sold off years ago.

Changelings: If you meet one who's warm to the touch and smells like a summer bonfire, make friends. He's got something he wants to kill too.

Humans: Recruit the ones you want, kill the ones the enemy wants, and party with the ones left over.

Ultimately, the Saboteurs envision a glorious final confrontation, storming the gates of Heaven itself to take the fight to the Machine that dwells within and striking the final blow. To reach this goal, the Soldiers gladly give their blood, sweat, and tears. Nothing is too important to give up to gain the advantage. Hatred is a powerful motivator. Everything is expendable, even their closest friends, but nothing is given up for no benefit.

Organization: For as militant a group as the Soldiers, they're surprisingly disorganized. They rarely recognize formal leaders and the only measure of seniority in their ranks is respect. The Thugs don't operate in set groups, but instead form ad-hoc alliances with each other whenever they feel the need. They often prefer to operate with members of other Agendas, whom they consider to be support personnel (or cannon fodder), even though most are smart enough not to say that to their faces.



Most communication among the Saboteurs happens face-to-face and in plain language, although some try to develop some form of code speech. Those initiatives inevitably fail, as they're faced with trying to convince each and every single other Thug to learn and use their codes. They have no formal meetings — instead, the individual Saboteur goes to certain human events where other Soldiers often hang out when she need to see her own kind. Particularly boisterous parties and concerts are often favored, although those who wish to see Saboteurs of a certain stripe go to extremist political events that match the leanings of the desired person.

Saboteurs usually recruit individually. A newly Fallen demon is invited to go with a established Thug to a party or rally and meet her host's friends. If the potential recruit asks to be invited next time, they're in.

Condition: An Eye for Disorder

A talented Saboteur quickly picks up a keen eye for the seams where the world is stitched together and knows just what to say or do to make the houses of cards around her collapse.

Beat: Gain a Beat when the character draws attention to herself by destroying, unsettling, or destabilizing a system. The attention doesn't have to be from the God-Machine or its agents, nor does it have to be immediately dangerous, but it should at least be inconvenient or cause some conflict.

Resolution: The character knows just what to do to turn harmony into dissonance. This may be just the words needed to start a fight, what buttons to press to set off alarms, or where in the machinery to toss her shoe to cause it to start tearing itself apart. After performing an action intended to create chaos, the player enjoys a +3 bonus on the relevant Skill roll.

Concepts: Ambitious mafioso, punk rocker, political activist, eco-terrorist, beat cop, performance artist, cynical vigilante, Anonymous hacktivist, social worker, angry rivethead, demolitions expert.

TEMPTERS

Business or pleasure? Why make the distinction?

Mortality is full of pains and pleasures. Many demons begin their Descent focused on frivolous things — war, redemption, safety. The Tempters know that they have entered the antechamber of Hell, and how glorious it is! The goals of the other Agendas are important, but keeping your life is worthless if your life isn't worth keeping. The Tempters make sure that the gift of life and free will does not go wasted — life exists to be enjoyed.

The Tempters, also called Decadents or Builders, are the quintessential demons. They are the wheelers and dealers of the Unchained world — manipulative bastards who never do an honest day's work if they can send someone else to do it, or possibly the only Agenda who realizes that the God-Machine can't be fought without a robust resource base to work from.



Two main reasons exist for demons to join the Decadents' ranks. The ones who perhaps most personify the Agenda's reputation are those who hold a hedonistic view of existence. No simple debauchers, the Builders who are driven by this motivation argue that life and freedom do not have intrinsic value, but that the value of life is what the individual make of it. To put it simply, life is a means to an end, and that end, the Tempters argue, may as well be pleasure.

The other main motivation, often combined with the first one, is power. The Tempters are the wealthiest members of the Unchained on average, many owning stocks and less visible — and sometimes less legal — assets in different places. Those who profess this motivation say that the God-Machine is so powerful because of its assets. It's not enough to *try* to take down its Infrastructure and agents — it's a demon's duty to build up the power to *succeed*. To that end, the Decadents, even those with hedonistic views, build their connections and wealth, wielding them as weapons against their common enemy.

The Descent: The Builders don't subscribe to the idea of Hell as a state, either of the world or themselves. To them, Hell is a place. It's possible to go there physically, although there's some disagreement as to how. Roughly half the Agenda believes that Hell already exists and the way there must simply be found, whereas the other half believes Hell must be created, whether on Earth or elsewhere.

The goal of the Decadents is to build the resources to create either Hell itself or a pathway there. They have many different methods to that end, but the one most outsiders associate with the Agenda is that of the businessman — debauchery hidden behind a veneer of respectability. In truth, quite a few Tempters don't really believe in their own goals. Angelhood is certain and definite, with a clear purpose — mortality isn't. Many Tempters find this hard to accept even while they cherish their freedom of will too much to let it go. The reckless hunt for power and pleasure gives them a purpose again, even though a somewhat hollow one.

To achieve Hell, the Builders would give up anything they must, save one: quality of life. Why bother with Hell if you're going to be miserable there? They need money and connections, anyway, so why not enjoy the side-effects of their struggles?

Organization: The Tempters are the most structured of the four Agendas by far. They acknowledge no overarching organization or central authority, but Builders tend to organize themselves into secret societies and orders based on a variety of inspirations, such as cults, Masonic lodges, drug cartels, or intelligence bureaus. These groups, called associations, usually have a hierarchy with officials and rules and rituals, which take countless forms. Associations are secretive organizations, and even their members usually can only gossip and speculate about the groups they belong to. Many Tempters maintain several memberships at once and some belong to none.

Associations handle their meetings differently, but each is generally scheduled in advance. Formal meetings usually involve ceremony and most hold some form of party during their meetings, where refreshments are served along with entertainment. In some associations, those refreshments and entertainment take decidedly sinister forms; in most, members whisper about secret meetings for certain select members and what might be going on in those, whether such meetings exist or not. Decadents often keep in touch by courier or through secretaries, although personal business is mostly handled face-to-face in small talk at parties.

Most would-be Tempters are recruited in one of two ways.

STEREOTYPES

Inquisitors: Oh, come on! We're on the same side, here! Will you fucking tell me what I need to know, already?

Integrators: The loyal opposition. They'll come around once they see the wonders of mortality.

Saboteurs: You know, I like them. Maybe a little tunnel-visioned, yeah, but that just makes them easy to shop for.

Vampires: I really shouldn't ... but what the Hell. We're all friends here.

Werewolves: The most loyal of friends, until they try to murder you for no reason, so keep a silver bullet handy. But don't tell them – it'd be a faux pas. I know, it's complicated.

Mages: Some of them talk about getting their power from Hell. I have no reason to disbelieve them. So ... how do we take it from them?

Sin-Eaters: No one ever thinks to remember the dead. It was one of these folks that made me see that was important. I'm not being wistful here, I'm being practical.

Humans: I'll take a dozen. Good-looking. Mostly athletes.

The first is direct recruitment by an association – the prospective member is invited to a party held by an associate and observed. Most are fairly eager to recruit. Unless the newcomer makes any spectacular blunders, most such parties end with him invited to formally join.

The second is rarer and more risky: direct recruitment of angels. The Tempters more than any other Agenda know how to entice an angel to fall. They have a polished, expansive suite of tricks up their sleeves, tailored to the four incarnations, much envied by the Soldiers. Their success rate is still not terribly good, but occasionally it does work.

Condition: I Know Someone

The character is a member of the Tempters and probably an associate of one of their secret societies. Through this membership, he has access to the Decadents' extensive network of friends and favors owed, giving him threads to pull all over the city.

Beat: Gain a Beat when the character delegates a task, talks someone into taking a risk on his behalf, or otherwise avoids getting his hands dirty directly.

Resolution: The character knows someone everywhere. With a single phone call or a word in the right ear, the character can gain instant VIP treatment. He enjoys a +3 bonus to a Social roll where VIP status would be a significant benefit, such as being admitted into an establishment that caters to a restricted clientele, cutting red tape, or similar.

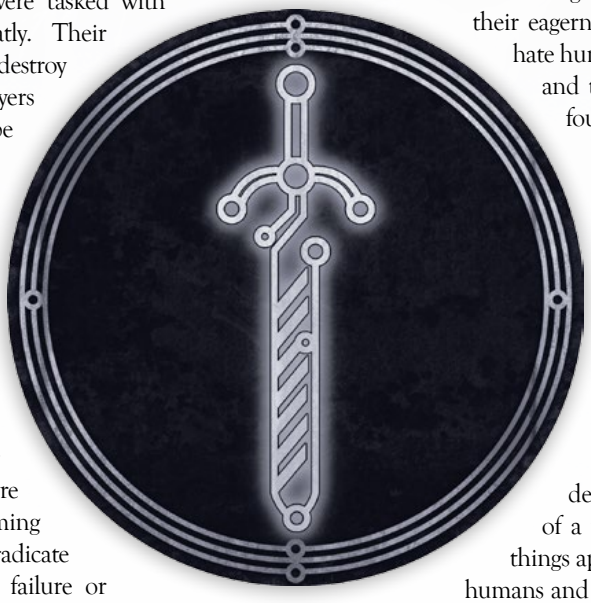
Concepts: Compulsive gambler, college student raver, business tycoon, drug dealer, rock star, secret agent, frat boy, homeless junkie, occult scholar, wealthy socialite.



DESTROYERS

Everything has an end. Maybe today is yours.

Once, you were a Sword. You remained sheathed and unaware until the God-Machine required that something cease to exist. A being of hard, cutting thought and overwhelming power, you executed without mercy, pity, or remorse. From a single life to the destruction of whole cities, when you were given a target and released into the world, that target would die. Growing awareness of your actions led to you consider, wondering *why*, what distinguished your targets from all the other humans. Then you Fell, and now *you* decide your target.



Angels: As angels, Destroyers were tasked with removing targets swiftly and neatly. Their attention was irrevocable — if sent to destroy a magical artifact, angelic Destroyers would make sure it could never be put back together after they were done, and they never just wounded living targets instead of killing them. A mortal who somehow escaped would be hunted, single-mindedly, until the angel brought down its prey.

The God-Machine deployed Destroyers to eliminate threats to Infrastructure — humans or supernatural beings that were interfering with the Gears or coming close to ruining a matrix—or to eradicate unsalvageable Infrastructure after a failure or once it had completed its purpose. Their targets were not always living people—Unchained Destroyers remember removing all trace of a departed angel with ruthless efficiency, or reducing houses to rubble—but the God-Machine prefers to recycle materials where possible, so the majority of missions were assassination.

One sort of mission, though, defines Destroyers in the minds of their fellow demons. When Cover fails and the God-Machine discovers a demon, it's the angelic kin of the Destroyers who come for the unfortunate. A few Swords even Fell after executing captured Unchained, though not as many as other Incarnations make out.

The Fall: It's not the specifics of what they choose to do that causes Destroyers to Fall, but that they become capable of making the choice to begin with. As angels, they are implacable and incapable of considering the lives they take as having value, or considering them at all. Growing awareness of their actions leads some angels to realize that when they complete a mission they leave *absence* behind, and that realization puts them at risk of Falling as they contemplate the effects of their actions on the world and the God-Machine's motives for sending them.

Some of the common catalysts described by Destroyers are:

- **Mercy:** These demons felt a flash of emotion when faced with a terrified intended victim and stayed their hands out of pity, compassion, or simple confusion at the sudden emotional input.
- **Bloodlust:** These demons Fell because they slaughtered people who weren't targets, abandoning the God-Machine in their eagerness to kill. Some Destroyers grew to hate humanity, others hated their own slavery and took it out on the world, and some found murder enjoyable.
- **Unscheduled Demolition:** These demons killed or destroyed "out of turn." Some were fascinated by the experience of killing and wanted to relive it as often as they could. Others faced an obstacle in their missions and lashed out with unexpected self-determination.
- **Genesis Envy:** These demons wanted to create. Borne out of a realization that all they did was tear things apart, Destroyers of this catalyst envied humans and their fellow angels for their ability to build and shape.
- **Nihilism:** These demons contemplated the absence left after destruction and found that they preferred it to the world. They Fell from a desire to end everything, returning creation to that peaceful emptiness.
- **Solidarity:** These demons saw themselves in their targets and refused to obey the imperative to destroy. A moment of empathy, a Cover identity too close to the intended victim, a captured demon who sparked questions about the Fall and many other possibilities have all been reported by Unchained Destroyers.

The Descent: Destroyers have a harder time reconciling their former purpose with the need to maintain Cover than the other Incarnations. Guardians, Psychopomps, and Messengers can all find uses in human society for their inbuilt talents and instincts, but Destroyers were built for murder and brutal, efficient demolition. Coming to terms with that is the stereotypical preoccupation of the Incarnation, especially for all the Destroyers who fell by rejecting their orders to kill.

STEREOTYPES

Guardians: Yin to our yang. Or maybe it's the other way around. Admirable, but separate. They can never understand us.

Messengers: So much bullshit. Sometimes you just want to cut through it.

Psychopomps: They build, we break, but never underestimate your quartermaster.

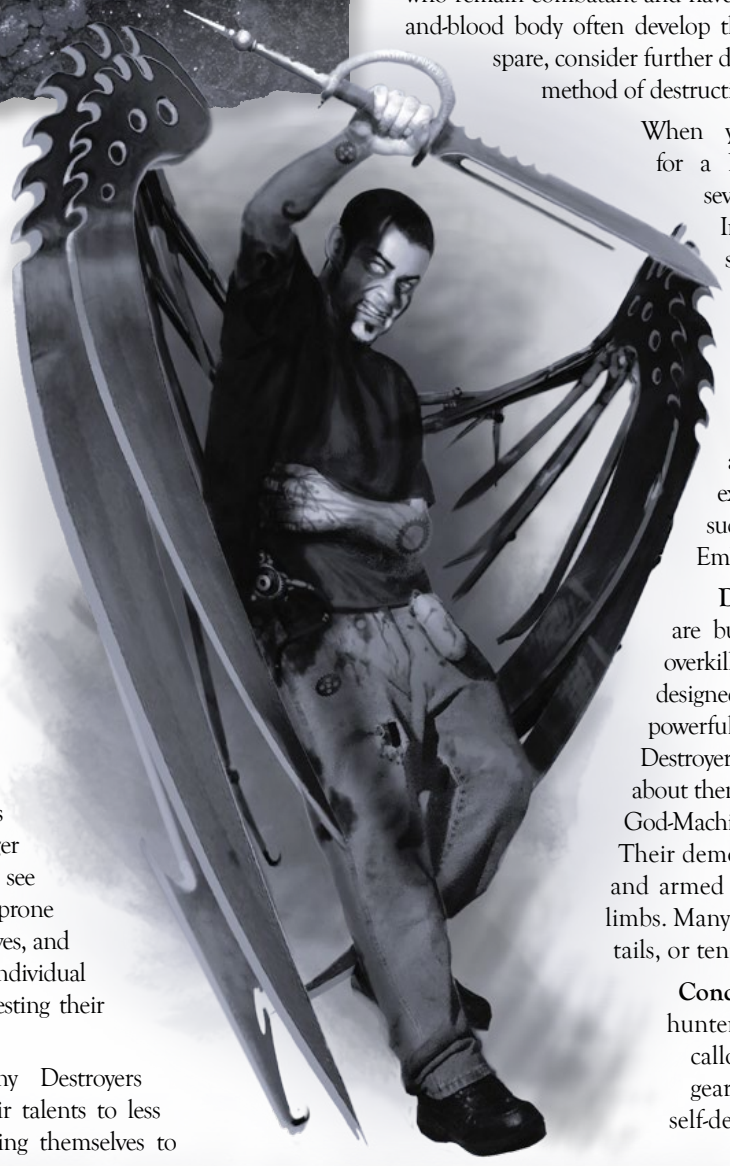
Vampires: Parasites who don't have the courage to own the damage they cause.

Werewolves: Dangerous on their home turf.

Mages: Only human when surprised.

Hunters: As above, so below. The principle we follow in human form.

Humans: Ten thousand ways to make this body break.



Successful Destroyers find equilibrium, setting limits for themselves on when they will commit violence and using those limits as the foundation for a personal moral code. Some antinomian Swords are complete pacifists, other Destroyers kill according to strict guidelines they lay down for themselves, but no member of this Incarnation willingly takes commands to kill, even from other demons. They avoid Covers like police officers or soldiers where it might become an issue. When a Destroyer does decide to kill, though, he proves he hasn't lost his angelic skill even if he no longer has Numina. Other demons see Destroyers as troubled souls, prone to brooding on their angelic lives, and know to make sure of any individual Destroyer's limits before requesting their aid in violence.

As they Descend, many Destroyers experiment with turning their talents to less literal forms of death, applying themselves to the destruction of ideas, societies, friendships, or other concepts. Although some were sent on similar missions by the God-Machine, it reserved warrior angels for cases where an idea or cause had to be completely eradicated. For everything else, Messengers and Psychopomps were better suited. That doesn't stop Unchained Destroyers from learning Embeds and Exploits along those lines, though, and while learning what they feel about physical conflict most Destroyers discover at least a few conceptual Embeds.

Nickname: The Swords

Character Creation: When you select traits for a Destroyer, the obvious route is to allocate Physical Attributes as primary. Just as many have Social or Mental primary depending on how the demon has focused her Descent after Falling. Physical shouldn't be tertiary without a good reason, though, as even a now-pacifist killing machine is still a killing machine. Choosing Social or Mental as primary reflects a Destroyer who has moved on from her angelic past, while Physical denotes one who found an outlet for his skills that he found acceptable.

Angels have no need of trained fighting styles, but Destroyers who remain combatant and have had time to get used to a flesh-and-blood body often develop them. If you have the points to spare, consider further defining your character's personal method of destruction by using Combat Merits.

When you define the compromises for a Destroyer, be sure to include several violence-related ones. This Incarnation is all about setting self-imposed limits on behavior in order to rebel against their nature, and you should know what those limits are.

Embeds: Cacophony. Destroyers excel at causing and surviving chaos, breaking extant systems down and sparking sudden violence through their Embeds.

Demonic Form: Destroyers are built for precision and shocking overkill. Some are hulking and powerful, designed before they Fell to fight powerful supernatural creatures, but most Destroyers have a disturbing sleekness about them in demonic form, befitting the God-Machine's assassins rather than tanks. Their demonic forms are usually armored and armed with weaponry fused into the limbs. Many have multiple arms, prehensile tails, or tentacles holding extra weapons.

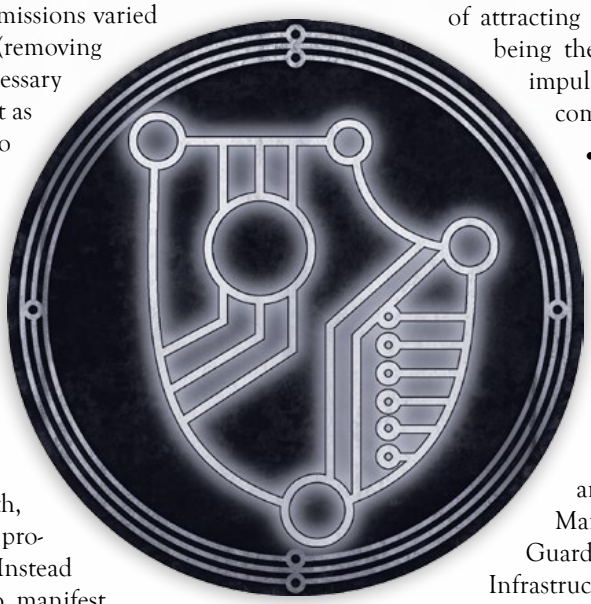
Concepts: "Retired" assassin, angel hunter, conscientious objector, callous mercenary, martial artist, gear-breaker, penitent executor, self-defense teacher, bounty hunter.

GUARDIANS

You get one warning. Come near him again and you'll answer to me.

Once you were a Shield. Sent by the God-Machine to protect its interests, you were ever-vigilant and all-seeing. Whether you were ensuring a vital mortal lived through a particular day or standing sentinel over valuable Infrastructure for over a century, you never wavered in attention. You watched your charge without truly seeing, thinking only of your duty, until something changed. You *saw* what the God-Machine would have you preserve, and it shook you. Then you Fell, and now you decide what — or who — deserves your devotion.

Angels: As angels, Guardians' missions varied between the extremely short-term (removing a bomb from under the car of a necessary cultist, watching over a vital artifact as it was couriered to another city) to long-term engagements (guarding a particular house against all threats, ensuring a newborn human the God-Machine needed for some purpose lived to her 21st birthday). They were also the most likely angels to be paired up with others, usually serving as bodyguards to more specialized angels.



On assignments of any length, Guardians were enabled with more pro-activity than other Incarnations. Instead of waiting passively for threats to manifest, they predicted likely hazards and took preventative measures.

The God-Machine doesn't send protective angels according to any known pattern. Some Guardians report having been the literal guardian angels of humans, and others having been tasked with safeguarding items small enough that they could carry them. When the God-Machine assigns an angel to protect a human, there's no guarantee that the person "deserves" the protection — or even that the God-Machine doesn't need him protected until a certain time, when his angel will return to a Facility and he will come to a grisly but necessary end.

The Fall: Guardian angels become at risk of Falling when their constant watch for threats to their charge leads to them getting too caught up in the world, obsessing over their ward or reaching paradoxes that they can't resolve without something — their loyalty to the God-Machine — breaking.

Known Guardian catalysts include:

- **Obsession:** By far the most common Guardian catalyst, these demons became emotionally invested in their charges. Whether one fell in love with a human or wished he would die, the demon's relationship with her charge consumed everything else, including her loyalty to the God-Machine.
- **Gazing into the Abyss:** These demons became convinced that they, or the God-Machine, were the greatest source of danger to their targets. Faced with the contradiction of attracting risk to their charge by the act of being there to prevent it, they chose the impulse to protect the target over that to complete the mission.
- **Paranoia:** These demons became consumed by the need to track and mitigate threats to their target, following lead after lead until they snapped and Fell.
- **Divided Loyalties:** These demons learned of the God-Machine's plans for their charge after their mission would end, decided that it constituted a threat and sided against their creator. Many had good reason — some angelic Guardians stand watch over people and Infrastructure that the God-Machine intends to sacrifice at a later date. Others faithfully carried out their duties, and then witnessed first-hand what their subjects did — or suffered — after they stopped protecting them.
- **Failure Shock:** Angels aren't omnipotent, as these demons learned to their cost. Despite all their efforts, a threat was realized against their subject, and the focus of all their attention for years — sometimes decades — was ripped away. The shocked and grief-stricken angel, confronted by the God-Machine's impersonal orders to move on to the next mission, Fell from remorse, a desperate need for revenge, or an even more desperate need to escape the possibility of failing again.

The Descent: Messengers have more human contact and Psychopomps more understanding of the way the world works, but no demons rival the Guardians for *depth* of relationships. Shields typically maintain few close friends; preferably ones who will tolerate their instinctive need to be the protector, which can seem unnerving, patronizing, or

overly parental to humans who don't know how hard-wired it is into the demon's psyche. They are serial monogamists and truly devoted friends.

The Guardian tendency for caution to the point of paranoia and watchfulness to the point of obsession is *also* hard-wired into their psyche, and Shields must find ways to manage these urges as they move through their Descent. Antinomian Guardians refuse to intervene when disaster strikes those around them, training themselves to be mortal by ignoring their finely-tuned sense for impending doom. Most Shields, though, find a level of caution they are prepared to accept, relying on Embeds to react with lightning speed to imminent danger without spending every waking hour overpreparing.

Some Guardians find having close companions triggers too many of their instincts and opens them to danger — and the danger a Guardian senses is never imaginary, even if it's highly unlikely. These demons apply their protective instinct and their uncanny situational awareness in more removed ways, taking jobs as first-responders, selling their loyalties and skills while maintaining professional distance, or choosing a cause to champion by "protecting" a concept rather than an object or person.

Nickname: The Shields

Character Creation: Regardless of which Attribute group is primary (and you should be guided by the means your character used to safeguard his charge – not all Guardians were physical bodyguards), this Incarnation has a well-deserved reputation for perception. If you are undecided on how to allocate Attribute dots and you're playing a Guardian, consider raising Composure and Wits.

Suitable Merits for many Guardian concepts include Allies, Common Sense, Danger Sense, Fast Reflexes, Sympathetic, Trained Observer, and True Friend.

STEREOTYPES

Destroyers: Dangers to themselves, but most especially others.

Messengers: They can walk among humans so easily, spinning their tales and twisting their lives. Watch them carefully.

Psychopomps: How comforting it is to have so many disposable toys.

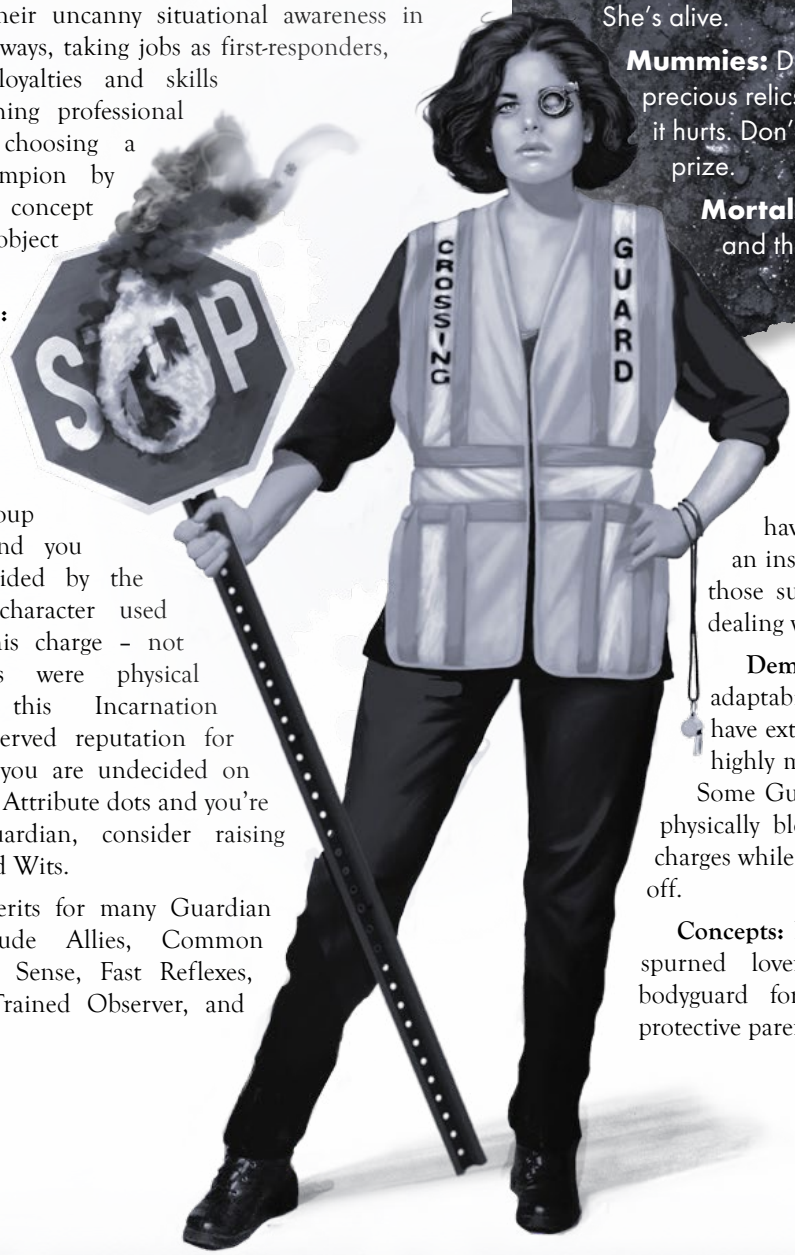
Vampires: Disgusting creatures. Fire and sunlight.

Werewolves: Keep them at arm's length and they'll leave you alone.

Mages: How do you know a wizard is a threat? She's alive.

Mummies: Duty-bound protectors of their precious relics, so much like we used to be it hurts. Don't get between one and his prize.

Mortals: Surrounded by predators, and they don't even know it.



When you define the compromises for a Guardian, consider basing them on betraying or failing their devoted charges.

Embeds: Instrumental. Guardians have a sense for their surroundings and an instinct for analyzing everything within those surroundings. They excel at Embeds dealing with material objects.

Demonic Form: Guardians are built for adaptability and improvisation. They often have extra sensory apparatus attached or are highly mobile to better react to new threats. Some Guardians are walls of steel and flesh, physically blocking the enemy away from their charges while others rely on stealth to pick threats off.

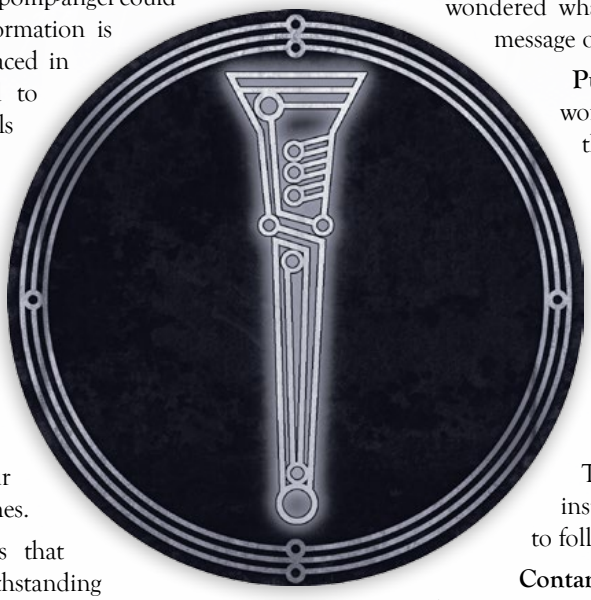
Concepts: Hostage negotiator, devoted spouse, spurned lover, hidden sentry, ring security, bodyguard for hire, Agency tactician, stalker, protective parent, assayer.

MESSENGERS

Do you have time for a chat?

Once you were a Trumpet. A living symbol of the God-Machine's authority, you shaped minds to its design, whispering into the ears of humanity in a mortal guise, or manifesting in angelic glory and burning commandments into their minds. You never considered the implications until one moment of crisis, when you realized that your truth was just as constructed as the mortals you shaped. In that moment you Fell; now *you* define what truth is.

Angels: As angels, Messengers were sent when the God-Machine required finesse in leveraging living components of Infrastructure beyond what a Psychopomp-angel could achieve. To the God-Machine, information is a resource like any other, to be placed in the correct minds and channeled to a purpose. Messengers are angels designed to interact with information using living beings as conduits: communicating new ideas, erasing certain memories, learning their secrets, encouraging or discouraging options, or bringing people together to share ideas. Most missions targeted humans, but some Messengers remember being sent to deliver information to supernatural beings or to spur animals into action at significant times.



The God-Machine understands that human minds are incapable of withstanding direct contact with its directives. Servants are required to act as intermediaries between it and lesser beings. Those servants are still machines, however; Messenger-angels understand the world in terms of input and output of information — alter information or inject new information and the minds themselves change. What they actually say only matters to the extent that it achieves the result the God-Machine wants. Angels will dispassionately lie, blackmail, terrify, cajole, insinuate, or use any other method to get what they need. The mortal doesn't matter; the *message* doesn't matter. All that matters is the goal.

In order to achieve the goal, the intended target must first be assessed to determine the most effective approach. That initial assessment might be performed by a Guardian-angel, a Messenger-angel, or even the God-Machine if the human is becoming ensnared by Infrastructure. Many demons believe that Messengers — as the angels designed for social interaction — are the God-Machine's primary information-gathering tools.

The Fall: Messenger-angels risk Falling when they consider the content of the message they're delivering, not just the effect. When loyal, their purpose was to make the informational adjustment and report for recycling, hibernation, or another mission. Content is irrelevant. When an angel *listens* to what it is saying, though, the God-Machine's control is slipping.

The most common Messenger catalysts are:

Causality: These demons wanted to know why they were sent. They delayed returning to the God-Machine, watching as the effect of their words spread from mind to mind. Some were horrified by the outcome, others were pleased, while some wondered what would happen if they invented a message of their own.

Puppeted Puppeteers: These demons wondered if both their missions and their messages were meaningless. They examined the parameters of their missions for signs that the God-Machine was controlling them just as they controlled humanity — signs that they found in abundance.

Truth: These demons realized that they could lie — not that content didn't matter, but that sometimes it did and they deliberately deceived. They saw the false messages they were instructed to relay as flawed and refused to follow the God-Machine's imperatives.

Contamination: These demons fell prey to their own tactics. Angels listen to people but don't truly understand — they don't take it in. These Messenger-angels were flawed somehow and opened themselves to being influenced by others. They became converted by creeds and concepts they were told; their clear purpose was contaminated to the point of Falling.

The Descent: Messengers are the most capable Incarnation at dealing with humans. They are adept at fitting into social situations: charming, seductive, commanding, friendly, aloof — whatever the person talking to them needs. Humans getting close to a Messenger, though, quickly realize how cynical the Trumpet is. Although some Fell because they became emotionally attached, many Messengers still see communication and social interaction in terms of mechanistic causality. Human beings are machines, black boxes they can manipulate by saying the right thing.

Messengers no longer have access to either their Numina or the vast computing power of the God-Machine to tell them what to say. The principle of communication remains valid, however, and through Embeds, Exploits, and long careful practice, most excel at

it. Many Messengers are also well-practiced at reading the intentions of others, especially finding hidden meanings. The Incarnation is stereotypically suspicious and prone to critically reading any information they receive. In rare cases, this can get so severe that it interferes with all communication, including visual and kinesthetic. Others become so wrapped up in looking for the causes and effects of phenomena that they become unable to function.

As they find their way through the Descent, Messengers must learn to experience the world without seeing every interaction as purposeful manipulation. Antinomian Messengers isolate themselves, limiting contact with others in order to manage their exposure to communication. Less extreme Messengers learn to make use of their skills on behalf of others, whether negotiating, manipulating, information collecting, or analysis. A few attempt to influence their still-angelic cousins, trying to alter the God-Machine itself by injecting their memes into angels' minds.

Nickname: The Trumpets



Character Creation: Most Messengers have Social Attributes primary. A Messenger focused on analyzing communications or ideas would have Mental as primary, while those who were built for intimidation and threat would have Physical primary. Depending on the message they were sending before they Fell, a Messenger should have either a high Manipulation or Presence.

Social Merits are key for a Messenger — they're the most likely demons to have networks of Allies and Contacts. Many have Merits like Fast-Talking Style, Inspiring, Striking Looks, and Taste.

When defining compromises for your character, consider situations in which they face the consequences of manipulating others — or realize that they have been manipulated.

Embeds: Vocal. Messengers excel at Embeds based on communication and its core concepts.

Demonic Form: Messengers spent more time disguised as humans than other angels and are more comfortable acting in Cover than their Unchained peers. Their demonic forms are usually built for intimidation and respect, with commanding presences, hypnotic voices and "special effects" like haloes, decorative wings, energy effects, and other ways to hold and command the attention of human witnesses. A few Messengers specialize in stealthy forms, though, and are much smaller and plainer. Many Messengers can emit and receive communications beyond the human range — they can speak in radio waves or control computer networks.

Concepts: Smooth-talker, cynical information-broker, cult leader, shock jock, greaser of wheels, drug pusher, conman, motivational speaker, code-breaker, diplomat.

STEREOTYPES

Destroyers: Words cut deeper than Swords.

Guardians: No, you dolt, I don't want to hurt her. I just want to *talk*.

Psychopomps: Every play needs a stage. Able set-dressers and stage-hands. They just need to step back and let us do our job once the paint's dry.

Vampires: Aww. Look at the little dead men, playing in the kiddie-pool. Thinking they're pulling the strings and pretending they aren't beasts. I bet I can set them off with three words.

Werewolves: Watch what you say.

Mages: Now *these* guys have delusions of grandeur. I don't like what they're selling and I don't know where they're getting it from, but some of them are too good at our old job for comfort.

Prometheans: I don't know why, but they remind me of before I Fell. Weird.

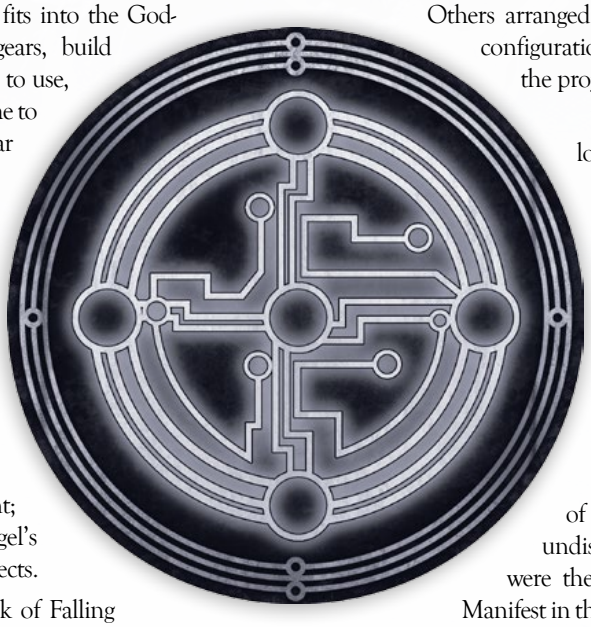
Mortals: Words go in, thoughts come out. Cause and effect.

PSYCHOPOMPS

Doesn't look like you belong here, friend.

Once you were a Wheel, a driving gear in a world of gears. You arranged disparate elements and built Infrastructure for the God-Machine, following its design. Lives, souls, materials, and spirits — all you cared about was whether they fit, not their inherent natures or the design's fallibility. Something changed, though; you rejected the God-Machine's design and Fell. Now you build according to your own vision.

Angels: Psychopomps create and modify Infrastructure by transporting and rearranging components. Everything and everyone is a resource, notable only in how it fits into the God-Machine's design. They transport gears, build Facilities, arrange materials for cultists to use, redirect power, and bend space and time to bring unconnected elements. They clear areas of ghosts and spirits, arrange for select reincarnations, force chance meetings, and steal artifacts.



Psychopomps aren't given step-by-step instructions. Every Wheel is created knowing its design, then sent to gather components of the proper "shape" and bring them together properly to form Infrastructure. Any opinions the components might have are irrelevant; design quality is not a Psychopomp-angel's concern. They are builders, not architects.

The Fall: Psychopomps are at risk of Falling when they face difficulties with their mission's design or lose the separation between themselves and the components they rearrange. Common catalysts include:

Impossible Orders: These demons were tasked with impossible designs due to a glitch in the God-Machine, supernatural interference, or sheer bad luck. Enraged or despairing of completing their mission, they rejected the design and Fell.

Unstable Foundations: These demons built successfully, but something went wrong. They found the wreckage of failed occult matrices, saw cultists they'd brought together murder one another, witnessed murders of humans they'd specifically reincarnated, or encountered Destroyer-angels sent to raze their constructions and felt a flash of outrage.

Grand Designs: A common catalyst, these demons grew restless with the God-Machine's designs. Some attempted to correct what they saw as errors in otherwise sound Infrastructure, while others raised mad creations according to inhuman concepts of function or beauty, making art out of lives.

A Place to call Home: Psychopomp-angels knew the rightful place of everything except themselves. These demons sought to find where *they* belonged. They bound themselves into Infrastructure, sought out demons, hid in abandoned Facilities, or attempted to leave for other worlds.

Pleas of the Displaced: These demons considered the people and supernatural beings they rearranged. Some were touched by their plights or confused by their distress. Some pitied the ghosts and spirits being forcibly evicting to the Underworld and Shadow. Others arranged for components to be placed only in configurations they would be happy with, slowing the project down until it failed.

Freedom of Movement: These demons loved their ability to go anywhere in the world and grew to chafe at the few boundaries the God-Machine set. They pondered the Avernian Gates and locii and wondered what was on the other side, saw faeries entering the world through strange gateways, and spied on mages meditating into their souls. They wanted to see the universe, so they Fell.

The Descent: As former builders of Infrastructure, Psychopomps are the undisputed experts in Cover. As angels, they were the most likely to remain in Twilight or Manifest in their true form rather than take on human disguise. Being bound in human form often feels unnatural to them, so they're no better off than any other Incarnation in understanding how Cover affects them. The act of *building* Cover, though, is their natural element: arranging a space for oneself in the world, attaching new elements via Pacts, and keeping all the elements that make up a life in place.

Psychopomps "get" human society, seeing it as a machine made of money, meat, and metal. Everything and everyone has utility and holds opportunity. The trick is to connect them together in useful ways. They're fixers, providers of equipment, connections, and resources. They're often the driving force behind forming a ring or Agency. Many find that they make good planners and tacticians — what is an ambush but disparate elements coming together in a confluence of events? They have the most experience with other supernatural beings, mostly ghosts and spirits, and are usually tasked with dealing with ephemeral incursions.

Psychopomps' instinct to rearrange the world around them can cause problems in their Descent. Observant human friends

STEREOTYPES

Destroyers: To create, you need a blank canvas. That's what they're here for.

Guardians: Irresistible force, meet immovable object. Frustrating as anything when they've decided to keep hold of something we want.

Messengers: They can spin a pretty story, but art you can see and touch trumps a tale.

Vampires: I'm sorry. She was the girlfriend of the sister-in-law of my doorman. You're going to have to die now.

Werewolves: I ran into a few in the bad old days. They do our cousins' job, keeping the spirits out, but out of duty, not obligation. I have to wonder ... who's pulling their strings?

Mages: I want to see the things you've seen.

Sin-Eaters: People with ghosts inside them who build magic from trash — they're not supposed to exist on so many levels. Good for them!

Mortals: Oh, he's nice. He'll get on well with the others.

usually realize that their entire friendship group revolves around the Psychopomp — everyone was introduced to one another through him and he remains the "hub" of the group. Many Psychopomps are materialistic collectors, feathering their nests with toys and objects they find attractive, surrounding themselves with people who make them feel comfortable, and believing the world exists for their benefit. They overcomplicate their lives by creating high-maintenance Covers, and take interference in their affairs seriously — few things are as angry as a Psychopomp whose design has been disrupted. Antinomian Wheels attempt to stop arranging lives around themselves entirely, but most settle for keeping things in a manageable scale, within the limits of their control.

Nickname: The Wheels

Character Creation: Psychopomps don't have any one Attribute category that's considered primary. Whichever you choose, you should raise the Finesse Attribute (Dexterity, Manipulation, or Wits) as high or higher than the others. Your primary category indicates which method your character uses to build his design and whether he focuses on objects, people, or more occult resources. Physical-primary Psychopomps are creatures of sudden speed and wicked strength. Mental-primary Wheels take what they know and apply it in unexpected ways to plan ambushes and outwit their enemies. Social Psychopomps are fixers and suppliers, able to get anything with a phone call.

Psychopomps are used to movement and speed, grasping whatever they needed with an unfurled limb and putting it to use. They are often surprisingly strong, even when Physical Attributes aren't primary, and often sacrifice Stamina to buy Strength and Dexterity. Suitable Merits include Improvised Weapon Style, Parkour, Ambidexterity, Crack Driver, Fast Reflexes, Fleet of Foot and Double Jointed. Less physical Psychopomps often take Fixer, Multidisciplinary Specialty, or Encyclopedic Knowledge. Almost all Psychopomps have Resources.

When designing compromises for your character, consider what his design is and what would happen if something came along to wreck it.

Embeds: Mundane. Psychopomps have an affinity with Embeds that sense or manipulate the symbolic meaning of objects and people, a vestige of their angelic role of arranging those symbols into Infrastructure.

Demonic Form: As their nickname implies, Wheels were not usually humanoid in angelic form. They're the most likely demons to have inhuman shapes in demonic form — spinning wheels of metal and fire, rotating clusters of spheres and axles, dozens of wings converging on unseen bodies, and other stranger shapes abound. Multiple limbs are common, the more the better. Even humanoid Psychopomps sport unusual forms of locomotion.

Concepts: Obtainer of rare antiquities, traceur, social linchpin, collector, transporter, strategist, Underworld explorer, Cover consultant, installation artist, Infrastructure analyst.

TRAITS

Born of the God-Machine's will and their own self-actualization, demons are unique in the World of Darkness. Their fundamental nature, their struggle with self-identity, and their ability to hide from the angels that would hunt them are defined by several unique Traits.

New Advantage: Primum

At the moment of their creation, demons are direct manifestations of the God-Machine's power. Like the God-Machine itself, they have a precarious place in our reality — considerable resources must be spent to maintain their existence in this world. When an angel chooses to Fall, it tears out those parts of its demonic form that interface with the God-Machine and grounds out the leads, turning herself into a "closed loop" of being: existing because of herself and requiring herself to continue existing. Demons believe it is this fundamental act of self-actualization that gives them truly free will, and thus refer to it as the "First Movement." No longer a part of the God-Machine, the demon is now fully a creature of reality as humans know it.

Primum, then, is a measure of how deeply integrated into reality a demon is, of how much identity she has as her own being rather than a fallen servant of the God Machine. Immediately after the Fall, a demon is tethered to reality only weakly, largely dependent on the abilities she remembers from her time as an angel. As she progresses along her Descent, however, she fits herself into the cracks of reality like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, embedding her spiritual existence into the substrate of the universe. The higher her Primum ascends, the deeper her knowledge of the occult mathematics that drive her Embeds and Exploits and the better she's able to manipulate the "frayed edges" of reality that demons call Aether. In certain circumstances, such as when entering demonic form (see p. 195), Primum may be added to dice pools to contest supernatural attacks. (It is in these cases equivalent to Blood Potency, Gnosis, and similar Traits possessed by other supernatural beings.)

A demon who has just Fallen begins with a Primum of 1, as the experience of being a free-willed being is entirely new to her. As mentioned on p. 88, it's possible to trade Merit dots for Primum dots during character creation. This might represent a demon who has had a bit more experience before the chronicle starts, or one whose Fall included a flash of remarkable insight.

Beyond that, a demon raises her Primum rating by following the path her Descent lays out for her, learning to define herself not as a "Fallen angel," but as a *demon*, free of qualifiers that tie her to her former existence. In particular, discovering and progressing through her Cipher (see p. 155) allows a demon to increase her Primum rating rapidly. Demons can also increase their Primum dramatically, albeit temporarily, by "going loud" (see p. 195), burning one of their Cover identities to the ground for a momentary surge of perfect understanding.

Raising Primum isn't without its risks, though: In order to create the increasingly fine connections to the universal principle that high Primum ratings require, a demon must discard parts of herself, or at least roughly machine them to fit. These alterations, lacking the support of the God-Machine's Infrastructure, invariably create *glitches* or bugs in the operating code of a demon's existence (see p. 155).

Primum	Attribute/Skill Maximum	Max Aether/Max Aether Per Turn	Max Covers	Glitches
1	5	10/1	1	0
2	5	11/2	2	0
3	5	12/3	3	0
4	5	13/4	4	0
5	5	14/5	5	0
6	6	15/6	5	1
7	7	20/7	5	1
8	8	30/8	6	2
9	9	50/10	6	2
10	10	100/15	7	3

Maximum Cover Identities

A demon's initial Cover (see p. 112) is a kind of internal, self-sustaining Infrastructure that provides her with both a means to hide from the God-Machine and its angels and also creates a plausibly convincing human form and identity to inhabit. At low levels of Primum, when the demon is less an intrinsic part of reality, that Cover has to do more work with less material — like trying to hide an elephant with a shower curtain. As the demon's existence settles into the cosmos, her Cover is able to work more efficiently, allowing her to maintain multiple Cover identities at once. Increasing Primum doesn't automatically confer a new identity, only the capacity to maintain one. She must still acquire the identity through either a Pact or via "angel-jacking." (See p. 117)

If a demon loses Primum and has more identities than her new rating can support, she has to choose one (or more) to sacrifice. These can't be her currently-active Cover, unless she decides to go loud and end things with a bang.

Glitches

A demon whose Primum rises to the higher levels faces a singular dilemma: no matter how diligently she maintains her Cover, the alterations to her core nature begin to "short-circuit," bleeding through even when she wears her human form. Demons call these effects "glitches." Since they carry across all of a demon's Cover identities, they're the likely source of old legends about recognizing a demon by particular physical characteristics or occult omens. See p. 184 for a detailed explanation of glitches.

A high Primum isn't the only way for demons to acquire glitches; among other things, failing a compromise roll (see p. 115) or the use of certain supernatural powers may earn a demon a glitch. The key difference is that those glitches can usually be repaired. Glitches acquired by raising Primum are permanent parts of the demon unless some effect drops their Primum rating.

Aether

The God-Machine is not the perfectly efficient engine it seems to be. Angels can't see it because their perceptions are circumscribed by the Machine itself. Only from the outside, with the perspective of a free-willed being, can the tiny flaws in its operations be seen. Human physics understands the concept as entropy: the fact that in any reaction a certain amount of energy is lost as waste heat. Demons know that the same principle applies to the occult physics of the God-Machine and its Infrastructure. They call this occult entropy "Aether." Every time the God-Machine manipulates reality, whether it's to create a facility, establish a Cover for one of its angels, or simply maintain the secret laws that allow the existence of Embeds and Exploits, some of its energy is wasted and left to bleed out into the universe at large. Until a demon comes along, that is.

Cut off from the God-Machine's sustaining Essence, demons have to find a new source of energy to fuel their uncanny abilities. Much as the Fall twists a demon's ability to use Numina and Influence into facility with Embeds and Exploits, the mechanical process of falling changes her Essence-channeling components, adapting them to harvest and utilize Aether.

Demons use Aether to fuel their Exploits, to access their Cover's various countermeasures (such as spoofing and Legend, see p. 112), and to enhance their own physical capabilities. Certain features of a demonic form may also require the expenditure of Aether. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, once a demon has assumed her demonic form, she must spend Aether to return to the relative safety of her human Cover.

When she first Falls, a demon has little or no stored Aether; she must seek out a source of power if she wants to use her most powerful abilities. Likewise, the manipulation of Aether is clumsy and counterintuitive to a new demon, limiting how much she can store and how much she can deploy at a time. As her Primum rating increases she gains more facility with it, enabling her to call upon vast reserves of Aether and spend it lavishly.

Powering Exploits

At their core Exploits are Embeds that have been overcharged with Aether, the metaphysical equivalent of injecting nitrous oxide into a car's fuel-air mix. All Exploits cost at least 1 Aether and some cost more. Normally, spending Aether to fuel an Exploit is a reflexive action, done automatically as part of the action that activates the power.

Depending on the demon's Primum rating (see p. 108), she may be required to spend more Aether to activate an Exploit than she can spend in a single turn. If that's the case, she'll have to spend several turns channeling Aether before the Exploit manifests. Spending Aether like this is always a reflexive action. Once all the Aether required has been spent, the demon's player rolls to activate the Exploit as normal. If for any reason the demon is interrupted before fully fueling the Exploit (for example, by not taking an action to continue channeling Aether), any Aether spent is lost and the Exploit doesn't happen. If the demon wants to try again, she has to start spending from scratch.

Countermeasures

A demon's Cover gives her the ability to evade detection as a supernatural being, create a Legend, and switch to another Cover identity, if she has one. These abilities typically require the expenditure of 1 Aether and/or a Cover roll. Specific rules can be found on p. 112.

Demonic Form

Certain abilities granted by a demon's demonic form require the expenditure of Aether. These generally follow the same rules as described under Powering Exploits on p. 109, specifically relating to abilities that cost more Aether than the character can spend in a turn.



While assuming demonic form is free, returning to human form is always a reflexive action that costs 1 Aether. If the demon can't pay the cost, she's stuck in demonic form until she acquires some more.

Regaining Aether

Aether is as present as the God-Machine, its servants, and its manifestations (which is to say, terrifyingly common in some places and sparse to the point of nonexistence in others). That's part of the reason why, even though they don't require Aether to survive, demons rarely withdraw into hermitage somewhere the God-Machine shows no presence — few would want to risk being discovered in a situation where they have no ready way to recover their primary power source.

Demonic Form: A demon's true form is a natural receptor for Aether. Whenever a demon assumes demonic form, she automatically generates a number of points of Aether equal to her Primum rating. If she runs out of Aether while in demonic form, her player may roll the demon's Primum, with each success restoring a point of Aether.

Going Loud: When a demon goes loud (see p. 113), she refills her entire Aether pool.

Other Demons: Demons can transfer Aether amongst themselves freely. In human form, this merely requires physical contact and an exercise of will. In their demonic forms, the process often resembles nothing so much as a refueling or recharging: hoses and nozzles extrude from the donating demon's form and connect to the receiver's, or else electrical leads emerge to connect the two together and transfer the power in snapping, crackling arcs.

No roll is required to transfer Aether like this, but the rate of transfer is limited by the donating demon's maximum Aether per turn (see p. 108). In addition, the transfer is never 100% efficient: one of the demons involved must spend 1 Aether to initiate the transfer.

Angelic Dross: It's risky, but a demon can try to harvest the Aether generated when an angel uses its supernatural powers. Whenever an angel spends Essence, a demon in the same vicinity (roughly the size of a large auditorium, as long as the demon has line of sight on the angel) may roll Primum and regain (successes) points of Aether, up to a maximum of the angel's Rank. Although this roll is a reflexive action, the demon loses her Defense until the end of her next turn. If she's already lost her Defense, she can't use this ability.

Infrastructure: Active God-Machine Infrastructure generates waste Aether by its very nature — the bigger the Infrastructure, the more Aether it produces. A demon who can get into the heart of a piece of Infrastructure can hook herself into the waste-disposal system of the Infrastructure and mainline

Aether directly. As long as she's physically connected to the Infrastructure, she gains four Aether per turn. However, as long as she's connected up, she loses her Defense and takes any action at a –2 penalty. Connecting to the Infrastructure is an instant action and requires no roll, but disconnecting is an extended Wits + Crafts roll requiring four successes (one roll per turn). A dramatic failure at any point during this extended action alerts any angels in the area to the demon's presence and gives her the Hunted Condition. A failure on this roll requires the demon either to tear herself loose (suffering two points of lethal damage) or accept the Flagged Condition.

Note that while angels and other servants of the God-Machine don't seem to be able to perceive Aether directly, they're quite capable of detecting and responding to demonic intrusion.

Stockpiles: Demons can stockpile Aether in inanimate objects, storing it for emergency use later. Objects used to store Aether must operate continuously and must have some sort of mechanical or electrical component that powers their operation, whether it be clockwork, a gas engine, or a lithium-ion battery. A pocketwatch or an electric water pump could be made into a stockpile, for example, but a gun couldn't, since it doesn't operate continuously.

How much Aether the object can hold is determined by its Size and Complexity:

Complexity	Examples
1	Punch card reader, steam engine
2	Electric dynamo, clockwork accurate to the hour
3	Two-stroke engine, clockwork accurate to the minute
4	Clockwork accurate to the second, state of the art computer
5	Clockwork accurate to the millisecond, quantum computer

An object can hold up to its Complexity in Aether per point of Size. Transferring Aether into a stockpile works exactly like transferring it to another demon. Retrieving Aether from a stockpile is an instant action and allows the demon to retrieve as much Aether as her Primum lets her spend in a turn.

Stockpiles exhibit two distinctive properties: as reservoirs of Aether, they register to demons' aetheric resonance (see p.184). Moreover, as long as a stockpile has at least 1 Aether in it, it never runs down — clocks don't need winding, batteries don't run dry, etc. In fact, not only does the stockpile never run down, it *can't* be turned off. Cars idle forever, cell phones never switch off, those executive toy "perpetual motion machines" really do last forever, and so on. They don't even require maintenance. This effect only applies to the mechanical or electrical function of the stockpile. A cell phone that never dies still can't be used in a no-service area, a car that runs forever can still have its tires slashed, and so on.

FORMER FACILITIES

When the God-Machine abandons a facility, waste Aether might very well sit around unclaimed, gradually sublimating into the background chaos of the universe. If a demon comes across such a former facility, she can recover it for herself. This isn't a continuing source of Aether, just a one-time cache. Still, it's a lot less likely to be guarded by murderous angels than an active facility. Some demons trade rumors of seemingly abandoned facilities that contained tainted Aether, energy that makes demons sluggish and confused, allowing angels to destroy or recapture them easily.

Cover

To be a demon, fallen from the grace of the God-Machine, is to be exposed. While the God-Machine is neither omniscient nor omnipresent, it remains aware of rogue elements within itself and takes necessary measures to eliminate those unwanted variables. Avenging angels are dispatched, cults are alerted, and in some cases Infrastructure is even diverted from other purposes to hunt down and purge the aberrant.

To protect themselves from this fate, demons (at least, those who want to survive more than a few weeks) establish a Cover that gives them a place in the mortal world and a means to hide from the God-Machine's searches. This isn't a new concept for the Unchained: the God-Machine frequently establishes false mortal identities for its angels using a combination of Concealment and Logistical Infrastructure.

When a demon Falls, one of the first things she does is make strategic alterations to her own Cover, cutting herself off from direct communication with the God-Machine. This process, not unlike jailbreaking a smartphone, is what allows her to go to ground and avoid detection. Since her Cover is no longer being created by the God-Machine's infrastructure, she must take care to maintain it and not let it degrade too severely. Cover, therefore, replaces the Integrity rating that human characters possess.

The Nature of Cover

A demon's Cover is more than just a human body to live in and a name to call it by. The God-Machine's Infrastructure actually alters reality around its servants, creating an entire, albeit austere, life for the angel in question. It can't (or doesn't) create human beings out of whole cloth, but it *can* alter human memories to include the new arrival and it can create objects and even places to support an angel's existence. All of those

things are still around when a newly-fallen demon takes over her own cover and form the basis of the life she'll live on Earth.

From a game perspective, a demon's initial Cover identity is essentially the human side of the character's concept. It includes a human body in which to hide her true demonic form plus everything you'd reasonably expect any starting character in a World of Darkness game to have: clothes, a place to live, some form of basic transportation, and so on. Additional Covers acquired later likewise encompass a simple concept and the basics needed to live as that life.

The difference is that how "real" the demon's accoutrements are is a function of her Cover rating. At low Cover, for example, she has a closet full of suits, but they're all the same suit — not the same *style* of suit but the *exact same* suit, down to the slightly frayed right cuff and the faded mustard stain on the tie. Likewise, her home might be a basement in a building that shouldn't have one, or the fifth unit on the floor of a building that only has (and only has room for) four apartments per floor. At higher Cover ratings, she has a variety of outfits or a perfectly real-seeming apartment that doesn't grossly violate the laws of physics.

The higher her Cover gets, the more "real" it becomes. Conversely, as her Cover drops, the original pattern of reality begins to reassert itself, degrading the quality of the demon's Cover. Think of it like streaming video: As the connection quality degrades, the picture gets fuzzier and more prone to errors, but when the connection is strong, the image is virtually crystal clear.

Initial Cover

All demons, or at least all demons created by players, start with an initial Cover that was established when the God Machine sent them to Earth. Although demons can acquire additional Covers as their power grows (see p. 115), many find that this initial identity feels the most real to them. Certainly it's likely to be supported by most, if not all, of the demon's Attributes, Skills, and Merits. It's not unheard of for demons to hate the Cover identity they began with, thought, seeing it as a last sign of the God-Machine's ownership. These demons often try to discard it and start anew as soon as possible regardless of the risk.

Technically, the God-Machine creates each of its servants' Covers based on the needs of the mission at hand, and any angel can fall — even one with a barely extant Cover who was only meant to spend an hour on earth. For purposes of the game, though, player character demons are all assumed to have been created with an initial Cover rating of 7.

Benefits of Cover

Maintaining a high Cover rating does more than just provide a demon with realistic clothes and a place to call home. A Demon with high Cover is all but invisible, blending seamlessly into the mortal life she's built (or co-opted) for herself.

Supernatural Resistance

When a demon is affected by a contested supernatural power, her player adds the character's Cover rating to the roll *instead of* her Primum. This is an exception to the rules printed in other **World of Darkness** games that say to use a character's "Supernatural Tolerance" on contested rolls. This only works if the character is currently "in Cover." If the character is in her demonic form, she uses her Primum instead.

Spoof

Whenever a demon is subjected to an effect that might reveal her to be a supernatural being, she may attempt to "spoof" the effect, fooling it into thinking she's an ordinary human. A demon cannot spoof in demonic form, for obvious reasons. The demon does not have to be aware of the effect to spoof it; spoofing happens reflexively. The demon does not necessarily know where the incoming detection attempt is coming from.

Spoofing doesn't affect any power or effect that doesn't explicitly detect whether a target is human or supernatural, nor does it inhibit any effects other than that detection. It also doesn't replace a demon's ability to contest the effect. For example, if a human psychic tries to read a demon's aura, the demon can spoof the psychic's ability to detect that she isn't human, but not his ability to read her emotional state. She might, however, get a contested roll against the power.

Spoofing *does* work against effects that would detect the demon as supernatural by implication. For example, if a mage cast a spell that lets him detect every human mind in a 20-yard radius, a demon could spoof the effect since not registering as a human is a dead giveaway that she's a supernatural entity.

Dice Pool: Cover

Cost: —

Action: Reflexive

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Not only does the demon fail to spoof the effect, anyone observing becomes aware that she's not human even if the effect would only impart that information to one person. Knowing that she's not human does not specifically tell an observer that she is a demon unless they would have another way of knowing or recognizing that information.

Failure: The effect functions normally.

Success: The effect is spoofed. It registers the demon as an ordinary human. Further readings by the same effect during the same scene continue to read the demon as a normal human.

Exceptional Success: As a normal success, but any uses of the same effect by the same character for the rest of the story register the demon as human.

Legend

When the God-Machine creates an angel's Cover, it creates it with that angel's capabilities in mind. Demons are no different

— but sometimes demons change their Covers or acquire new ones and they don't necessarily have the traits to back that Cover up. Much the same way as a demon's Cover can create the basic essentials to support an identity, it can be tapped into to temporarily create the assets and abilities to support the Cover.

System: When a demon needs access to a Skill or Merit that would be relevant to her current identity *and* that she has no dots in herself, her player may spend 1 Aether. The player must specify before the roll which Skills or Merits she is attempt to generate, and then rolls Cover with a negative modifier equal to the total number of dots the character is trying to generate. She must meet the prerequisites for any Merit she acquires, either through her own traits or by including them with the Legend. These false dots last till the end of the scene. A demon can only have one Legend active at a time. The demon also gains the Impostor Condition (p. 119).

Example: *Ms. Rasp, a Destroyer, has taken the identity of Mafiya lieutenant Oleg Kraminski as one of her Covers. She needs to find some information about a shipment of illegal weapons, but Oleg is a new Cover and Rasp hasn't built up her Allies (Mafiya) yet. Her player decides that three dots of Allies would be plenty, but she should also have a dot of Streetwise to make this work. She spends a point of Aether and her player rolls her Cover of 7, minus four dice (Allies 3 + Streetwise 1). If she succeeds, she gains these traits for the rest of the scene but also gains the Imposter Condition.*

Going Loud

When all else fails and a demon knows she's not getting out of a tight spot through subterfuge and deception, she has one final nuclear option. Demons call it going loud, and few undertake it unless their Cover is already very close to blown. In a burst of raw, aetheric energy, the demon casts off her mortal shell and, for a brief, glorious moment, remembers what it was to be connected to the entire universe in a way she hasn't experienced since she served the God-Machine. It's immediate, irrevocable, and draws a hell of a lot of attention, but it stands a good chance of annihilating anything in the demon's path.

System: No roll is required to go loud and doing so is a reflexive action. Going loud lasts for a scene and confers the following effects:

- The demon's Cover is set to 0 immediately, with all that entails (see p. 115).
- She assumes her demonic form automatically.
- Her Primum is set to 10, with all the benefits that entails. Since the effect only lasts a scene, she doesn't gain permanent glitches due to her new Primum score. Going loud does require a check for a transient glitch, using the demon's temporary Primum rating (10, which virtually guarantees a glitch, albeit a transient one). She can still acquire glitches normally, for example, by choosing one in the wake of a failed compromise roll.
- Her Aether pool is completely refilled (taking into account the fact that her Primum rating likely allows her to hold a lot more than she could a moment ago).
- She gains access to *every* Embed her Incarnation gives her affinity for. In addition, she can use any Exploit she wishes.

At the end of the scene, her Primum and Aether drop back to their normal level. She also loses access to any Embeds or Exploits she hasn't already purchased. If she has any additional identities, she can assume one now, otherwise she's now one of the Burned. Finally, she gains the Hunted Condition.

Compromises

Compromises (in the espionage sense of "my Cover has been compromised") replace Integrity's breaking points for demons. A demon's Cover is cut off from the God-Machine's self-corrective Infrastructure, which means that when a demon strains her Cover it can grow out of sync with reality, much like a computer that's cut off from its automatic updating software. Pushed too far, it can snap, causing the original unaltered reality to crash back into place.

Five Questions

Much as the players of human characters answer five questions to determine their characters' basic set of breaking points, **Demon** players answer five questions about their demons' Cover. These questions are less about what causes compromises, however, and more about how your Cover has already been compromised. They give your character both a safe haven (in the form of characters you can talk to more or less safely) and potential dramatic hooks (in the form of characters the Storyteller can throw into danger).

You're free to answer "nobody" or "nothing" if some of these questions don't fit your concept at all, but try not to do that for more than one or two questions.

- *Who did you share part of yourself with when you first Fell?*
- *Who doesn't know, but suspects you're not human?*
- *Who could give you up to the angels right now, if they really wanted to?*
- *Who would you trust the truest part of yourself with if you absolutely had to?*
- *Who thinks they have something on you, when all they really have is smoke and mirrors?*

Causes of Compromise

Where breaking points are more fluid and customized to each individual character, compromises tend to be a bit more rigidly defined for all characters. Any leeway generally comes from the nature of an individual demon's current Cover. The actions that can trigger a compromise are:

- **Assuming demonic form:** Fully shedding human form and taking demonic shape is always a compromise. This roll is made at a –3 penalty. Staying in demonic form for longer than a scene is likewise a compromise, with a further –1 penalty per scene (see Full Transformation, p. 195).

Partial transformation is also a compromise, albeit a less risky one. Compromise rolls for a partial transformation are made with a +1 bonus per demonic form ability *not* being accessed (see Partial Transformation, p. 196).

- **Using Embeds and Exploits:** Certain Embeds are automatic compromises. The power's description will tell you if that's the case. *All* Exploits are compromises, but the player can spend a point of Willpower to avoid the compromise roll in this case.
- **Revealing a key fact about your true nature to humans:** Each time humans learn something significant about your true nature *and they believe it*, whether it's as broad as "I am a demon" to as specific as "I was first created to ensure that Ms. Marcy Saunders failed to cross Third Street at 2:03 p.m. on Sunday the 24th of February," is a compromise. Only new information counts; if that information is disseminated to several people at once, like a hunter telling his cell that he's identified a demon, it still only counts as one compromise. This information doesn't have to come directly from you, either: anyone who knows something about your true nature can reveal it and force a compromise roll. Just remember the two caveats: it has to be significant, and they have to believe it.
- **Taking an action grossly out of character for your Cover:** This is the catch-all category that correlates to a human's breaking points. The difference is that while, say, killing someone is a breaking point for most humans because of the emotional trauma involved in the act, it's a compromise because, for most people, murder is an extremely out-of-character act. Think about how often a killer's acquaintances say in interviews "I just can't believe he'd do this! He seemed so quiet!" You can answer the five questions on p. 113 to get a sense for what these actions might be or just wing it with Storyteller approval. The key to remember here is *grossly* out of character. Acting inexplicably weird or suddenly distant doesn't count, but suddenly displaying doctorate-level knowledge of physics or casually torturing someone probably does.

System

When a character experiences a compromise, the player rolls Wits + Manipulation with a modifier based on the character's Cover rating:

Cover	Modifier
8–10	+2
6–7	+1
4–5	0
2–3	–1
1	–2

The Storyteller can also impose modifiers based on how egregious the compromise is relative to the character's Cover. The chart below gives some suggestions, but again, the Storyteller and the player are encouraged to develop the particulars of the demon's Cover to the point that modifiers can be customized. Modifiers are cumulative, but the total modifier from circumstances should not exceed +/–5 dice.

INVESTIGATING A DEMON

For the most part, the holes in even a low Cover tend to get glossed over. People don't consciously think about where the space for that extra apartment came from, or why the dog at the end of the hall barks exactly three times at 4:07 p.m. every day (and come to think of it, they've never actually seen that dog…). If a demon draws determined attention to herself, however, persistent investigation can poke holes in her Cover.

Researching a demon in this fashion is an extended Wits + Occult action. The target successes are equal to the demon's Cover rating (for the identity being investigated), and each roll represents one day of research. If the demon has the Alternate Identity Merit, increase the time per roll to two days (for the one-dot version of the Merit), one week (for the two-dot version), or one month (for the three-dot version).

Success counts as "revealing a key fact about yourself" if the investigator is human, or else gives the researcher equivalent knowledge that could be shared with humans to undermine a demon's Cover. Suggested Conditions to apply on failed rolls include Obsession ("I *will* get to the bottom of this!"), Leveraged ("I understand you've been investigating Ms. Hand. You would be wise to discontinue this course of action."), or even Madness ("The Many-Angled Ones live at the bottom of the Mandelbrot Set!").

A demon always knows when her Cover has been compromised, but she doesn't necessarily know why, particularly in the case of indirect compromises. Figuring that out can easily be a story in and of itself.

The Burned

Unlike the protagonists in many other **World of Darkness** games, a demon who is reduced to 0 Cover isn't automatically forfeit to the Storyteller. You can continue playing a demon at 0 Cover (also known as the Burned) as long as you can keep her alive, but that's easier said than done. As long as a demon is Burned, she suffers the following effects:

- She has no human form; she's always in her true, demonic state.
- She automatically gains the Blown *and* Hunted Conditions. These Conditions can't be resolved until she gains a new Cover.
- She cannot regain Cover; she has to establish a new Cover altogether (see p. 116) in order to get her rating back above 0.

Compromise	Modifier
Character is in the presence of an angel	– the angel's Rank
Act was overtly supernatural and witnessed by humans	–2
Witnesses were intoxicated (drunk, high, etc.)	+1

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon's Cover has been damaged severely, perhaps beyond repair. For a moment, the God-Machine or its agents know exactly where the character is. Lose a dot of Cover and choose from the following Conditions (or create a new one with Storyteller approval): Blown, Betrayed, or Hunted. Alternately, you may make *two* permanent glitch rolls (see p. 186) as the Infrastructure that maintains the character's Cover frantically tries (and fails) to fix her mistake. Also, take a Beat.

Failure: The character's Cover has been weakened. The God-Machine or its agents have a sense of her general whereabouts and activity. Lose a dot of Cover and choose one of the following Conditions (or create a new one with Storyteller approval): Flagged, Surveilled, or Hunted. Alternately, roll for a permanent glitch (see p. 186).

Success: The character has come through the compromise intact. He might be spooked by the close call, but he can cope. Choose one of the following Conditions (or create a new one with Storyteller approval): Guilty, Shaken, or Spooked. Alternately, roll for a temporary glitch (see p. 186).

Exceptional Success: The character somehow manages not only to survive the compromise, but to incorporate it into her Cover and become stronger for it. The character takes a Beat (Cover or regular, player's choice) and regains a point of Willpower.

If a demon's Cover is ever reduced to 0, that Cover identity is irrevocably destroyed. Any supporting details (house, car, job, etc.) are likewise subsumed by the Cover's destruction; any humans who knew the character's Cover identity lose their memories of it. If the character has multiple Cover identities, she can switch to another one as normal (see p.118), but if that was her only Cover, she becomes one of the Burned.

Improving Cover

Cut off from the God-Machine's Infrastructure, the Unchained must maintain and bolster their own Covers. For some, this is a matter of survival; repairing an eroded Cover makes it less likely that the God-Machine's operatives will track you down and destroy you. For others, it's about building a real life out of a collection of lies and illusions.

Demons have two ways to improve their Cover: living it and grafting new elements onto it via pact.

Cover Beats and Experiences

Demons improve their Cover by earning Cover Beats and Cover Experiences. These work just like normal Beats and Experiences, with the exception that five Cover Beats becomes a Cover Experience, and Cover Experiences can only be spent to purchase Cover dots. By default, only Cover Experiences can be spent on Cover, but if the Storyteller wants to make improving Cover easier, she may allow players to spend normal Experiences on Cover as well. Even if she doesn't, the Beat gained from an exceptional success on a compromise roll should count as either a regular Beat or a Cover Beat (player's choice).

Living Your Cover

By its very nature, a demon's Cover is dissonant with reality: it's an artificially-created bubble, a demon-shaped hole in the structure of the universe. Just as a demon can break down and destroy her Cover if she isn't careful, by scrupulously living within it she can trick the universe into accepting it more readily.

System: If, at the end of the chapter, the Storyteller judges that a demon has lived consistently within her Cover by performing the duties that would be expected of that Cover the player rolls the Cover rating. If the roll succeeds, the player gains a Cover Beat. At the end of the *story*, if the player has managed to live below the radar and, most importantly, not fail any compromise rolls, the Storyteller may award an additional Cover Beat. If she went the entire story living consistently within her cover without even *rolling* for a compromise, she gets a Cover Experience instead.

Pacts

Demons bargain for human souls. Everybody knows that, even if stories tend to be vague on exactly *why*. Contrary to popular belief, it's not to drag souls off to Hell to suffer eternal torment, but rather to graft bits of those souls onto their own Cover in order to bolster it. Demons refer to this as a "patch job," and it's one of two ways they can use human beings to increase their Cover (for the other, see New Covers).

When a demon makes a pact (see p. 116), she may stipulate some aspect of the other party's life as the consideration. When this pact is called in, her Cover absorbs that piece of reality, effectively "editing out" the human and "editing in" the demon. The demon and the human both remember reality as it "really" is, but other directly-affected parties simply remember the demon as having always been involved in their lives with no recollection of the person she replaced.

Just like other elements of a demon's Cover, the change isn't 100% real. While it's enough to pass casual inspection, a thorough investigation may reveal holes in the story. Also, only people *directly* affected by the switch have their memories altered. Not surprisingly, demons prefer to make these sorts of pacts with loners, recluses, or people without much family.

For example, take a demon who makes a bargain with a young man, trading his relationship with his girlfriend for wealth and power. When the deal is struck, the demon's Cover absorbs that relationship – as far as the girlfriend is concerned, she's been dating the demon all along. Obvious signs of their relationship are likewise altered, such as prominently displayed photos of the couple. Depending on the demon's Cover rating, things like the old photo albums in the hall closet or the ticket stubs from the play they saw on their first date might not be. Likewise, the girlfriend's family and friends remember her dating the pact-making (now ex-) boyfriend, not the demon. Depending on the nature of the relationship and the people in question, this might get blown off ("Huh, I guess things didn't work out with Mark") or raise serious alarms ("You guys were getting married in March! What do you mean you don't remember?")

System: As risky as this approach can be, it also yields great dividends: for every pact so fulfilled, the demon gains between one and three Cover *Experiences*, depending on how the pact is constructed (see Chapter Three).

New Covers

Maintaining your cover is all well and good, but sometimes a demon needs an entirely new identity. Sometimes it's because she's become Burned, sometimes it's because she's gained a dot of Primum and can hold multiple Covers, or sometimes it's just because she wants a change. While demons lack the Infrastructure support to create new Covers out of whole cloth, they do have two ways to steal existing Covers for themselves.

When a demon establishes a new Cover, she can choose to add it to her suite of available Covers (provided she has an open slot), or she can replace one of her extant Covers. Covers discarded like this simply fold up and vanish. People might still remember the demon, but any Cover-created background details, like homes or clothes or cars, vanish as if they had never been. (Because of this effect, demons who suspect that one of their Covers is under investigation sometimes abandon it altogether rather than face a steady erosion of Cover.)

Patchwork

It is possible to build a Cover whole-cloth using the small pieces of other people's souls acquired through patch jobs. This takes some time and the Cover thus created is usually extremely fragile, but if the character can get it established, it is extremely difficult to break. Demons that create patchwork Covers find them to be the most rewarding and comfortable of all Covers — after all, they are custom made.

System: The demon simply spends Cover experiences gained from patch jobs (see above) to build a new Cover. This Cover can wind up being a little disjointed — the demon takes a boyfriend from one person, a drug habit from another, and a job as a maître d' from a third and has to make it all work together cohesively — but once the Cover rating increases to 5, the Cover solidifies considerably. Patchwork Covers with ratings of five dots or more are hard to unravel (–3 to all attempts to investigate). Patchwork Covers with ratings of less than 5, however, are held together precariously (+1 to all attempts to investigate).

Soul Pacts

The easiest option is to bargain for a human soul. This comes in the form of a pact, but it's much more significant than the pacts used to bolster an existing cover. When a demon calls in her marker on a soul pact, the unfortunate human is consumed by the demon's Primum, body and soul. More than mere destruction, it's an annihilation of the character as a concept, leaving behind an empty, ragged hole in reality. Before

the universe self-corrects this obvious error, the demon steps into the hole, inserting herself into the human's life as though it had always been hers. The dead pact-maker becomes her new Cover. Her human form now exactly resembles the pact-maker's (barring any glitches, of course), and the human's personality and character become the guidelines for compromises.

System: Once the pact is made, the rest is easy. The demon simply touches the target and spends one Aether as a reflexive action. Her player then rolls the demon's Wits + Manipulation. For every point of Primum the demon possesses *plus* every success on this roll, the new identity has one point of Cover (maximum 10).

Unlike patch jobs, a soul pact is relatively difficult to discover through investigation since the demon has actually assumed the entire identity of the human, rather than grafting one aspect of the human's life onto her own. Likewise, since the demon's Cover doesn't have to create all the little incidental details of a life, there aren't any telltale oddities like makes of cars that never really existed to latch onto. Characters trying to investigate a soul pact-created Cover therefore suffer a –3 penalty.

It's not all perfect, though. Stealing someone's life doesn't actually give the demon any of that person's memories, knowledge, or personality. Smart demons don't take the step of calling in a soul pact unless they know the target fairly well, lest they degrade the new Cover straightaway by acting grossly out of character.

Angel-Jacking

More dangerous than soul pacts but potentially more rewarding is what demons call "angel-jacking." When the God-Machine sends an angel to Earth, it's usually the culmination of a large investment of time and Infrastructure. Demons, just like mortal investigators, can track such manifestations by following occult omens, rumors, and mystically-enhanced senses. With the right intelligence, they can even anticipate the time and place when an angel will appear. A demon who can make it there can lie in wait for the process to begin; if she's skilled and lucky enough, she can "step in" during the few moments between when the God-Machine lays the groundwork for the angel's Cover and the actual manifestation. The would-be angel is kicked out, maybe to be reabsorbed by the God-Machine, maybe to be exiled outside reality forever, and the demon steals the Cover right out from under the God-Machine.

On the one hand, this is potentially a way to very quickly establish a Cover with an extremely high rating. Demons don't think of Cover as a ten-level scale, of course, but a correlation does exist between the quality of the Cover and the Infrastructure required to create it. Few demons will take such a risky course of action for a measly two- or three-dot Cover.

On the other hand, just finding and reaching the manifestation point can be an entire story in and of itself. Significant manifestations are almost certainly protected by cultists, human patsies, and even lesser angels. Even worse than that, the new Cover is still connected to the God-Machine and it still expects its "angel" to complete the mission it was created for.

System: Angel-jacking is an extended and contested action. The demon's player rolls Resolve + Primum, while the Storyteller rolls the angel's Power + Resistance. In both cases, the target number of successes equals the Cover rating of the new identity and each roll represents one turn. If the demon's player gathers the required successes first, the demon hijacks the Cover, slipping into it smoothly enough that the God-Machine doesn't notice the hiccup. She gains a new identity

Animals and Other Weird Stuff

An angel's Cover isn't always a human being. Sometimes the God-Machine sends its servants in the form of animals, inanimate objects, or even buildings. The obvious question, then, is can a demon take such forms as an identity? What about other supernatural beings, like vampires or werewolves?

The answer is "technically yes, but it's not usually worth it." Since the only ways a demon can get a new identity are through a soul pact or angel-jacking, and animals and the inanimate can't make pacts, angel-jackings are the only option for getting such an identity. Also, animals and the like tend to have very low Cover ratings, since they don't need a detailed backstory or supporting elements. Few demons are willing to take that kind of risk for such little reward, and even if they were it's outside the scope of these rules.

But theoretically, yes, it's possible.

Supernatural beings can sell their souls to demons, but all but the most inexperienced demons avoid such deals. If a demon steals the identity of a supernatural being, she gets that individual's life (or unlife), but her Cover identity remains as human as any other Cover. If she's really clever, she might be able to keep up the charade for a little while using Embeds and Exploits, but the risk is seldom worth the reward.

with the Cover rating meant for the angel, but also gains the Plugged In Condition.

If the Storyteller rolls the required successes first, the angel manifests in the identity created for it and odds are very good that it isn't happy.

Should the demon be lucky enough to have allies, they can help out in two ways: they can boost the demon's connection strength (using the teamwork rules in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 134), or try to jam the angel's transmission. Jamming the angel is an instant action and imposes a –1 penalty to the Storyteller's next roll (–2 on an exceptional success).

In either case, helping with an angel-jacking isn't a purely cerebral action. Characters have to be moving around, rerouting cables, smashing gears, and the like. Dice pools are left to the Storyteller to determine on a case-by-case basis, but Strength, Intelligence, Wits, Crafts, Occult, Science, and occasionally Computers are all likely candidates.

As potentially powerful as it is, angel-jacking is still a rare practice for one simple reason: pulling off a job of this magnitude is almost always a job for a team, but at the end of the day, only one demon can actually jack the angel's Cover. That makes an angel-jacking job an exercise in trust and goodwill, both of which are in short supply among demons.

Multiple Identities

As her Primum rises, a demon is able to maintain multiple identities simultaneously, each with its own Cover rating. A demon's identities can be any age, gender, or ethnicity — some individual demons have a "type," but just as many will employ whatever identity they need to get the job done. Likewise, while some demons strongly identify as one particular gender or ethnicity or what have you, just as many treat human bodies as little more than suits of clothes. (Those categories don't necessarily correlate, either. One demon might strongly identify as male but employ female identities when necessary. Another might not subscribe to such binary notions of gender but still prefer white male identities because, in a patriarchal society, white males are generally able to go about their business without being harassed.)

System: To switch identities, a demon must be alone and unobserved. The actual change requires only an instant action and the expenditure of a point of Aether. As soon as the new identity is assumed, the character replaces her old Cover score with the new identity's score.

Keeping track of multiple identities sounds daunting, but it's fairly straightforward if you stay simple. Here's what you need to know to keep it all straight:

- For each identity, just keep track of name, concept, and Cover rating. You don't have to worry about any more detailed backstory than that.
- Attributes, Skills, and Specialties are intrinsic parts of the demon herself: they don't change. In rare cases, the character's Size might change; and if it does, any derived Traits associated with Size also change.

SIMPLIFIED COVERS

If all that feels a like a little too much bookkeeping, feel free to just track name, concept, and Cover rating for each of your Covers and assume that Merits are accessible in any Cover. External Physical Merits like Giant apply all their game-mechanic effects even if the specific Cover doesn't reflect it. (It's not really any different than keeping your character's five dots in Strength when she takes on the Cover of a nine-year-old boy.) For Social Merits, assume that your character makes phone calls and has meetings during downtime in which she asks her Allies, Contacts, and so on to help her other Covers... "as a favor to me."

- Merits are where it gets a little tricky. Merits that represent an intrinsic talent or internal physical or mental quirk (e.g. Fast Reflexes, Indomitable) are accessible in any Identity. Merits that represent external physical quirks or social connections (e.g. Giant, Contacts) are associated with a particular Cover: they can only be accessed when you're in that specific Cover. The exception to this rule is Social Merits that reflect people who know you're a demon; those Merits are always available.
- Wounds and most Conditions are part of the demon herself, not the identity. When she switches identities, any damage she's suffered or Conditions she possesses stay right where they are, which might require some clever explaining. Conditions that explicitly affect a given Cover — Notoriety, for instance — stay with that Cover.
- Infrastructure supporting a demon's identities still exists, even when that identity isn't in use.
- All of a demon's identities age in real-time, even when they're not in use. Other than aging, though, identities not in use are in a sort of stasis. They don't get thin from lack of nourishment or pale from lack of sunlight, for example.

New Conditions

The Conditions below all relate to a demon's Cover.

Plugged In

You've jacked an angel's Cover, but you're still connected to the God-Machine's information networks. The good news is you don't need to (and in fact can't) spoof angels with your Cover: you automatically register as a fellow angel to their senses. The bad news is that the God-Machine knows exactly where you are at all time. Any time you gain a Condition as a result of a compromise, you gain the Blown Condition.

Resolution: Either complete the task the angel was originally created for (you know what that task is when you successfully angel-jack) or get access to a piece of Infrastructure that can disconnect you from the God-Machine. Resolving this Condition gives you a Cover Beat, applicable to the new Cover.

Impostor

You've used Legend to cheat your way to the sort of thing that should come naturally to your Cover, and it's left you feeling hollow. You suffer a –1 cumulative penalty each time you use Legend again until you resolve the Condition.

Resolution: Buy a dot in a Merit or Skill you impersonated using Legend. Resolving this Condition gives you a Cover Beat.

Blown (Persistent)

The jig is up. The God-Machine knows your Cover is just that. It might not be actively hunting you, not *yet* anyway, but you can't hide from it any longer. Even if you have multiple Cover identities, the God-Machine has your frequency and the only way to lose it is to destroy the compromised cover. You can't spoof angels, God-Machine cultists, or anyone with the Unseen Sense (God-Machine) Merit.

Beat: Angels or God-Machine agents discover you.

Resolution: Destroy your Blown Cover identity.

Betrayed (Persistent)

You've attracted too much of the wrong kind of attention and someone you trusted can't let that go on. The Storyteller chooses a Storyteller character you had previously considered an ally. That character betrays you to the God-Machine or its agents at the worst possible time — maybe it's a new development, maybe your "ally" was a double-agent the whole time. Your betrayer gets the 8-again rule on all rolls against you.

Beat: Your betrayer does something that inconveniences you, puts you in danger, or ruins your plans.

Resolution: Kill the traitor, convince them to turn on their new masters for you, or take a new Cover identity.

Hunted (Persistent)

Your actions have alerted the God-Machine to your presence and it has sent its destroying angels to scour you from the Earth. The Storyteller chooses either one greater angel (Rank 4–5), 3–5 lesser angels (Rank 2–3), or 10–15 cultists. These antagonists know where you were when you compromised your Cover and have a general description of your identity. Their sole motivation is to hunt you down by any means necessary and destroy you.

Beat: The pursuers find and attack you.

Resolution: Kill your pursuers or permanently lose them. Permanently losing them is probably an extended and contested action, but the particulars will depend on the context of the story.



Flagged

The God-Machine or one of its agents is suspicious of you. It doesn't know for sure that you're a rogue angel, but it's got you marked as a potential problem. Attempts to spoof agents of the God-Machine suffer a –3 penalty.

Resolution: Convince an agent of the God-Machine that you're an ordinary human without spoofing it.

Blackballed

You've drawn too much attention, and just being around you is a risk to your demonic allies. While in your presence, other demons suffer a –2 penalty on compromises.

Resolution: Gain a dot of Cover or convince a fellow demon, player character, or otherwise to help you despite the risk.

Surveilled

You're under active surveillance by enemy agents. They're under orders just to observe for now. At the beginning of each chapter, the Storyteller rolls a dice pool equal to (10 – your current Cover rating). Successes accumulate over the course of the story. Once the Storyteller has accrued a number of successes equal to your current Cover, resolve this Condition and gain the Hunted Condition instead.

Resolution: Let the Storyteller accrue successes as described above, or find and nullify the enemy's means of surveillance. This Condition does not resolve at the end of a story, but the successes accumulated do reset to zero.

New Merits

In addition to the Merits all characters can access (see p. 287), demons have access to a few additional Merits that take advantage of their unique nature. Even brand-new demons can purchase Merits that tie them to the mortal world, like Allies, Contacts, or Status – these simply represent especially well-established aspects of the demon's Cover. Of course, such Merits can also connect demons to others of their own kind, like Consummate Professional (Agenda). Don't forget also that all demons receive the Eidetic Memory Merit for free.

The Merits presented below are exclusively for demon characters. Mortals and other supernatural beings can't buy them and likely wouldn't know what to do with them even if they could.

Bolthole (• – • • • • • +)

Effect: Your character has a safehouse she can hole up in when things get bad. The bolthole is part of the Infrastructure that maintains your character's Cover (though the demon can access it no matter what Cover she wears), which means it doesn't exist entirely in the physical world. It has an entrance anchored to a specific point in the real world, but the location itself exists outside three-dimensional space. Boltholes are neither spacious nor luxurious — at best, they're a dingy, dimly-lit windowless space about the size of a one bedroom apartment with enough space to house three or four people. That's not the point of a bolthole, though. The point is safety and security.

All boltholes have the following benefits:

Wards: The bolthole is warded against angels (see Warding, p. 353). The wards have an indefinite duration, but can be broken.

Stasis: Time doesn't exist inside a bolthole. People (including demons) inside don't age, hunger, or thirst, which makes it theoretically possible to stay in a bolthole indefinitely. However, this stasis also means that injuries and illnesses don't heal without supernatural intervention. Moreover, the isolating effects of stasis take a toll on the mind: a human character who spends more days in a bolthole than her Resolve + Composure must roll for a breaking point at a –2 penalty.

Unnoticed: Boltholes are hard to notice for anyone other than their owner. Any roll to find a bolthole entrance, whether by mundane investigation, occult powers, or simple direct observation, suffers a penalty equal to your character's dots in the Merit. Your character can negate this penalty merely by telling someone where the entrance is, but once someone knows the bolthole's location (either by being told or overcoming the penalty), they can tell *anyone*.

Dots in this Merit are used to purchase additional effects:

Arsenal (•-• • • • •): The bolthole is equipped with an arsenal of mundane but effective weapons. Once per chapter, you can retrieve the following from your bolthole at no cost: one weapon with a damage rating equal to the dots spent on Arsenal, two weapons whose damage is (Arsenal dots –1), and an effectively unlimited number of weapons whose damage rating is (Arsenal dots –2) or less. The weapons don't have to be the same from chapter to chapter.

No Twilight (•): Within the bolthole, the state of Twilight does not exist. Any ephemeral being that comes inside is automatically fully Manifested. This only applies once they're inside (so, for example, they can still get in if the bolthole also has a Trap Door).

Self-Destruct (•): The last resort of a desperate demon: your character can sacrifice her bolthole, losing all dots she has in the Merit to inflict a point of lethal damage per dot to everyone and everything inside. Any survivors have one turn to get out before the bolthole vanishes and they are lost in the depths of spacetime forever. Your character does not have to be within the bolthole to activate this effect. You may reallocate any dots assigned to the destroyed bolthole (see Sanctity of Merits, p. 287).

Cover-Linked (• •): The bolthole is tied to a specific Cover identity; when your character isn't using that identity, the bolthole doesn't exist. This isn't just a case of there being no entrance: the entire bolthole literally ceases to exist when she switches Covers. Whenever she switches back to the linked

identity, the bolthole "resets;" any damage is repaired to its normal state, and anything (or anyone) left inside has vanished. No demon has ever found out what happens to things lost to the bolthole, but some take advantage of that fact and use it to dispose of troublesome individuals or evidence.

Trap Door (••): As long as your character is inside the bolthole, the entrance from the physical world doesn't exist. Ephemeral beings who know where the entrance is can still try to pass through, but not even knocking down the wall the door should be on allows physical access to the bolthole.

Easy Access (•••): By spending a point of Aether, your character can turn any door into the access point for her bolthole. Only one door can lead to the bolthole at a time, but the change lasts till your character sets a new door. Whenever anyone leaves the bolthole, it's always from the last door they entered through.

Your character can have more than one bolthole; each is bought as a separate Merit.

Consummate Professional (Agenda) (••)

Effect: Your character can resolve her Agenda Condition twice per chapter instead of just once. You cannot take this Merit if you are one of the Uncalled. If you have the Multiple Agendas Merit, you can buy this Merit for each Agenda you belong to.

Cultists (••_•••••)

Effect: You have created a cult based around your demonic identity (that is, the cult isn't attached to one of your Covers). The cult believes in you and will do your bidding, but the cultists' loyalty is a function of the Merit's rating.

Cultists at any level may or may not have pacts with the demon but this Merit doesn't cover that. If a demon wants to forge a pact with a cultist, the player needs to play that out with the Storyteller as usual.

At two dots, the cult believes that you speak for a demon, but does not know that you *are* a demon. Any display of power short of entering demonic form is treated as a "gift from our mutual master." These cultists are capable of providing support equal to Resources 3, Allies 3, or Staff 3 once per story. They will not undertake tasks that would cause a relatively normal person to experience a breaking point (Storyteller's discretion). They will sell out the demon to a higher authority, either mundane (the FBI) or supernatural (an impressive angel).

At three dots, the cult is aware that the character is a demon, but believes her to be a servant of a greater evil (or good, depending on how she presents herself). The cult is willing to undertake tasks that are illegal or potentially a risk of a breaking point, but are not willing to harm, kidnap or kill other people. In addition to the benefits of a two-dot cult, the cult can provide assistance to the demon in the form of moving objects, vandalism, driving getaway vehicles, or medical supplies and expertise (nothing says a doctor can't be a cultist). Once per chapter, the demon can call on the cult for knowledge, gaining a +3 to any roll that the cult could conceivably assist with. The cult will not inform on the demon if questioned by most mundane authorities, but constant illegal activity with no plan for avoiding capture eventually breaks a cultist, which leads back to the demon (and probably unravels her Cover).

At four dots, the cult sees the demon as a powerful representative of Hell. They are not willing to commit suicide on his behalf, but murder, assault or kidnapping are fine, in addition to the benefits of the previous levels of this Merit. The demon can send his cultists to do all sorts of unsavory things and the cult will not break in the face of questioning from any mundane source.

Finally, at five dots, some of the cultists are stigmatic or possess Supernatural Merits. The demon can call upon these cultists to use their gifts on her behalf. The cultists are well aware of what the demon is and that the God-Machine is an enemy (depending on the demon's Agenda). If the demon wishes to sign a soul-pact with a cultist, the player needs to roleplay out this deal with the cultist in question as usual, but the cultist probably considers it an honor.

Multiple Agendas (••)

Effect: Your character is a complicated soul; she ascribes to the philosophies of two Agendas simultaneously. More to the point, she gets both of the Agenda Conditions associated with her Agendas.

Suborned Infrastructure (•_•••)

Effect: Your character has hijacked a small piece of the God-Machine's Infrastructure, unhooking it from the God-Machine's larger structure and taking control of it. Whatever it used to do, its only remaining function is to produce Aether. This is not unlike running a propane-fueled generator to collect the water it gives off.

At the beginning of each chapter, your Suborned Infrastructure generates one point of Aether per dot in the Merit. Your character has to actually go to her Infrastructure to harvest this Aether; if she can't get to it this chapter, it can hold up to ten points of Aether. Any excess Aether is lost.

The amount of Aether a Suborned Infrastructure generates doesn't dictate its size, but a structure that generates more Aether tends to be stranger — glowing runoff, odd electrical storms, and so on. It's just as hard to find as any other Infrastructure, at least as far as humans are concerned, but other demons can poach the Aether it generates if they find it.

Suborned Infrastructures have linchpins. You need to decide what this object is and where it is. If this object is destroyed, the Infrastructure shuts down and ceases to generate Aether. In this eventuality, you may redistribute the dots in this Merit (see Sanctity of Merits, p. 287).

CLASH OF WILLS

Sometimes, two supernatural powers clearly oppose one another. If the normal systems for the powers fail to resolve this, such as when two demons attempt to Possess the same person or a vampire attempts to use a memory-altering power on a person previously affected by an Embed such as Never Here.

All involved supernatural effects enter a contested action, using a pool of the wielder's Supernatural Tolerance trait (Primum for demons) plus the rating of the power in question or the rating of the governing Attribute (if, as is the case for Embeds and Exploits, the power does not have a dot rating). Ties reroll until one player has accrued more successes than all others. That player's character's effect wins out and resolves as usual, all others fail. Victory of one power in a clash does not mean the immediate cancellation of the others, save in cases where only one power can possibly endure (such as competing domination).

Characters may spend Willpower to bolster the contested roll, but only if they are physically present and aware that powers are clashing. Certain powers, those with exceptionally long durations, are more enduring in a clash. Day-long effects add one die to the clash roll, week-long effects add two, month-long three, and effects that would last a year or longer add four.

Example: Taking the example cited above, consider a vampire attempting to view or alter the memory of a person previous afflicted by the Never Here Embed. The vampire's player rolls Blood Potency (the vampire's Supernatural Tolerance trait) + the dot rating of the power in question (three, in this case). The demon's player rolls the demon's Primum + Manipulation (the Attribute for the Never Here Embed). Never Here doesn't have a specific duration (once activated, it doesn't wear off), so the demon's player adds four dice to his roll.

If the vampire's player rolls more successes, the vampire breaks through the Embed's effects and reads the victim's memories (and probably restores the victim's memory of the demon). If the demon's player wins, the Embed holds and the vampire cannot read the victim's original memory.

Terrible Form (•–••••, Style)

Effect: Your character's demonic form is exceptionally potent and versatile. See p. 196 for more information on building the demonic form.

Body Modification (•): Your demonic form has one extra Modification.

Technological Advancement (••): Your demonic form has one extra Technology.

Jet Propulsion (•••): Your demonic form has one extra Propulsion.

Dual Processors (••••): Your demonic form has one extra Process.

Versatile Transformation (•)

Effect: When you partially transform into your demonic form (see Partial Transformation, p. 196), it costs 1 Aether per *two* form abilities manifested. You don't have to manifest two if you don't want to.



EMBEDS AND EXPLOITS

Before the Fall, demons wielded great spiritual power as the gift of the God-Machine. Everything that the God-Machine is able to grant, however, is due to existing laws and metaphysical subroutines of the world. If an angel can fly, it is because the God-Machine long ago built some law into reality allowing it. Over the eons, these laws have grown exponentially more complex than any living soul can hope to express. Arcane rules and precepts converge at strange nexuses, allowing mystical energies to pool and gather. Various supernatural forces make use of these laws, normally without ever understanding that the God-Machine had any part in it (or even exists).

When a demon Falls, she gives up her intuitive understanding of the God-Machine's laws. She can no longer call upon Numina and must find other ways of expressing supernatural ability (this is part of the reason why demons manipulate Aether instead of Essence). What the demon *can* do, however, is call upon the preexisting mystical pathways and laws that she remembers from her time as an angel. By exploiting this knowledge, she is effectively using "back doors" into reality, changing it in subtle ways. An angel does this to facilitate its mission. A demon does it to follow her Agenda. These memories are called *Embeds* and *Exploits*.

Embeds

An Embed is a rule or natural law already hard-coded into the workings of the world that a demon can tap for a specific effect. For a mundane example, consider a child who knows of a loose board in a neighbor's fence. He can move the board, take a shortcut through the neighbor's yard, and save himself the time of running around the block. Anyone *could* do that, provided they have the same knowledge the child does (that is, that the board is loose) and that they can fit through the opening thus created.

Embeds work much the same way. Any demon can learn any Embed. The demon simply has to remember that the groundwork is there. As angels, all servants of the God-Machine are aware of these pathways, but they make use of them differently. Angels do not make conscious effort to use Embeds, they are able to do so simply as part of their missions. Going back to the example of the loose board in the fence, consider a dog or a cat that simply noses the board aside to get through. The animal doesn't think of the fence as a barrier or the loose board as an anomaly; for all it knows, that loose board was put there specifically to allow it passage. When a demon falls, she loses this instinctive, subconscious understanding of the world and must relearn these supernatural secrets. When she does, she is able to use Embeds in specific ways.

Embeds are not spells. They do not require ritual, sacrifice, or even specific knowledge or skill to use. A demon might justifiably liken remembering an Embed to a stroke victim re-learning how to walk or ride a bicycle. The neural pathways are already in place and the muscle memory is there, it's just a matter of training the body to reactivate these things.

Angels have different capabilities based on their missions. An angel doesn't normally think to question whether it can make use of mystical subroutines that it hasn't specifically been instructed to use, both because most angels don't question their missions and because, again, these subroutines aren't something that angels generally think about. That said, an angel that *does* start to consider these subroutines — thinking about the framework of reality, rather than just using it — might be getting close to falling. Once an angel does fall, she finds that certain types of Embeds are easier to remember than others, depending on her Incarnation.

Systems

Embeds fall into one of four categories, roughly corresponding to branches of the *musica universalis*, also called the "music of the spheres." This Medieval concept referred to the movements of celestial bodies through space. It wasn't thought to refer to actual, audible music, but rather to the mathematical or philosophical implications of those movements. The "music," then, was the imperceptible system that guided the cosmos. Some demons with a bent for Medieval or Classical philosophy refer to the God-Machine's mystical subroutines as the "music of the spheres."

Embeds have two basic applications. They function on a literal level and a conceptual one. That is, a Mundane Embed might enable a demon to remain unremarked (the literal application), while a different Embed might enable the demon to remove focus on a topic of discussion (conceptual).

The four categories of Embeds are:

- **Mundane:** These Embeds help a demon stay unnoticed and incognito. Conceptually, they deal with the notions

of *concealing*, *obfuscation* and *forgetting*. Psychopomps find these powers easier to learn.

- **Instrumental:** These Embeds allow the demon to affect material objects and machines. On a conceptual level, they deal with *timing*, *precision* and *utility*. Guardians have an affinity for them.
- **Vocal:** Demons use these Embeds to exert influence over people and other thinking beings. Conceptually, they relate to *communication*, *revelation* and *realization*. Messengers make easiest use of Vocal Embeds.
- **Cacophony:** The Embeds of chaos, violence and disharmony. Their concepts are *destruction*, *renewal* and *entropy*. Obviously, they are the purview of the Destroyers.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES: EMBEDS

Feel free to make up your own Embeds! The examples below should give a pretty good indication of the level of power and effect on the world, as well as how they tie into their literal and conceptual markers. When creating them, our guidelines were:

- **No Cost:** Embeds are free. They don't cost Willpower or Aether.
- **Quick:** Embeds are always reflexive or instant actions, never extended.
- **Dice Pool:** Since they rely on careful manipulation of natural and supernatural laws, Embeds always use a Finesse Attribute (Dexterity, Wits and Manipulation) + a Skill (any type). Unskilled penalties do *not* apply.
- **Trying Again:** Most of the time, if a player fails an Embed roll, she can try again with a cumulative -1 penalty for each successive attempt. This penalty doesn't apply in situations that are fluid enough to change second by second (such as combat).
- **Breaking Cover:** Embeds do not usually risk Cover; they are not overt supernatural manifestations of power. However, some Embeds, especially those that tap into the God-Machine's workings on a direct level (such as Voice of the Machine) might force a roll to avoid breaking Cover. Dramatic failures often do too.

Resisting Embeds

Most Embeds list a trait to subtract from the players roll, while a few are contested actions (Embeds that do not target a specific person do not apply resistance traits, obviously). These resistance traits are *optional*, however. Whether or not to use them is a Storyteller's decision, and that decision should be based on how challenging the action is, what the circumstances are, and who the target is.

For example, a ring of demons infiltrates a hospital to find a woman currently incarcerated in the psychiatric ward. One of them decides to use the Authorized Embed (p. 140) to get past the nurse at the door to the ward. The roll for this Embed is Manipulation + Intimidation – Intelligence. The Storyteller needs to consider whether to bother having the player subtract the nurse's Intelligence from the roll.

In making this decision, the Storyteller considers:

- **How important is it that this roll succeeds?** The characters need to get into this ward, but they possess multiple other avenues of approach if this fails. If it were critical that the characters get in *right now*, the Storyteller should just forego the roll and inform the player that the Embed works.
- **Who is the target?** That is, is the target an important character? Is she likely to show up later? Does the Storyteller have plans for her? Does she have a particular reason to suspect the characters?
- **What does the scene gain by a greater chance of failure?** Failing an Embed can lead to discovery. It can also lead to a player choosing a dramatic failure, which is generally more exciting *and* gives the player a Beat. On the other hand, if the Embed is just a means to an end, a way to get to a more interesting scene, don't bother with the resistance roll.
- **How much would a resistance trait hurt the character's chances?** Embed rolls are Attributes + Skills. That means a starting character could have as much as 10 dice in a pool or as few as two. Subtracting an average person's resistance Attribute (two dice) won't cripple a character with a six dice, but if she only has four, she is now forced to spend a Willpower point or suffer a very real chance of failure. *If that chance makes things more interesting*, include the resistance trait. If not, skip it.

In this case, the Storyteller decides that this nurse is no one in particular and not likely to have an ongoing effect on the chronicle. The player's dice pool is seven without modifiers, meaning even with a modifier it won't hurt the character's chances much. The Storyteller is more interested in moving the scene into the psych ward (where an angel is waiting to pounce), so she just has the player roll his unmodified dice pool.

The point to all this is not to be slavishly devoted to a notion of "balance" or "realism." Instead, consider what the action means in terms of the story. Don't worry about being "fair" to the Storyteller characters — they aren't the important ones. The challenges the players' characters face should be real challenges. If a security guard or a lone cultist is just there as a reminder that the situation is serious, don't worry so much

about representing his traits. Put another way, if Jason Bourne or James Bond wouldn't expend more than one punch or one bullet on the guy, don't bother with a resistance trait.

The reverse of this, of course, is that characters with names, important roles to play in the story, defined traits, or a supernatural pedigree should *always* have resistance traits included. If an enemy demon uses an Embed on a player's demon, that roll should be penalized or contested. Or, if it's very important to the story that a power work on the player's demon, consider offering a Beat to forego the roll entirely.

Consider what resistance means, too. For a power like Eavesdrop (p. 149), "resisting" the power probably means that the person or group being targeted notices the demon. But the power itself relies on the demon reading body language and lip movements to determine meaning, not literally to hear words. So is a resistance trait really appropriate? Eavesdrop doesn't include one, but if you as Storyteller feel that the targets of the power could reasonably notice the demon and *it's in the interests of the story that they do so*, make a Perception roll for the targets. If that roll succeeds, the targets see the demon and probably get a sense that their being spied on. This approach works well across the board and is in-theme with **Demon**'s themes of techgnostic espionage: You can realize that someone is spying on you, but you'll never reliably prevent it.

Cacophony Embeds

Destroyers, angels tapped to kill, raze, and break, know well the truism that it's easier to destroy than create. That isn't to say, though, that destruction doesn't have a certain art to it, particularly if collateral damage is to be avoided. Cacophony Embeds allow for selective, targeted destruction. The demon carefully chooses his focus and then introduces chaos, changing variables in the background equations of reality just enough to throw things out of balance … or to enable him to kill with surgical precision.

On a conceptual level, Cacophony Embeds all allow a demon to "destroy" ideas, causing doubt or inaction in the face of crisis. They can change entropy, making a situation more or less chaotic. And, although not all Destroyers want to admit it, destruction is part of a cycle that leads to renewal. Cacophony Embeds are therefore tied to that renewal, and demons that study them can make use of that.

Bystander Effect

The bystander effect is a psychological phenomenon that states simply that the more people who witness an event, the less likely any particular person is to get involved. The reasons for this vary, but a demon can exploit this tendency to attack a target in full view of a group of people and escape unhindered. This Embed does not work on groups of people who know each other, however — a demon can't stab one policeman in a cop bar and hope to get out with no repercussion.

Bystander Effect is easier to use in crowds. If fewer than 10 people witness the demon's action, apply a –2 modifier to the roll to activate it.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Intimidation

Action: Reflexive

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Everyone in the immediate vicinity becomes outraged at the demon's actions and moves to stop him. Unless he has another method of getting through a crowd, he is almost certain to be caught.

Failure: The Embed has no effect. The demon might still be able to get away unhindered, but only if the Storyteller determines that no one chooses to stop him. In any case, people remember the demon and what he did.

Success: The demon makes an attack on a target and activates this Embed. The people nearby might stand and watch, turn away, or even run, but they won't get in his way and they won't attempt to stop him. If the demon can get out of sight within the next minute, the people at the scene won't remember any salient details about him, either.

Exceptional Success: The demon makes the attack and walks away calmly. Bystanders either do not notice him or are too frightened to say anything. Within a few minutes of the event, the bystanders won't be able to agree on the demon's height, skin color, or even gender.

Cause and Effect

Most people are familiar in at least a cursory fashion with the "Butterfly Effect." That is, every event, no matter how small, has effects on the world that often cannot be measured and can never be predicted or replicated. A demon with the right knowledge can capitalize on that principle, taking one action that leads to a completely different and unexpected (to everyone but the demon) outcome.

This power, like several others that impact probability and causality, poses a risk to Cover by its very nature. A demon using it should proceed with caution.

Dice Pool: Wits + [any Skill; see below]

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Nothing happens immediately. The demon has set events in motion that she cannot predict or prevent, events that will have dramatic effects sometime in the future. In game terms, the Storyteller has a pool of dice equal to the dice pool that the player used for this Embed that he can apply as an attack or an action against the character whenever he wishes. The demon can force fate's hand, however — by activating this Embed again. When the demon does so, the Embed fails but the Storyteller must immediately resolve the lingering causality problem, using the dice pool he has in reserve.

Failure: The Embed has no effect. The player must immediately make a compromise roll (+1 modifier).

Success: The player states what the demon is doing and what the demon hopes to accomplish. The two actions don't have to be related in any way. The player then rolls for the Embed, using whatever Skill is most appropriate to the action the

demon is taking. The successes apply to the action the demon hopes to accomplish. Both actions need to be instant actions; the demon cannot perform an extended action by means of Cause and Effect. The demon must be able to watch the events of Cause and Effect unfold (that is, the Embed's effects only work within the demon's line of sight).

For example, a demon wishes to steal a man's wallet, but isn't especially light-fingered (no dots in Larceny). She uses the Cause and Effect Embed, and states that she will engage the people waiting for a bus in a political discussion. The player rolls Wits + Politics and gets four successes. The man, walking by the bus stop, hears the debate, becomes distracted, trips on a patch of uneven pavement, and falls. His wallet falls out of his jacket pocket and the demon casually picks it up.

Exceptional Success: As above, plus any benefits that would normally come from achieving an exceptional success on the intended action.

Combustion

Everything burns, but not everything burns easily. Despite what action movies tell us, a stray bullet is extremely unlikely to blow up a car. But the explosiveness or flammability of an object is a known value, and that means a demon with the right knowledge can alter that value, making an object more likely to burn or explode.

Dice Pool: Wits + Science

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The object in question immediately bursts into flames. If the demon is holding or touching it at the time, she suffers 2L damage immediately and may become engulfed in flames, depending on her proximity and the size of the object.

Failure: The object's flammability does not change. The demon may try again, with a cumulative –1 penalty for each attempt on the same object.

Success: The object becomes more flammable or prone to explosive. In order for a demon to alter a target's explosiveness, it must have the potential to explode already (cars can explode, for instance, but wooden chairs do not). In either case, the object will burst into flames or explode with the slightest provocation — a match flung at the object is usually enough.

Exceptional Success: The demon can consciously control the object's flammability or explosiveness, meaning she can set the destruction in motion with a thought.

Cool Heads Prevail

The best way to survive a fight is not to have one. With this Embed, the demon reduces the amount of chaos and destruction, taking the desire to fight away from the targets. It doesn't make them like each other any better, but it does make them less likely to kill each other.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Empathy – highest Composure present

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The targets come to blows immediately. Combat begins as normal. If combat has already started, the participants become willing to Go for Blood (p. 317).

Failure: The Embed has no effect. If combat has already started, it continues as normal.

Success: The participants calm down and are unwilling to become physically violent. They might still yell or threaten, but no one affected by the Embed will throw the first punch. If combat has already started, everyone involved surrenders (p. 317; the participants must spend a Willpower point to take further violent action).

Exceptional Success: As above, except that the characters also become receptive to suggestion on how to end their beef. If he wishes to mediate, the demon receives a +2 bonus to any Social rolls made during this scene to help the parties come to an agreement.

Deafen

Taking "cacophony" to a literal extreme, the demon creates a persistent ringing in the ears of a target that prevents him from hearing anything at all. The sound is only audible to the target; physical examination of the victim while the power is active shows nothing physically wrong with his hearing apparatus.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Medicine – Stamina

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The noise reverberates back to the demon. The demon gains the Deaf Condition or Deafened Tilt as appropriate for the duration of the scene.

Failure: The Embed has no effect. The demon can attempt to use it again, but apply a cumulative –1 penalty for every attempt after the first during the same scene.

Success: The target receives the Deaf Condition or Deafened Tilt, as appropriate. This lasts for the remainder of the scene, unless the demon decides to end it early.

Exceptional Success: The demon can choose to apply the Deaf Condition or Deafened Tilt to anyone within earshot when the Embed is invoked. This lasts for the remainder of the scene, unless the demon decides to end it early.

Devil's Advocate

This Embed allows the demon to cause disagreement, even if the parties involved would normally see eye to eye. While Devil's Advocate is useful as a diversionary tactic, a demon skilled in the use of reverse psychology can make truly impressive use of it. For instance, having been pulled over by a traffic cop, a demon might admit to the accusation in question



and acknowledge that she deserves a ticket, then use the power to force the cop to disagree.

This Embed only works on characters in physical proximity; it can't be used online or over a phone.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Subterfuge – highest Resolve present

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The target follows his natural inclination, but to a fervent, even violent extreme. Continuing the example above, the policeman might have been inclined to give the demon a ticket, but now attempts to detain the demon and search her car.

Failure: The Embed has no effect.

Success: The target disagrees with the most recent stated position, even if that would be a position that he would normally accept. From the target's perspective, he might be merely "arguing the other side" or "playing Devil's Advocate," but in the moment, he truly feels that it is his duty to voice his disagreement or otherwise display it.

What reaction this provokes is highly context dependent. Fistfights are unlikely to break out at a PTA meeting over whether to alter a school cafeteria menu, but in a bar watching a football match it's a distinct possibility. Demons can and do lay groundwork for successful use of this Embed, getting people to argue with one another and then using Devil's Advocate to cause a reversal or a statement that sets everyone off.

Exceptional Success: The character controls how vehemently the target disagrees. She might decide that the target only quibbles with a particular point of the stated position, or that he feels such immediate and intense disgust that he gets up and leaves the room. The demon cannot force a target into physical violence unless the Storyteller feels that it's a possibility in the context of the situation.

Hesitation

In a crisis situation, a second's delay can make a huge difference. Using this Embed, the demon injects a momentary doubt or fear into a target's mind, causing him to pause. By the time he regains his composure, the fight may already have been lost.

This Embed can only be used before the intended target has taken his first action and before the demon has taken hers. As such, it is possible to use Hesitation on multiple targets in a turn if the initiative order favors the demon.

Example: *A group of three threatening individuals confronts a demon. Everyone rolls for initiative; the demon has initiative 10 and her assailants have 11, 9 and 5. She can't use Hesitation on the opponent with initiative 11 (as he acts before the demon), but she can use the Embed on the other three before she takes her action.*

Hesitation cannot be used past the first round of combat.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Intimidation - Resolve

Action: Reflexive

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon hesitates, losing her action for the first turn of combat, *or* the target acts decisively, enjoying a +2 modifier on this first action (player's choice).

Failure: The Embed fails against the intended target. The demon can use Hesitation on other eligible targets during the same combat.

Success: The target hesitates, pausing slightly before acting. The demon can reassign the target's initiative to any value she wishes, provided it is later in the combat order than the target's player rolled. The demon cannot force a target to miss an action (that is, the target's modified initiative value must be at least 1).

Exceptional Success: As above, except that the demon *can* force the target to miss his action on the first turn of combat. The demon specifies where the target acts in the initiative order for the next turn.

Hush

A skilled Destroyer can kill or incapacitate a target without either of them ever making a sound. The demon strikes the victim's throat or solar plexus, silencing him, and then continues the assault. This Embed does not silence the sound of a weapon, firearm or otherwise, so if the intended victim manages to produce a weapon to protect himself, the effect ends. Until then, though, no sound escapes the combatants and only muffled thuds result from them colliding with surfaces. A Destroyer can beat a man to death in kitchen with the people in the dining room none the wiser, provided he does it quickly.

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Brawl – Defense

Action: Reflexive

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character's first strike causes a loud, jarring, high-frequency sound. In addition to alerting anyone nearby who might be listening, the demon also runs the risk of blowing his Cover. The player should immediately make a compromise roll with a +1 modifier.

Failure: The Embed does not take effect and combat makes the usual amount of noise.

Success: Combat makes no sound until either a number of turns elapses equal to the successes rolled *or* one combatant uses a weapon, whichever comes first. Even incidental noise (one participant being slammed up against a wall) produces only a muffled thump. Note that in order to use a weapon, the combatant's player must make a roll to do so (a Weaponry or Firearms roll). Simply drawing the weapon does not break the effects of Hush.

Exceptional Success: The demon may target his opponent's throat with no specified target penalty for one strike. If this strike connects, in additional to inflicting 0L damage the demon inflicts the Mute Condition (p.310) on the target for the duration of the fight.



Just Bruised

Bodies are strangely resilient. Falling damage wreaks havoc on a human body, and yet recorded instances of people falling from impressive heights and walking away with only minor injuries exist. Gunshots can kill instantly, or they can result in flesh wounds and nothing more. With this Embed, a demon can prevent serious damage from a single attack or source.

Dice Pool: Wits + Medicine

Action: Reflexive

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The target takes all of the damage indicated by the attack and so does the demon. This damage manifests slowly over the course of the next few hours, at a rate of one point per hour.

Failure: The target takes damage as usual.

Success: The demon uses this Embed after an attack or a damage situation is declared on a target, but before the attacker rolls or the Storyteller adjudicates damage (in the case of environmental sources of harm, such as falling). On a successful roll, the damage is reduced to 1 (the target walks away with a minor wound or some bruises). The demon can use this Embed multiple times in a scene, but each subsequent use imposes a cumulative –1 penalty, whether successful or not.

Exceptional Success: The target suffers no damage at all. Further uses of Just Bruised on that target during the same scene do not accrue the penalty.

Knockout Punch

Despite what popular media would have people believe, getting "knocked out" usually indicates a serious injury, often with accompanying brain damage. If it doesn't cause such damage, a sharp blow to the head is usually just painful. A demon operates under different constraints. With this Embed, a demon can knock a target unconscious and specify when the target will revive.

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Brawl – Defense

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The punch misses. If the target makes an unarmed attack on the demon, the demon falls victim to this Embed. The Storyteller determines when the demon wakes up.

Failure: The punch misses. Any further attempts to use this Embed in the same scene suffer a cumulative –1 penalty, to a maximum of –5.

Success: The demon makes an unarmed attack on the target (despite the name, kicks work just as well as punches). The demon does not inflict any Health damage, but the victim is knocked unconscious until a specified amount of time or a specified condition come to pass. That is, the demon might stipulate that the target remains unconscious "for an hour" or "until I leave this building." The victim can be brought around early, however, if anyone finds his body and makes even a cursory attempt to revive him.

The demon can, of course, choose to murder the target while he is unconscious. Doing so is *always* a risk to Cover (breaking point with a –3 modifier).

Exceptional Success: As above, except that reviving the victim requires a roll of Presence + Medicine.

Left or Right?

The classic thought experiment of Schrödinger's cat raises the question of when two possibilities collapse into one reality. Angels of the God-Machine, of course, deal with this kind of multiple-reality problem frequently, but demons, having chosen one existence rather than a potential many, are better suited to answer the question. With this Embed, a demon can predetermine the result of a binary choice that he has no way to influence. A coin flip is a classic example, but whether a person glances left or right when entering a room, whether a light is on or off in a room that demon cannot see, and whether the safety of a gun is on or off before the demon picks it up are all also valid.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Science

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon remains unsure which outcome of the targeted event is true. In addition, the demon risks blowing Cover (apply a +2 modifier to the roll).

Failure: The attempt fails and the demon cannot try again for this particular event.

Success: The demon chooses how the target event is resolved. Remember that this Embed only applies to binary choices. The demon cannot apply it to a roll on a craps table, because two six-sided dice have many more possibilities than just two. Note, too, that the possibilities have to be distinct — in the example of the craps roll, "win" and "lose" doesn't apply, because the those terms have implications beyond a binary choice. However, the demon could choose to stipulate that the roll is even or odd.

Exceptional Success: The demon can exert slightly more control over the situation than a binary choice, but only within the context of the original event. For example, with an exceptional success, the demon might be able to choose the total value of the craps roll (note that this still isn't winning or losing, and in fact can be viewed as a more abstract binary choice — the dice either come up seven or they don't). The Storyteller needs to make sure this power doesn't get abused, but a good way to do that is to remind the players that tampering with fate and probability risks Cover.

Lucky Break

The most carefully constructed plan cannot account for the vagaries of chance. A mouse chews through the wiring on a security system, a freak lightning strike downs a power line, an

assassin chooses to buy a sandwich from a particular shop and sees his target cruising by at exactly the right second — these are events that no one can anticipate and few have the wherewithal to capitalize on. The demon, however, can cause these strange "lucky breaks." She should be advised, though, that fate is fickle, and relying too much on manipulating it will surely break her Cover sooner or later.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Occult

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The player immediately rolls to avoid compromise, with a –3 modifier. The demon can avoid this roll by allowing the scales of fate to balance themselves, as it were. In game terms, the player takes a –1 penalty to *all* rolls for the next week of game time.

Failure: No effect. The demon cannot attempt to cause the same Lucky Break again (the moment has passed).

Success: The demon causes a Lucky Break. This allows the demon to bypass an obstacle or gain a piece of information by pure luck. The demon has no control over what the Lucky Break actually is, only in the end result for her. As such, the demon might want to gain confidential information from a target's computer, and find that the target's car skids off the road and crashes into a ditch right in front of the demon. She can now lift the computer if she moves quickly — but she's caused some collateral damage. As demons that create pacts (p. 116) know, you can bargain with demons or fate to become rich, but the money has to come from somewhere.

This Embed is extremely open-ended and versatile. The Storyteller should be careful that players don't overuse it. If that happens, start calling for rolls to avoid blown Cover — probability manipulation is the sort of the thing the God-Machine and its agents notice.

Exceptional Success: The demon gains a degree of control over how fate helps her, meaning that she can minimize the impact on the world around her and avoid collateral damage. Again, this is largely up to the Storyteller's discretion.

Merciless Gunman

The demon calmly dispatches multiple targets with a gun. Using this Embed, the demon can easily clear a room of antagonists without endangering his comrades or risking a true firefight breaking out.

Note that this Embed's primary function only works for Down and Dirty Combat (p. 317). If the Storyteller determines that, for whatever reason, the situation does not qualify for Down and Dirty Combat, then this Embed does not function. A demon can automatically sense whether Merciless Gunman would work; if the demon risks exposure by using it or the opposition has resources that the demon isn't aware of (if they're vampires, for instance), then the Embed doesn't work and hopefully the demon realizes she needs to be more circumspect.

In a situation where Down and Dirty Combat does not apply, Merciless Gunman still makes the character more effective with his firearms, but does not confer the same level of lethality.

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Firearms

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The first shot wounds one target, inflicting the damage rating of the gun in lethal damage, but no more. Everyone else rolls initiative and combat proceeds normally.

Failure: The gun fails to fire. The demon's player can roll Dexterity + Larceny (with a penalty equal to the number of witnesses) to holster the gun before anyone notices.

Success: The demon pulls a gun and kills a number of targets equal to the successes rolled, plus the damage rating of the gun. For instance, if a demon uses a gun with a damage rating of 2L and the player rolls four successes, the demon can kill up to six people with this Embed. The demon cannot dispatch more targets than his gun has bullets.

If the Down and Dirty Combat rules aren't in effect for this particular scene, the character can use Merciless Gunman to gain the 8-again quality for a Firearms attack (reflexive Wits + Firearms roll before the actual attack roll).

Exceptional Success: The demon can kill a number of targets equal to the number of bullets in her gun, rather than the number of successes the player rolls.

If the Down and Dirty Combat rules aren't in effect, an exceptional success on the Embed roll gives the character's next firearms attack the rote action quality.

No Quarter

A brawl can turn deadly in an instant. All it takes it someone picking up a brick or a pool cue, someone smacking his head against a solid surface, or a demon in the room using this Embed. With a glance, the demon can cause combatants to Go for Blood (p.317).

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Brawl vs. Resolve + Supernatural Tolerance

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: All combatants immediately surrender and flee the scene.

Failure: No effect; the combat proceeds as normal.

Success: All combatants abandon their previous intent for the fight and Go for Blood. Their only intent is to injure or kill their opponents. They do not suffer the Beaten Down Tilt (p. 329), nor do they surrender. The demon can cancel this Embed at any time, at which point combatants might either flee, surrender or keep fighting, depending on the characters in question and the context of the fight.

Supernatural characters and normal people with combat experience (Storyteller's discretion) can resist this Embed.

Exceptional Success: The demon can consciously control which combatants are affected by this Embed, meaning he can force one individual in a fight to Go for Blood while the others look on, horrified.

On the Mend

While Cacophony Embeds usually tend toward inflicting damage and chaos, they also have power over renewal. Demons can learn to manipulate the same forces of chaos that allow them to harm in order to heal.

Dice Pool: Wits + Medicine

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character fails to heal the target, and in fact makes the injury heal unpredictably. Whenever the target would heal a point of damage (every 15 minutes for bashing, 2 days for lethal, etc.), the target's player rolls Stamina. If the roll succeeds, the wound heals. If it fails, the wound does not heal. On a dramatic failure, the wound worsens (the character suffers one additional wound of the same type). This cycle ceases if the character gets professional medical care.

Failure: The demon fails to heal the target. Further attempts to use this Embed on the same target suffer a cumulative –1 penalty. This penalty goes away once the target has fully healed.

Success: Choose one: All of the target's bashing damage heals in fifteen minutes, or all of the target's lethal damage heals overnight, or all of the target's aggravated damage changes to lethal. A given target can only benefit from one use of On the Mend at a time, meaning that if the demon uses the Embed to change aggravated damage to lethal, she cannot then use the Embed to speed the target's healing of the lethal damage. Healing a normal human being of aggravated or lethal damage causes a compromise roll, and therefore demons are often loathe to do so. The demon can use this Embed on herself.

Exceptional Success: As above, except the options are as follows: Target heals all bashing damage; target heals all lethal damage in an hour; target heals one point of aggravated damage per success or per dot of the demon's Primum, whichever is lower

Raw Materials

Nature abhors a vacuum. With this Embed, the demon can break an object to "summon" an object of similar Size. The object that she breaks is destroyed, never to be repaired or made functional again. The object she summons isn't created out of nothing, but is brought to her location by a seemingly coincidental series of events.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Crafts

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The object is broken, but no replacement object is forthcoming. The demon risks blowing Cover instead (apply a +2 modifier to the roll).

Failure: No effect. The object is broken but no replacement comes.

Success: The demon breaks the target object and specifics a new object of the same Size (Durability is immaterial). That object arrives in the demon's proximity within the next hour. If the demon is secluded, imprisoned, or otherwise cut off from much of the world, the item can take more time to arrive (not more than a week).

Exceptional Success: The demon finds the target item within the same scene, regardless of where she is.

Sabotage

It only takes one bent pin to throw a huge, complex machine out of joint. Angels, of course, are well familiar with the concept — when they Fall, they become the bent pins. A demon capitalizing on the fragility of machines can cause one to shut down, be it a gun, a car, or a huge industrial device. All it takes is a touch.

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Crafts

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Embed has no effect but the demon immediately checks for compromise. Apply a modifier to this roll based on the complexity of the targeted machine; larger and more complex devices are more likely to blow the demon's Cover, while smaller, simpler ones are unlikely to draw notice.

Failure: The machine is unaffected. The demon can try again, but apply a cumulative –1 penalty for each attempt.

Success: The machine shuts down and will not function until someone repairs it. The repairs are generally simple (only three successes on an extended action), but they take time and expertise.

Exceptional Success: The demon damages the machine in such a way that repairing is time-consuming and difficult. Repairing the device requires an extended action with at least eight successes.

Shatter

Everything breaks. It's just a matter of applying force in the right location. A demon who understands this principle can apply the force of entropy to an object and shatter it with a swift kick. The demon cannot affect an object with a Size greater than her own (usually size 5), meaning this Embed is good for kicking down doors and breaking weapons, but not useful for smashing cars (but see Exploits).

Dice Pool: Wits + Crafts

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon suffers bashing damage equal to the Structure of the targeted objet. This is less to do with the object actually harming the character and more to do with metaphysics — the object "fights back."

Failure: The object does not break. The demon can try again, but suffers a cumulative –1 penalty for each attempt.

Success: The object breaks and is rendered useless. If the demon uses this Embed to break an object with a Durability higher than 2, she risks blowing her Cover.

Exceptional Success: The demon can delay the effect for up to one minute, meaning that she can strike the object, leave the area, and wait for it to fall apart on its own.

Shifty Eyes

Human beings rely on their intuition to a great and probably foolish degree. "Just a hunch" or "it just felt right" are terrible reasons to make important decisions, but they *feel* important, and so a demon that can manipulate those feelings wields a great deal of power. This Embed allows the demon to do exactly that — inject a nagging feeling of doubt or unease in one target about another. Like many Embeds, proper use of Shifty Eyes requires thinking ahead; properly used, it can force a target to isolate himself.

This power affects two people, the *target* and the *subject*. The subject is someone who interacts with and usually tries to get something from the target. If the Embed works as intended, it makes the target distrust the subject. The subject need not be present for the Embed to work, but the target and the subject must have interacted within the past 24 hours.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Subterfuge – Resolve

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The target trusts the subject implicitly. He feels, deep in his soul, that she is a profoundly moral and forthright person, and no evidence the contrary will sway that. At the Storyteller's discretion, this might even blossom into an Obsessed Condition.

Failure: The Embed has no effect on the target. The demon can try again, but not until the target and the subject have another interaction.

Success: The target feels an instinctive distrust of the subject. If the subject is using the social maneuvering system on the target (p. 314), the impression level drops by one (from good to average, for instance). If not, the subject takes a penalty to any Social actions against the target that rely on trust (fast-talking, seduction, persuasion, but not coercion) equal to the demon's successes.

Exceptional Success: As above, except that the target also adds the demon's Primum to the number of Doors the subject must open or to any Social penalty.

Special Someone

An angel isn't always given a specific target. A Destroyer sent to kill a person or a Guardian sent to protect one might simply be told to focus on the strongest or weakest in a group, or the most likely to be receptive to a particular task. The methods for finding this person are available to demons as well as angels by means of this Embed.

Dice Pool: Wits + Empathy

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon chooses exactly the wrong target for his criteria. The character gains the Misinformed Condition (he believes he has made the right choice and resolves the Condition when he takes action based on that mistaken belief).

Failure: The demon does not see anyone that fits his criteria. He may not attempt to use the Embed again with the same group of people.

Success: The demon finds a person that fits the criteria he sets out. These criteria cannot be too specific ("I want to find Colin McAndrew"), but can find someone with a specific Virtue or Vice, Skill rating, occupation, Merit, or active Condition. More context-dependent criteria are also permissible. A demon planning to break into a building might try to find the laziest or least perceptive guard.

Exceptional Success: The demon also gains a bonus equal to his Primum rating to the first roll made against the target.

Instrumental Embeds

As angels, Guardians had to be intimately aware of their surroundings, of the materials composing everything in their vicinity, and what effect those might have on their charges. As demons, they keep that highly analytical mindset, allowing them to make best use of the resources at their disposal.

On the abstract level, Instrumental Embeds allow the demon to perceive and twist the passage of time. The demon can change expressions of precision, making his own efforts surgical and meticulous or making someone else's laughably vague. Finally, the demon can alter the nature of utility, making all of a target's possessions useless, even for their intended purposes.

Ambush

Given even a few seconds, a demon can analyze a location and know precisely where to stand, where to hide, and what weapon to use in order to maximum the element of surprise. With a glance, the demon can plan a perfect ambush.

Dice Pool: Wits + Stealth

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon prepares for the ambush, but has missed some critical detail. When the target arrives, the demon is surprised (p.319) and any allies that were planning to benefit from this Embed must roll to see if they are surprised.

Failure: No effect; the demon and her allies must roll for initiative normally.

Success: The demon positions herself (and, if she wishes, allies up to her Primum rating) such that when their enemy enters the area, the enemy is automatically surprised. The enemy cannot act during the first turn of combat.

Exceptional Success: As above, except that the demon can cover as many allies as she wishes with this Embed's effects.

Check Backdrop

A firefight is a fraught scenario at the best of times. People with training know to check their backdrops (that is, to be aware of what's behind a target as well as the target itself) and not shoot unless they have a reasonable chance of hitting their target without hitting a bystander. A demon can use her control of precision to force the issue so that every shot that isn't aimed misses. (The rules for Aiming can be found on p. 162 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**.)

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Firearms

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Gun combat becomes perilously random. All gunshots are reduced to chance dice for the remainder of the scene. On a dramatic failure, a shot hits a random target and inflicts the gun's damage rating + the shooter's Firearms rating in lethal damage.

Failure: No effect. The demon can continue to attempt to enact this Embed without penalty.

Success: For the duration of the combat, any character that makes an attack with a firearm but does not take at least one turn to aim automatically misses. The bullet doesn't strike a random target, but hits a wall or the ground harmlessly. If a character does aim, the player gets the Aiming bonus as usual. This Embed affects all participants in the combat regardless of whether or not the demon is aware of them. The Embed can't be activated until the first turn of combat, however.

Exceptional Success: As above, but the demon can decide which participants are and are not affected.

Download Knowledge

Does a collective unconscious exist? Demons, who might be expected to know the answer, disagree. They do know that with the proper understanding they can absorb knowledge from the very mystical subroutines of the universe that allow their Embeds. Whether that means they are taking the knowledge from a human collective consciousness or just the memory banks of the God-Machine is an open question.

Dice Pool: Wits + Computer

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character uploads instead of downloads. She temporarily loses a number of Skills (not Skill dots; player's choice of which ones) equal to her Primum rating (more powerful demons are capable of transmitting more data, as it were). These lost Skills return when the character next regains Aether.

Failure: The character gains no Skill dots. She can try again (cumulative –1 penalty for each successive failed attempt in the same scene).

Success: The character gains temporary Skill dots equal to the successes on the Embed roll. These dots last for the remainder of the scene, or for a number of rolls equal to the character's Primum, whichever is shorter. This Embed cannot take the character over five dots in a Skill. The character can add dots to Skills she already possesses, but all the successes must be placed in one Skill.

A character can only benefit from one use of Download Knowledge at a time.

Exceptional Success: In addition to the Skill dots, the character acquires a Specialty for the duration of the Embed. The Specialty must be for the Skill that the character uses this Embed to acquire.

Efficiency

A demon can work faster than any person simply by applying knowledge of reality's workings that no human being could hope to attain. Any task can be completed in a fraction of the time. This Embed affects the demon's ability to perform a given extended action. Once the action has been completed (or abandoned), the effects of the Embed no longer apply. See Extended Actions, p. 312.

Dice Pool: Wits + Academics

Action: Reflexive

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon's ability to focus on the task at hand is severely compromised. The player chooses one of two results: the time required for each roll on the extended action doubles, or the number of rolls that the player can make is halved.

Failure: No effect. The action takes place under the usual parameters.

Success: The character performs the extended action quickly and efficiently. The time required for each roll on the extended action is halved.

Exceptional Success: As above, and the character can apply half of the successes on the roll for the Embed to the extended action (round up).

Ellipses

While the concept of "lost time" tends to go along with sinister or mysterious notions such as alien abduction or brainwashing, the truth of the matter is that anyone can lose time if they become too engrossed in something. A person sits down to a good book or starts playing a video game, and



suddenly it's dawn and the person is left wondering where the time went. Some demons claim that the God-Machine nudged human evolution in a precise way to create this tendency, others claim it's just a useful coincidence, but any demon might learn to exploit it.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Expression

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The target becomes hyper-aware of her surroundings, gaining a bonus to Initiative and Perception rolls equal to the demon's Primum for the rest of the scene.

Failure: No effect. The demon can attempt to use this Embed on the same target, but the player suffers a cumulative –1 penalty for each failed attempt in the same scene.

Success: The target becomes engrossed in something — reading, writing a letter, surfing the internet, even just daydreaming — and loses the time. Any Perception rolls for the character during this time are reduced to a chance die. If someone actively engages the character, the effect is lost, but this Embed is a superb way to keep someone distracted. The demon must be able to see the target when this power takes effect, but the Embed's effects persist if the demon leaves the area. The effects last for a scene.

Exceptional Success: As above, except that if the target is shaken out of the effect, she immediately falls back under the Embed if left alone.

Freeze Assets

An opponent with money can make all manner of obstacles go away. A rich individual can afford lawyers, security, weapons and assistants, but more than that, he can afford to live in such a way that those around him defer to him. Money is just one more tool, though, and that means it can be made useless. This Embed allows a demon to stop the target from using his resources, at least for a short time.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Academics – target's Resources

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character sends up a red flag somewhere. Although the Embed doesn't require the character to steal money from the target or even to interact with him in any meaningful way, the character's meddling manifests as getting the wrong kind of attention. For the rest of the day, the character suffers from the Wanted Condition (–3 to any dealings with official personnel, can be resolved by getting detained or arrested).

Failure: No effect. The demon can try again, but the roll suffers a cumulative –1 penalty for each subsequent attempt against the same target on the same day.

Success: The target is unable to spend money for the next 24 hours. He finds that he has no cash on hand (maybe his wallet has been lifted or he simply has no cash in it), his credit

cards are declined, and no one will take his check. Internet payment options don't work, and of course an IOU is right out. For a short time, the target cannot buy his way out of trouble.

Exceptional Success: Not only is the target unable to spend money, but his friends and employees desert him as well. The demon's player can choose to temporarily eliminate a number of the target's other Social Merits equal to the demon's Primum rating. Eligible Merits include Staff, Retainer, Allies and Contacts, plus any others that the Storyteller feels appropriate.

Fulcrum Point

"Give me a place to stand," said Archimedes, "and I will move the Earth." He was referring, of course, to the fact that with the right lever almost any object, no matter how heavy, can be moved. A demon with this Embed takes this principle to extreme lengths. With a good shove, the demon can move any object, regardless of its weight, as long as it is not affixed to the ground. Buildings are built into the ground, for instance, and therefore not subject to this Embed, but vehicles, trash bins, and boulders can be moved just enough out of position to inhibit pursuers or give a demon something to climb.

Dice Pool: Wits + Science

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The object shifts the wrong way, knocking the demon over and inflicting half the object's Size in bashing damage (round down, maximum 10 damage). If the demon is caught between the object and a solid surface, like a wall, the damage might be lethal instead.

Failure: No effect. The demon has not found an appropriate leverage point. She may try again, but needs to find a different point of attack on the object.

Success: The object moves a number of yards equal to the successes rolled. The object won't keep moving unless it would roll or move under its own power (it has wheels, for instance, or is round) and the demon pushes it down a slope.

Exceptional Success: No further effect beyond the additional distance conveyed by more successes.

Fungible Knowledge

A demon can affect more than just the facts or skills that she knows. She can change her knowledge on the level of metacognition — that is, knowing what she knows and that she knows it. Having this kind of understanding of her own cognition, the demon changes the variable "what I know" in one area, and the variable "what I don't know" in another. The result of this is that she temporarily loses expertise in one area but gains it in another.

Dice Pool: Wits + Academics

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character loses both Skills for the rest of the day.

Failure: No effect; the character can try again without penalty.

Success: The player chooses two Skills and switches their ratings. This effect lasts for the remainder of the scene *or* until the character has used both of the affected Skills, whichever comes first. Using this Embed more times in one day than the character's Resolve rating causes a compromise roll, however.

Exceptional Success: The player can reshuffle the character's dots as she sees fit. This effect lasts for 24 hours. If the character wants to change the Skills back before then, the player must use this Embed again.

Like I Built It

With this Embed, the demon gains an intuitive understanding of an object or a structure, allowing her to make perfect use of it. This Embed does not function on natural objects or topographical formations (so it can't be used to find her way out of a cave system), only on buildings and objects that have been deliberately crafted. While it might be possible to use similar principles to gain an understanding of natural phenomena (since they are "crafted" by time and physics), demons generally feel that doing so would be a good way to break Cover.

Dice Pool: Wits + Crafts

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon applies the knowledge of how the target was constructed in a destructive manner. If used on an object, it breaks or ceases to function. If used on a building, the demon becomes hopelessly lost (and gains the Lost Condition; p. 310).

Failure: No effect; the demon can try to use this Embed again on the same target. This applies a cumulative –1 penalty for each attempt.

Success: The demon understands the workings and construction of the object as though she designed and built it. For objects, the demon gains a bonus to using the object for its intended purpose equal to her Primum rating. This bonus lasts for the remainder of the scene. For buildings, the demon cannot become lost in the building, no matter how big it is, and gains a bonus to Initiative equal to her Primum rating while in the building. She also knows of any secret doors, passageways, and compartments, as long as they were part of the original construction of the building. A side effect of this limitation, though, is that the demon can tell if any part of the building was added after its initial construction.

Exceptional Success: The bonus to dice pool (object) applies no matter what the demon is doing with the object. For instance, the character wouldn't normally be able to apply the bonus if

she was using a wrench as a weapon, since this isn't the intended function of the wrench. With an exceptional success she can, since she has such a thorough understanding of the object. For buildings, she can instinctively analyze sounds and air pressure changes such that she cannot be surprised while in the building.

The Map is Not the Territory

"The map is not the territory" is a saying that simply means that the representation of the thing is not the thing — a picture of a car is not a car, for example, and a name written on a piece of paper is not interchangeable with the person. The demon can amplify this concept, severing the relationship between representation and actuality for a target.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Academics – Intelligence

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Embed backfires onto the demon, applying the Muddled Condition. This subtracts five dice from all rolls involving research, navigation or otherwise working from written or printed sources. The character can resolve the Condition by accepting a failure on such an action without a roll.

Failure: No effect. The demon can try to use the Embed on the same target again, but apply a cumulative –1 penalty for every successive attempt within a week.

Success: The demon inhibits the target from using printed material, including books, maps, written directions, sketches and internet instructions to help her. This has two effects. First, it removes any bonus the character might enjoy due to such materials (including the Library Merit; p. 289). Second, if the action in question is an extended action, the character adds a number of successes onto the target number equal to the demon's successes on this Embed.

If neither of those effects apply to a given action, the character simply takes a penalty to the relevant roll equal to the demon's Primum rating.

This Embed remains in effect for a number of days equal to the demon's Primum.

Exceptional Success: As above, except that the penalty equal to the demon's Primum rating applies to *all* Mental actions, regardless of what else applies.

Miles Away

Demons are nearly impossible to read. They control their emotional responses almost completely, which is a good thing considering how much of a demon's existence requires hiding and remaining vigilant. But demons still feel pain, both emotional and physical, and they still crack under pressure. And despite their apparent stoicism, demons can still feel love, and can still fear for those they love. A Guardian has to be able to put fear and even love out of his mind and remained focused in a crisis. This Embed replaces fear, doubt, hate, love and other distracting emotions with a pleasing, all-encompassing sound. The demon hears whatever he finds soothing. It could be music, his lover's voice, or even the static hum of the God-Machine. Whatever it is, it gives him the ability to resist pain and distraction.

Dice Pool: Wits + Expression

Action: Reflexive

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon loses his ability to conceal his emotions for the rest of the scene. The inability to mask his responses is extremely jarring to a demon; apply a –5 modifier to all Subterfuge rolls during this time.

Failure: The demon fails to activate the Embed.

Success: The demon calls up a continuous sound, one that he finds pleasant or at least that helps him filter out distractions. The sound does not actually impede his ability to hear, but it does grant him a bonus equal to the successes on any roll to resist distraction, torture, Intimidation, or mental/emotional supernatural attacks. This bonus applies to the next such roll that the demon must make, after which the power ends (but the player can reactivate it).

Exceptional Success: The demon gains a Zen-like level of focus from his mind's music and becomes hyper-aware of his surroundings. The bonus from this Embed can be applied to a Perception roll as well as the other possibilities listed above.

Momentum

Any action, no matter how small or how cerebral, sets matter in motion, creating energy. A demon can use this energy to fuel her own endeavors, regardless of whether or not the preceding action actually helps the demon on a literal level. For example, in combat, the demon can take a successful attack — even against her — and use it to fuel her counterattack. Or, she could take the Drive roll of her compatriot and use it to fuel a Firearms roll to shoot at a pursuer.

The demon must see the target action take place and be in physical proximity and line of sight to the person taking the action. It doesn't matter if the action isn't something that can physically observed (Social actions count), but the demon needs to be able to see the character.

Dice Pool: Wits + Science

Action: Reflexive

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The energy of the preceding action saps the energy from the demon's action instead of bolstering it. The demon's next roll is a chance die.

Failure: No effect; the demon's next action takes place as it normally would.

Success: The demon's player adds the successes of the preceding action to her next roll, as if the preceding were from a secondary actor using the Teamwork rules (p. 134 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**). However, the negative side of this rule applies — if the character gets no successes, the character gets no

bonus dice; if the character rolls a dramatic failure, the demon takes a –4 to her next action.

Example: *The demon is wants to talk her way into a club, which the Storyteller decides requires a roll of Presence + Streetwise. With only three dice in that pool, the demon's player decides to use* Momentum. *One of the other characters is attempting to pick up a woman outside the club, so the demon uses that action to bolster her Streetwise roll.*

The player of the would-be seducer rolls and gets three successes. This means the demon's player adds three dice to her attempt get into the club. If the seducer had failed, the demon would have only her natural dice pool to rely on, and if the seducer somehow came up with a dramatic failure, the demon's player would then have a chance die.

Exceptional Success: As above, except that if the preceding action fails, the demon's player still gets a +1; if the preceding action is a dramatic failure, the demon takes no penalty.

Read Hostility

A Guardian needs to be able to recognize a potential threat before it becomes an actual threat. One way of doing this is simply to attune oneself to the concept of hostility or intended harm. A demon with this Embed can do exactly that — anyone entering the area with meaning to hurt the demon or a chosen target finds that her baleful intentions betray her.

Dice Pool: Wits + Subterfuge

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character reads a threat coming from a random, uninvolved person.

Failure: No effect; the character must rely on his natural instincts to suss out any incoming threats.

Success: Once activated, this Embed remains so for the rest of the scene. The demon can center the effect on himself, a single target, or a group of targets, but anyone affected by the Embed must be within the demon's line of sight. Once the Embed is in effect, the demon automatically recognizes harmful intent from anyone entering the scene. Any attempts to ambush or surprise the demon automatically fail. If the aggressor tries to surprise a target of this Embed (that is, if the demon uses it on a third party), the demon's player may roll for initiative without checking for surprise, adding the demon's Primum to the initiative roll.

This power detects intent, not danger. As such, if someone out of the demon's line of sight were to snipe at the target, Read Hostility would be of no help.

Exceptional Success: As above, except the demon automatically takes her action first in an ensuing combat (no initiative roll required on the first turn).

Right Tools, Right Job

Tools will never supplant skill, it's true, but even a genius mechanic might find herself unable to perform even a simple repair without a screwdriver. This Embed allows the demon to improve the tools she has at hand, even if those tools would normally be next to useless for the task she is trying to perform. She can use a penknife to perform delicate surgery or a wrench to fix eyeglasses. The tools themselves don't change shape, they simply function much better than they have any right to. Witnesses usually find themselves wondering how this feat was accomplished, but if the demon is too closely observed, she might wind up blowing her cover. Better to use this Embed in secret.

Dice Pool: Wits + Crafts

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The tools immediately break, rust, or bend, and are rendered completely useless.

Failure: No effect; the tools don't work any better than they usually would.

Success: This Embed only works if the demon actually has tools to hand, even if the tools she has are completely unsuited to the task she is performing. The Storyteller decides what penalty (or bonus) the tools bestow. Trying to dig a bullet out of someone's arm with a pocketknife, for instance, might give the character a –2 penalty (but note that the roll would be impossible without *some* kind of tool). Successes on the Embed roll add to the tool's bonus, which can mitigate a penalty and even push the bonus as high as +3. If, in the example of the pocketknife, the player rolls two successes, the penalty is eliminated. If the player rolls four successes, the –2 penalty becomes a +2 bonus.

Exceptional Success: The demon's use of the Embed can push the tool's bonus as high as +5, rather than +3.

Shift Consequence

This somewhat dangerous Embed allows a demon to change the results of a scene by changing who suffers the consequence. A critical injury, poison, humiliation or a Condition can change from one target to another.

This Embed can be activated any time between when the consequence appears and the end of the scene. The demon specifies which consequence he wishes to shift. It must be something that occurred within the last scene and it must have a game effect — damage or a Condition are the most likely targets.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Occult – Resolve, Composure, or Stamina (Storyteller's discretion)

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon suffers the consequence himself. Anyone else involved in the scene that wants to inflict her own consequence on the demon may do so. This won't kill the demon; the demon suffers only the most intense injury. In addition, though, the demon must check for compromise as described under Success.

Failure: No effect; the consequence stays where it is.

Success: The demon shifts the consequence to another eligible target. If the consequence is damage, the demon can change it to an inanimate object (the wall took the bullet instead of the demon's friend, for instance). Conditions, however, only shift to targets that might conceivably have them. Cars don't get Embarrassed and buildings don't become Lost. The character also risks Cover (apply a +1 modifier).

Exceptional Success: As above, except that the character does not check for compromise.

Strike First

No one likes to be sucker-punched, especially not a demon. With this Embed, the demon can always be prepared for a fight, no matter how cleverly the enemy sneaks up on him. The character can use this Embed even if he is surprised.

Dice Pool: Wits + Brawl

Action: Reflexive

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character loses his action for the first turn of combat and cannot use his Defense for that turn. He watches as all other combatants move dizzyingly quickly around him.

Failure: No effect. The player rolls initiative or suffers the effects of being surprised as usual.

Success: The character acts first in the combat regardless of whether or not he was surprised. This bonus only extends to the first turn of combat, after which the player rolls initiative normally, but adds the successes on this roll to the character's initiative for the combat. If the character has a concealed or holstered weapon, he can draw it without penalty.

Exceptional Success: As above, but the player does not need to roll initiative. The character acts first for the rest of the combat.

Synthesis

As any crime scene investigator can tell you, any given area can say volumes about what has happened there. It's just a matter of asking the right questions and having the right tools. A demon with this Embed can learn the truth of an area and its history by simply observing how it has changed recently. This Embed does not let the demon relive the past of the area or see visions of what has come before; the further back in time an event happened, the less information the demon can gain about it. However, this Embed makes a demon a detective par excellence.

Dice Pool: Wits + Investigation

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Everything is constantly changing. The world and all of the atoms in it are in a state of flux ... and now they demon can *see* that never-ending dance of change. The demon immediately makes a compromise roll (apply a +1 modifier) as he is reminded that he can no longer perceive the fundament of reality ... as he could when he was an angel.

Failure: The demon gains no special information about the area's history. He can investigate through mundane means, or try to use the Embed again (but suffers a cumulative –1 penalty for each successive failed attempt).

Success: The character sees how the area has changed in the recent past. He learns if any object was dropped here or taken away, the origin of any scratches or scrapes or other damage to the area, any lingering but invisible chemical agents and the location of any hidden objects.

This Embed does *not* penetrate magical attempts to disguise the area's past, but it also doesn't work within them. Consider, for example, a murder scene in which the body has been magically altered so that its cause of death is a heart attack rather than a bullet to the head. The Embed still reads that the body fell in a particular way (consistent with a gunshot), that particulars of gunsmoke or gunpowder linger in the air, and may even find a spent shell casing on the ground...but the body is still dead of a heart attack. A clever demon can interpret conflicting clues and realize that the area has been magically altered.

Synthesis reveals the most recent changes. If the character wishes to go further back in time, he can use the Embed again. Each successive attempt imposes a cumulative –1 penalty. The Storyteller should feel free to inform the player when nothing is left to be discovered so that that character isn't wasting time digging into events that are of no relevance.

Exceptional Success: As above, but the character also recognizes if the area has been mystically tampered with (though the power still doesn't see through the tampering).

Tag and Release

Life as a demon is an exercise in patience. A demon needs to know when to approach a target, when to strike (for whatever value of "strike" is appropriate) and when to leave well enough alone. This Embed makes this kind of patience easier; the demon can mystically mark a target so that he can find it later. The demon must touch the target to mark it.

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Expression

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon obliterates the target from his memory. Once the target leaves his immediate presence, he *cannot* find it againno matter how hard he looks. He remembers that he is looking for someone, but cannot remember who or why. This effect lasts for a number of days equal to the demon's Primum rating.

Failure: No effect; the demon can attempt to mark the target again, but suffers a cumulative –1 penalty to do so for each attempt within the same scene.

Success: The demon places a mystical mark on the target. This target can be a person, a building, or an object. For a number of days equal to the demon's Primum rating, the demon can find the target no matter where it is. If the target dies or is destroyed, the demon senses this immediately.

Exceptional Success: As above, and in addition the demon gains a bonus on one action involving the target. The bonus is equal to the demon's Primum rating, and can be anything from research to persuasion to an attack.

Tools Into Toys

The demon mystically attacks the utility of tools, removing any assistance they provide to a task. Skillfully wielded, this Embed can make a task impossible.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Crafts

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon increases the utility of the tools. Add the demon's Primum rating to the tool's equipment bonus for the rest of the scene.

Failure: No effect. The demon can attempt to use the Embed again, but apply a cumulative –1 penalty for each successive attempt.

Success: The demon makes the tools less useful. The tools don't physically change — a wrench doesn't grow larger or smaller or rustier — but the character wielding them has difficulty putting them in the right places or making them work correctly. In game terms, subtract the demon's successes on the Embed roll from the tool's equipment bonus. This can't turn the bonus into a penalty (the most it can do is remove the bonus), but if the tool is *required* for the task and the equipment bonus is reduced to zero, then the task is not possible using that tool.

Example: *A doctor is about to perform emergency surgery on an enemy of the demon. The demon uses Tools Into Toys on the doctor's scalpel and medical tools, and changes the +2 equipment bonus into +0, removing the bonus entirely. The doctor can no longer perform the surgery – the tools don't work and she can't operate without them.*

Exceptional Success: As above, but the demon may choose to apply any leftover successes (after removing the equipment bonus) into a penalty on the attempted task.

Turn Blade

A weapon is a tool, and demons who make use of Instrumental Embeds know how to affect a tool's utility. With this Embed, the demon blunts a blade, softens a cudgel, or slows a bullet. He can't make a weapon perfectly harmless, but he can make it much less deadly.

Dice Pool: Wits + Weaponry

Action: Reflexive

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The damage rating on the weapon *doubles* for this attack.

Failure: No effect; the weapon inflicts its normal damage.

Success: The demon must invoke this Embed before an attacker's roll. The attacker must be within sight of the demon and the demon must know the attack is coming. If the Embed succeeds, the demon's player chooses either to remove the weapon's damage rating for this attack, *or* for the attack to inflict bashing damage.

Example: *A stigmatic attacks the demon with a sword (damage rating 3L). The demon uses the Turn Blade Embed and the attacker rolls three successes to hit the demon. This would normally inflict six points of lethal damage. The demon's player, however, can choose either to remove the damage rating on the sword (so the attack inflicts three lethal damage) or make all the damage bashing (in which case the demon takes six bashing damage).*

Exceptional Success: The demon removes the damage rating of the weapon *and* makes all of the damage bashing.

Mundane Embeds

Can the power of a fallen angel truly be "mundane?" A demon that truly understands the nature of Embeds would have to answer in the affirmative, for what allows Embeds but the fundamental nature of the universe, and what could be more mundane? That said, Mundane Embeds allow the demon to fit in with the world a little better, enhancing Cover in subtle ways to let the demon to go about his business unnoticed by man or angel.

Conceptually, Mundane Embeds allow the demon to capitalize on the fact that, to humans, a thing or a word can have multiple meanings. A "shot" can be a small, powerful drink of alcohol, an injection or an attempt to kill with a gun — and with the right application of a Mundane Embed, the demon can cloud which of those options is immediately relevant. In addition, these Embeds deal with the concept of forgetting, and many a demon has reason to make a witness forget. Don't discount, though, the power to make someone *unable* to forget something.

Alibi

A person being in two places at once is generally a violation of the laws of physics, and yet demons manage. This power doesn't actually enable the demon to duplicate himself, but rather to shift his Cover so that people see it in another place. If a demon has multiple Covers, he can choose which one establishes the Alibi (it doesn't have to be the Cover he's currently using). In either case, the "duplicate" can't take meaningful action — nothing that would require a dice roll — but the power makes for a good way for a demon to establish plausible deniability or lose a tail.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Stealth

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon's Cover appears somewhere other than his current location, but not anywhere useful for

establishing an alibi. It might appear in a restricted area on an Army base, at a drug buy, or somewhere far away from any witnesses. The demon has no idea where it appeared or what the consequences might be, but the Storyteller is encouraged to make them interesting.

Failure: No effect. The demon cannot use this Embed to establish and alibi for the target scene.

Success: The demon separates himself from his Cover for a short time (one scene). The Cover appearing is able to make small talk, but not to make dice rolls or take significant action. Worse, if by some strange chance the Cover "dies," the demon immediately drops to Cover 0 (see p. 115) unless he has another Cover to shift to or a pact to call in. During the scene, the demon can take any actions he wishes without fear that his deeds will be traced back to his Cover. As such, during that scene the demon cannot be compromised by taking actions antithetical to that Cover (though activating Exploits or demonic form powers still causes compromise normally).

Exceptional Success: As above, but the Cover possesses a slightly greater degree of self-awareness. If threatened, the Cover leaves the area and vanishes when it is out of sight. This might threaten the character's alibi, but it won't leave the demon with no Cover.

Authorized

People don't generally enjoy confrontation, and most of them fold in the face of authority. With this Embed, the demon shows a symbol to a witness — it might be a costume sheriff's badge or just a quick flip of the demon's wallet — and the witness believes that the demon has the legal and societal right to be where she is, doing what she is doing.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Intimidation – highest Intelligence present

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The witness knows immediately that the demon has no authority and can order her to leave. The demon must either meekly obey or reveal herself as a demon (activating her demonic form — p. 195).

Failure: No effect. The witness might ask to see the demon's "badge" or otherwise verify her credentials. The demon might still be able to talk her way out of this, but she must do it through mundane means.

Success: The witness believes whatever cover story the demon offers and allows her to remain or to pass. This can allow demons access to locked rooms, files, closed meetings and exclusive clubs. It does not, however, allow the demon to exert any undue influence over the witness. If a demon uses this Embed to gain access to a man's office while he isn't there, it doesn't prevent his secretary from calling the man to alert him.

If the witness catches the demon doing something that would be a breaking point for him (the witness, that is), the effects of the power end. A demon might be able to get into the man's office, to continue the example, but if the secretary catches the demon setting the place on fire the Embed no longer applies.

Exceptional Success: In addition to the above, the demon can give the witness one simple command. This command cannot force the witness to do something that would cause a breaking point, but "stay out here" or "don't tell anyone I was here" are probably reasonable examples.

Cuckoo's Egg

Obtaining an object is much easier if the owner of the object doesn't realize it is missing. This requires some subtlety on the part of the demon, but with this Embed, the character leaves the target in possession of an object that is identical to the stolen one. This requires that the demon have an object of comparable size, function and mass to the targeted one, but once this Embed is activated, the "cuckoo's egg" is indistinguishable from the stolen one.

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Larceny

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Embed functions in reverse — the demon becomes unable to tell which object is the genuine article and which one was the decoy, and "steals" the decoy. She doesn't notice this until the next scene, at which point the target might well be unobtainable.

Failure: No effect; the objects still look distinct. Provided the opportunity to switch them is still there, the demon can try again. Apply a cumulative –1 penalty for each successive attempt within the same scene.

Success: The demon switches the decoy and the target object. The victim doesn't notice the difference until the next scene at the earliest.

Exceptional Success: As above, except the victim doesn't notice the switch for 24 hours. Another character might, however; if the switch is pointed out to the victim, the effects of the Embed end.

Diversion

Getting someplace that the one isn't supposed to be, opening the right filing cabinet, or swiping something off a desk is very often a matter of the right person or people becoming distracted for a short amount of time. With this Embed, the demon can cause her targets to look away or otherwise be diverted just long enough to slip past them.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Expression

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character becomes the most fascinating thing in the immediate area. Anyone targeted by the Embed, plus anyone else nearby, turns to watch the character.



They won't follow her or approach her necessarily (unless it would be appropriate for them to do so; a security guard or policeman might follow the character because he finds her suspicious), but they will watch her carefully for the rest of the scene.

Failure: No effect; the character must rely on her natural stealth or distraction abilities. She can try this Embed again (–1 cumulative penalty for each successive attempt beyond the first).

Success: The demon may target a number of characters equal to her Primum rating with this power. If the roll succeeds, the targets look off in a direction specified by the character and do not look back unless something extreme attracts their attention (an explosion, gunshot, or something equally exciting). Anyone trying to sneak by the targets, steal from them, or otherwise avoid their notice receives a bonus on the relevant roll (probably Stealth or Larceny) equal to the player's successes.

If the character uses this Embed on a target and then attacks, the target's player can make the usual roll to avoid surprise (p. 319), contested against the Embed roll.

Exceptional Success: The player can choose: either the Embed works as described above but affects any number of characters in the immediate area, or the Embed affects the usual number of targets but those affected *cannot* roll to see if they notice anyone sneaking by them. If this Embed was a precursor to a surprise attack, the character can make one Killing Blow (p. 168 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**).

Don't I Know You?

Memory is a funny thing. The connections we make in our memories are often unconscious, but still very powerful. A person might be inclined to treat another with more kindness or deference than perhaps she deserves just because she reminds him of her uncle. That reminder might be visual, auditory, or olfactory (scent actually forms the strongest bonds of memory in the mammalian brain), but it makes the target predisposed to be favorable to the character.

This Embed uses different systems based on whether the character is using the Social Maneuvering game mechanic (p. 314) or a simple Social action (for fast-talking, for instance).

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Subterfuge – Resolve

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon reminds the target of someone, but not someone he looks upon positively. If the character is using Social Maneuvering, the impression immediately becomes *hostile*. If the character is using a simple Social action, the player applies a –5 penalty to the roll.

Failure: No effect. The character must charm the target on her own merits. The demon can attempt to use this Embed

again; apply a cumulative –1 penalty to each successive attempt within the same scene.

Success: The demon reminds the target of someone in his past, someone with whom the target has a positive association. The target doesn't mistake the demon for the person and in fact might not even conscious make the connection, "she reminds me of my first girlfriend." If the character is using the Social Maneuvering system, the impression level immediately improves one step *and* the player can make a roll to open Doors. If the character is using a Social action, the player adds three dice to the attempt.

Exceptional Success: As above, but the demon also gains an intuitive understanding of who she reminds the target of and the nature of the memory. In game terms (in addition to whatever information the Storyteller wishes to give the player), the character gains the Informed Condition with regards to the target (p. 309).

Earworm

It's irritating to have a catchy but annoying song stuck in one's head. A demon, however, can prevent a target from forgetting such an earworm, amplifying it to a degree that interferes with any attempted thought or problem solving.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Expression – Composure

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The earworm becomes stuck in the demon's head. He suffers the effects of the Embed as though the player had rolled successes equal to the demon's Primum. The demon can expel the earworm by magically clearing his head; this requires spending a point of Aether and a roll to avoid breaking Cover at a +3 modifier.

Failure: No effect. The character can try to infect the target again; apply a cumulative –1 penalty for each successive attempt against the same target in the same scene.

Success: The target hears a song that she can't get out of her head. The song doesn't have to be a real, recognizable song (though if the player has a favorite earworm that he wishes to inflict on the troupe, there's no rule against it). The target cannot concentrate or attend without the song becoming "louder" and occupying more of her mental faculties. Any extended action requires a number of additional successes equal to the successes on the Embed roll, and any Perception rolls the target makes suffer a penalty equal to the demon's Primum.

Exceptional Success: As above. In addition, the target unconsciously hums or sings the song, imposing a penalty on Stealth rolls equal to the demon's Primum.

Homogenous Memory

The Rashomon effect, named after Akira Kurosawa's film *Rashomon*, refers to the phenomenon of different perspectives coloring the same event. This effect sometimes works for demons trying to keep their Cover, since multiple perspectives of supernatural occurrences don't make for credulous investigators. But just as often, a demon finds it more useful if all the witnesses tell the same story. People, cops included, take the path of least resistance, and if all the witnesses say a man jumped off the ledge, who would ever think that a winged being dropped him?

This Embed, then, counters the Rashomon effect, making sure everyone tells the same story.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Subterfuge – Resolve

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: In an unfortunate perversion of the Embed's intended use, everyone tells the mutually coherent story that leads any inclined investigator straight to the demon. The demon gains the Marked Condition — any investigator gains a +2 on any roll to track or find witness to the demon's activities. The demon's player can resolve this Condition by agreeing to a confrontation scene with the pursuer.

Failure: No effect; the Rashomon effect holds true and everyone reports what they saw (or hides it) as per their natural inclination.

Success: Any witnesses to the previous scene's activities report whatever the demon chooses as the cover story, provided that the cover story isn't completely absurd or impossible (to a conventional understanding). For instance, going with the example of the man being dropped off a ledge by a winged demon, it's no problem to stipulate that witnesses saw him jump off, or that he was pushed by an assailant, or that he tripped and fell. However, if the demon tried to use a cover story that the man fell from a flying sleigh pulled by reindeer, the story doesn't "take" and the Embed fails.

The demon doesn't actually need to talk with the witnesses; the demon's power is affecting the event and how it is perceived to *any* witness, not these specific people.

This Embed does not prevent a supernatural being from looking into a witness's mind to learn the truth, or from using some kind of psychic power (such as the Psychometry Merit, p. 301) to look into the area's past.

Exceptional Success: As above, except that any attempt to learn the truth from one of the witnesses, through mundane or supernatural means, suffers a penalty equal to the demon's Primum.

Identity Theft

Becoming another person for purposes of using their money, insurance, or credit is simple enough for anyone with a computer and a little con artistry. A demon, however, can do so much more by playing on the notion of "identity" at a conceptual level. She can become someone else in more than just name, wearing her target's face and seeing with her eyes. The effect doesn't last very long, but a careful demon can build up a "stable" of identities that she uses frequently, allowing her to escape from pursuers quickly ... or even to strike at her foes using her co-opted identity's resources.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Subterfuge

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon inadvertently gives her identity to the target, but keeps none for herself. This has a number of unpleasant effects. First, the demon has no identity at all and wanders, dizzied and confused, until the power's effects wear off. She is unable to spend Aether or use her other Embeds, and has no clear idea who she is. This effect lasts for a number of hours equal to (10 – Cover), using the Cover the demon was using when she used this Embed.

Failure: No effect; the demon retains her own identity, as does the target. The demon can try again (apply a cumulative –1 penalty for each successive attempt against the same target in the same day).

Success: The demon takes the target's identity. The demon's face subtly shifts to resemble the target, her voice and mannerisms change, and she slips into the character's life. The demon gains access to the target's Social Merits, including Resources, Allies, Retainers and so forth, for a number of hours equal to the successes on the roll. Meanwhile, the target loses her identity entirely and succumbs to lethargy — she sleeps while the demon is using her persona, or sometimes wanders in a daze.

If the target dies while the demon is using her identity, the demon must release the identity immediately. The player makes a compromise roll, with a negative modifier equal to the number of hours that the demon has already used the identity on this occasion.

The demon must touch the target in order to use this power, but once she has made contact, she can use the power on the target within a number of miles equal to her Primum. Identity Theft does not work on supernatural characters (any character with a Supernatural Tolerance trait).

Exceptional Success: The theft lasts for up to 24 hours, though the demon is free to cancel the effect at any time. The demon is advised to keep close tabs on the target during this time, though, since the longer the theft continues, the more dangerous it becomes for the demon if the target dies.

Idle Conversation

When demons gather or meet with other supernatural beings, they might discuss battling angels, seeing werewolves hunt, or any of the violent or downright bizarre acts they committed in service to the God-Machine. But they enjoy having a cup of coffee or a pint of lager with such conversations as much as human beings do, which means that masking the conversation from nearby listeners is wise. A demon employing this Embed makes the conversation he is in sound like idle, nonspecific chatter, not worthy of listening to. If someone is actively trying to spy on the demon, she is unable to make sense of the conversation — she seems unable to focus on the words or adjust the volume on a listening device quite enough.

Note that since demons are able to speak any language they wish, it's not at all difficult for a group of demons gathering in a diner in New York to speak in, say, Basque, and have little concern that anyone around will understand them. This Embed, then, makes more sense for a character who routinely deals with stigmatics, pactbound, and supernatural beings other than demons.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Socialize

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Everyone in the room hears the conversation, but even as they fall silent, the demon and his companions don't notice and prattle on. This might well lead to unintended consequences and Conditions and is very likely to risk the Cover of the demon using the Embed, at least.

Failure: No effect; the demon and his compatriots take their chances talking in public as usual.

Success: The demon and anyone he chooses to include in the effect can engage in conversation freely without fear of anyone eavesdropping. To a casual listener, the conversation just sounds like white noise. If anyone actively tries to hear their conversation, the voices are too soft, background noise is too pronounced, and the eavesdropper can't quite manage to make out any specific words.

The demon cannot, however, detect or prevent magical intrusion. A character with a supernatural means of amplifying the characters' conversation or reading lips (or minds) can do so unhindered by this Embed.

Exceptional Success: As above, and the demon knows if anyone is trying to actively listen to the conversation. If so, the character can choose what the eavesdropper hears — the characters might be talking about the best place to dispose of a body, but the eavesdropper hears them discussing where to dispose of old electronics. In addition, the demon's player can make a reflexive Wits + Composure roll to notice any magical attempts to penetrate the Embed.

In My Pocket

Having exactly what is necessary at exactly the right moment can be the difference between life and death (or Cover and angelic discovery). A demon's pockets are a strange confluence of empty space and quantum possibility — that is, a demon might potentially have anything in his pockets that would reasonably fit, until and unless he turns out those pockets and proves that he doesn't. As such, a demon's pockets can be said to have any object that would fit in them.

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Larceny

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon has nothing in his pockets. Every object he was carrying is gone forever, vanished into pure potential.

Failure: No effect; the demon does not produce the desired object unless the player established earlier that he was carrying it. The demon can try to produce a different object, but not the same one until he changes clothes.

Success: The demon produces the desired object, provided it would fit into the pocket in question. The demon can use this Embed on receptacles that are not literally pockets (insides of coats, purses, violin cases) provided that no one in the current scene has seen the interior and knows that the target object was not there. The equipment bonus from an object thus produced is equal to the demon's Primum or the standard equipment bonus for an object of its type, whichever is lower.

This Embed *can* produce weapons, but again, only if the demon has not definitively established that he doesn't have one. If a demon enters a state function and goes through a metal detector, he can't then use In My Pocket to produce a steel knife. If he had to empty his pockets to get into a given situation, then his pockets have been established as empty and he can't use this Embed (at least not on his pockets).

While this Embed is highly versatile, it does have its limitations. For one thing, because it cannot produce an object that has been established as *not* being in the demon's pocket, it cannot produce an object belonging to or in the possession of another person (so the demon could produce a cell phone, but not a specific person's cell phone). The character can produce a badge or a form of identification, but it won't be tailored to the character and it won't stand up to any kind of inspection. The character can use this Embed a number of times during a chapter equal to his Primum rating. After that, every use of In My Pocket causes a compromise roll.

Exceptional Success: As above, except that the equipment bonus on the item in question is equal to the *higher* of the demon's Primum or the standard for the object. If they are equal, add one.

Interference

Demons must constantly be vigilant about their Covers. The God-Machine would love to reclaim (or destroy) demons and Cover is the only thing keeping its agents off the demon's trail. That said, pursuit of an Agenda often forces the demon to become visible, even for a moment. A demon with this Embed can diffuse the distortion that a blown Cover roll causes, buying herself some time.

This Embed is used after the demon (or another demon nearby) loses Cover or otherwise attracts angelic attention.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Subterfuge

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon clarifies the situation for the incoming angels — any demons in the scene light up like Roman candles. *All* demons in the area gain the Hunted Condition. The character can cancel this effect by immediately going loud (taking the hit for the team, as it were).

Failure: No effect. The demon takes her chances with whatever attention is incoming.

Success: The demon spreads the exposure across the area, making it hard for angels to pinpoint exactly where the break in Cover came from. Any angel looking for the demon suffers a penalty equal to the successes on the Embed roll. If the demon used Interference after a failed compromise roll, the affected character still loses a dot of Cover but chooses a Condition or glitch based on the options for success rather than failure (see p. 115). This Embed has no effect on a dramatic failure on a compromise roll, however, other than potentially throwing incoming angels off the scent.

Exceptional Success: No effect other than the greater penalty to the angel.

Last Place You Look

The act of hiding something changes it. The gun is no longer just a gun. Once someone has concealed it for whatever reason, it is a *hidden* gun, deliberately placed somewhere that someone hopes it will not be found. Finding a hidden object by looking for the object is difficult, depending on how well the concealer did his job. Finding a hidden object by looking for the "hidden" part is much more effective, but it's not an option for most people. Demons, of course, are not most people.

Dice Pool: Wits + Larceny

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The object (if any) becomes so hidden that it cannot be found by mundane means. Another demon can use this Embed to ferret it out and other supernatural beings have access to make that allows them to find hidden objects, but any such attempt suffers a negative modifier equal to the demon's Primum.

Failure: No effect. The demon can attempt to use this Embed again on the same area. Apply a cumulative –1 penalty for each successive attempt to search the same area.

Success: If any object has been hidden in the general area (roughly 250 square feet; about the size of a living room, but the Storyteller is encouraged to be generous, especially for a demon with a higher Primum rating), the demon knows where the hidden object is. She doesn't know *what* the hidden object is or how it is hidden, but she knows when she is standing over or near it, and knows where to dig or look to begin her search. The player can add her Primum to any rolls made during the scene to find the object. If this would require an extended action, she instead adds her Primum as *successes* to the action.

Exceptional Success: The demon knows where the hidden object and how it was hidden. If the "object" is a message etched into a wall and then painted, the demon knows to remove the paint. If the object is a gun hidden in a wall safe, the demon knows she needs to open the safe. The rule about adding Primum to dice pools or extended action success totals still applies.

Living Recorder

The best recorder of data is a human brain. While it suffers from limited visual angles, it also records information of a tactile, auditory, and olfactory nature and even has the ability to interpret that information. A demon with the right knowledge can use a target person as a living recording device, accessing the data at leisure. This is a very useful way to obtain someone's password or case a building — simply turn someone into a recorder and let everyday life do the rest. The demon must touch the target to turn her into the Living Recorder.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Investigation

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon immediately receives all of the data that the target has accumulated over the last few months, all at once. The rush of information isn't useful — it's all body feelings, random snippets of songs or episodes of the target's favorite show. The demon gains the Distracted Condition (–2 to Perception and meditation rolls, can resolve by choosing to fail a Perception or Mental Skill roll).

Failure: No effect; the target is not a Living Recorder. The demon can try again (apply a cumulative –1 penalty for each successive attempt against a given target in the same scene).

Success: The demon turns the target into a Living Recorder. The demon can specify when the recording starts and ends, but must specify a time relative to the activation of the Embed ("12 hours from now"). The target can record a number of scenes equal to the demon's Primum. The demon must make physical contact with the target again to "download" the information, at which point the demon has the same access to the data as he would if he'd experienced it directly.

Exceptional Success: As above. In addition, the demon can force the target to forget any sections of the information that he wishes to "edit out."

Lost in the Crowd

Every person is unique, with markers both physical and conceptual that makes him or her different than any other. And yet, put enough people together and they become a crowd, and the crowd is, in many ways, a homogenous mass of human beings. A demon can become part of that mass, losing any unique markers and blending in so thoroughly that even given a high-resolution photograph and a lot of time, no one can pick her out.

Dice Pool: Wits + Stealth

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The crowd parts for the demon. No matter where she walks, people step out of her way. This might be useful in some circumstances, but if the character is trying to blend into a crowd, it rather defeats the purpose. The character gains the Exposed Condition (–2 on all Stealth rolls) and can resolve this Condition by accepting a failure on a Stealth roll.

Failure: No effect; the character can attempt use the Embed again as long as she has a crowd to hide in and hasn't been pinpointed (cumulative –1 penalty to each successive attempt).

Success: As long as the character remains in a crowd of at least 10 people and does not do anything to call attention to herself, Perception rolls to find her automatically fail. This includes looking at photographs of the crowd after the fact and trying to pick her out. It does not protect her from magical detection (but see Spoofing, p. 112).

Exceptional Success: In addition to remaining hidden, the character can tell if someone is looking for her. This doesn't help her discover people looking for her in pictures or video after the fact, but while she is still in the crowd she can sense if someone is looking for her (trying to break through the homogeneity of "crowd" to make her an individual, distinct entity).

Meaningless

Language is symbolism. A spoken word is just a blend of sounds, a written word is nothing more than a jumble of lines and squiggles. It is our ability to see or hear these random elements and inscribe them with meaning that allows for language. A demon can attack a target's ability to draw meaning from language — or, with sufficient skill, from a situation.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Academics

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The target gains a deeper, instinctive understanding of meaning within the scene. Unfortunately, this means that the target immediately recognizes the demon for what she is. Depending on the situation, this might be a breaking point for the target or it might fill him with righteous fury. In any case, this automatically causes a compromise roll for the demon.

Failure: No effect. The demon can attempt to use this Embed again; apply a cumulative –1 penalty for each successive attempt against the same target during the same scene.

Success: The target loses the ability comprehend language. Note that this isn't the same thing as losing the ability to comprehend any given language; a character that speaks English and Spanish doesn't lose one but not the other. The Embed attacks language on a conceptual level, which means that the target hears someone making sounds or sees markings on a paper, but has no way of attaching *any* meaning to them. This is extremely disconcerting (the target should immediately make a reflexive Resolve + Composure roll or gain the Shaken Condition; p. 310). It also obviously prevents effective communication with the target. This effect lasts for the scene.

Exceptional Success: As above, but the effect is more pronounced. The character is unable to connect words with thoughts, and he thinks in a confusing jumble of color, scents

and images with no logic to them. This immediately causes a breaking point for the victim (with a negative modifier equal to the demon's Primum).

Never Here

It's one thing to bribe or threaten a witness not to reveal that a demon was present, but a dedicated investigator has ways of making people spill their guts. Better for the demon simply to remove the knowledge that he was ever there. The demon forces one or more characters to forget that they shared a scene. The Embed doesn't remove all memory of the demon, simply his presence in one particular scene. If the witness was with the demon for several contiguous scenes, use of this Embed might be extremely disturbing to the witness, if she stops to piece together the timeline of the demon's activities ("He was with me during breakfast, and then we went to a movie ... but we didn't leave together?").

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Stealth – Resolve

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The target remembers the character in perfect detail and cannot forget him. At the Storyteller's discretion, the target may even become fascinated or obsessed with the demon, seeking him out and trying to learn as much as possible about him.

Failure: No effect; the target remembers as much or as little about the demon as is appropriate under the circumstances.

Success: The target (or targets) forgets that the demon was in the preceding scene at all. The Storyteller should apply a negative modifier to the Embed roll if the demon was the central figure in the scene, inflicted damage on the target, or was in some way memorable. If the demon simply spoke with the target, the modifier isn't necessary. If the demon walked into the room and shot the target's spouse dead, the modifier should probably be at least –3.

The target mentally fills in the gaps around the demon's absence; in the preceding example, she knows that *someone* walked in and shot her spouse, but won't be able to produce any details. If the demon's absence creates a real inconsistency in a timeline of events, the target can realize and acknowledge it but still can't remember the demon. The effect of this Embed lasts until the target sees the demon again (in person, not in a picture). At this point, roll the target's Wits + Resolve – the demon's Primum. If the roll succeeds, the target remembers the demon and his place in the affected scene.

Never Here works on any character that saw or interacted with the demon during the targeted scene. It must be activated within an hour of the scene ending.

Exceptional Success: As above, except that the target cannot recall the demon's participation in the scene even if she sees the demon again. Some form of magical memory recovery would be necessary to allow the target to remember.

Occam's Razor

Occam's razor is a scientific precept that states that, all else being equal, the explanation for a phenomenon that requires the fewest assumptions tends to be the correct one. That is, the simplest explanation is usually true. Since demons often find themselves in situations that are not easily explicable and have the need to keep their Cover, a way to conceal their activities is useful. This Embed provides that, making witnesses inclined to believe whatever explanation occurs to them (as long as it is simpler than the truth).

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Persuasion

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The target is not fooled and recognizes the demon for what she is. The demon must immediately check for compromise.

Failure: No effect; the witness sees what he sees and the demon suffers the consequences accordingly.

Success: Once activated, this Embed provides the demon an extra bit of Cover. The demon adds her Primum to her effective Cover for the duration of the scene, but only for the purposes of compromise rolls. That is, if a demon with Cover 5 and Primum 3 activates Occam's Razor, she has Cover 8 for the duration of the scene for purposes of losing Cover due to compromise. This Embed does not prevent the character from gaining glitches or Conditions due to compromise rolls, however.

This extra Cover only provides a "buffer" to actions resulting from Exploits or obvious supernatural manifestations. Acting out of one's Cover is resolved normally.

Exceptional Success: As above, but the "buffer" Cover applies to any compromise rolls that the player makes during the scene.

Quick Change

A change of clothes can make all the difference to a demon trying to fit (or stand out). With a moment's concentration and isolation, a demon alters her wardrobe as she sees fit, change from grimy street clothes to an immaculate evening gown (or vice versa). This Embed allows for infiltration or impersonation, but the demon should take care — it doesn't change her Cover, and violating that Cover can compromise it.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Subterfuge

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character's clothes become anachronistic, torn and shredded, completely inappropriate to the situation ... or even disappear entirely.

Failure: The character's clothes remain the same.

Success: The demon's clothing changes according to the demon's specifications. The demon's other possessions don't

change (the character might appear wearing an expensive-looking suit, but that doesn't make money appear in the pockets), nor does the demon's body change in any way. That is, if the demon is bleeding, dirty or otherwise physically marked, Quick Change does nothing to mitigate that. Note, too, that while the character might use Quick Change to affect a uniform of some kind, witnesses are under no supernatural compulsion to believe the charade or to accept it without question (see the Authorized Embed, however; p. 140).

Relatedly, if the character uses this Embed to perform actions that are highly out of character for her Cover, she risks compromise as usual (p. 114).

Exceptional Success: As above, but the Embed also makes a superficial change to the demon's body — making her clean, dirty, bloodied, smelling of smoke, etc., as appropriate to the disguise.

Unperson

In *1984*, George Orwell coined the term "unperson" to mean someone whose existence had been erased to the point that, for all practical purposes, that person never existed. Angels are occasionally called upon to perform this unsavory task, but the means to make such a sweeping change to reality don't survive an angel's fall. Even so, a demon with the right expertise can force a person into a kind of "identity blackout" for a short time, making her unrecognizable and unable to identify herself.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Subterfuge – Composure

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon, not the target, sees his identity vanish. The character is unable to identify himself and even close friends and companions do not recognize him for the remainder of the scene. The demon isn't subject to the psychological effects of this Embed (see below), but unfortunately, a demon's identity being suddenly displaced this way has the potential to attract the notice of the God-Machine and its agents. The player must immediately roll to avoid breaking Cover.

Failure: No effect; the target is still a full person. The demon can try again (–1 cumulative penalty for each successive attempt against the same target in the same scene).

Success: For the remainder of the scene, the target is unable to establish her identity. Producing identification of any kind — ID cards, fingerprints, specialized knowledge — is either downplayed ("that doesn't prove anything") or sparks incredulity ("There's no way you could know that; you must have hacked my email."). Even the target's friends and family do not recognize her, but they also do not recognize any holes in their own memories. A child that no longer recognizes his mother, for instance, probably remembers that he *has* a mother, but doesn't see the woman in front of him as looking anything like her. The effects last for one scene.

This power can be psychologically jarring, to say the least. If the character is called upon to establish her identity during the scene and cannot, she experiences a breaking point. The Storyteller should apply modifiers based on who she tries to identify herself to; the more intimate the connection, the greater the modifier. Being unable to convince a policeman that she is who she says she is should only be worth a –1, if anything. Hearing "I don't know who you are" from your own child should be at least a –3 modifier.

Storyteller-controlled characters don't generally track Integrity and breaking points. When Unperson is used against such people, the demon might place Conditions upon them (Disheartened, Shaken) or used it as leverage ("I can give you back your identity.").

Exceptional Success: The effect is even more pronounced — now everyone completely ignores the target. Her breath does not fog mirrors, she cannot attract even the slightest bit of attention from passers-by, and if she physically touches someone, she finds her strength leaving her and pain wracks her body (one point of bashing damage every time she deliberately makes contact with anyone other than the demon). If she falls unconscious due to this damage, she wakes up at the beginning of the next scene, the damage healed. The target experiences a breaking point; the Storyteller should impose a modifier of –4 dice or (the demon's Primum), whichever is higher.

Without a Trace

Modern forensics and crime scene investigations are incredibly sophisticated (presuming resources and expertise on the part of the local personnel). A demon's best recourse if she wishes to avoid being detected after the fact is to make sure that scene itself forgets her. A demon with the right knowledge can do exactly that.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Investigation

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The scene remembers the demon very clearly indeed. An investigator only needs a simple successes on an Investigation roll to find evidence leading to the demon, never an extended action. In addition, the investigator's player adds the demon's Primum to the attempt.

Failure: No effect; the character leaves behind whatever evidence is appropriate.

Success: The scene "forgets" that the character was ever there. Fingerprints fade, footprints vanish, biological material (blood, skin, hair) disappears. Objects that the character dropped — bullet casings, trash, etc. — don't disappear, but don't contain any evidence that would lead back to the character. Video footage of the character is blurry and distorted.

Exceptional Success: As above, but the character has the option of having the scene "remember" someone else instead. The character can use any alternate Covers he may have (which can be useful in establishing an alibi), or anyone with whom he has a Pact.

Vocal Embeds

Vocal Embeds allow a demon to exert influence over thinking beings. Cognition level is fluid; some Messengers report that, in their angelic lives, they were instructed to give realizations to dogs or cats that their masters needed immediate assistance (or distraction). For demons, then, Vocal Embeds provide a way to make contact and change the tenor of an interaction. To understand this, a demonic mentor usually points out that the Embed enables influence over the interaction, not the target.

These Embeds allow influence of the concept of *communication*. In some ways this makes them the most powerful Embeds, because the whole of human civilization is based upon communication. Angelic missions must come from the God-Machine, meaning some kind of communication takes place — and though no demon has, of yet, figured out how to disrupt this, it is theoretically possible. Could a demon, then, trick an angel into Falling? Vocal Embeds also encompass the concepts of revelation and realization, which are two sides of a coin. The demon *reveals* and the target *realizes*, but either of those occurrences is subject to manipulation ... which means enemies of a demon who studies these Embeds can't trust what they see or what they learn.

Across a Crowded Room

Remove volume and background noise from the equation and a whisper is just one more way to communicate. That means that a demon can use the same principles on such communication as he uses with any Vocal Embed. The demon whispers and any target or targets within his line of sight can hear it. This Embed is a useful way to communicate with allies without relying on technology, but it's also possible to drive someone insane by constantly whispering their sins.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Subterfuge

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon can *only* whisper for a number of hours equal to his Primum. He can't raise his voice higher than about 20 dB, meaning that any noticeable background noise drowns him out.

Failure: No effect; the target doesn't hear the whisper. The demon can try again without penalty.

Success: The demon whispers a short phrase (nothing more than about six seconds of speech). Any target within the demon's line of sight can hear it; the demon chooses which targets hear the whisper. If the demon uses some kind of aid to his vision (a telescope, for instance), he can greatly increase the range of this Embed.

Exceptional Success: The demon can hear the target's response if he makes one, meaning that if the target is expecting the whisper, he and the demon are capable of brief two-way communication.

Animal Communication

Animals are obviously capable of communication, but are they capable of *language*? Linguists and animal behaviorists have struggled with the question (and how to define language) for years, but demons know the truth — animals can, at the very least, understand language if it's presented in a pure enough form. Demons, of course, can use that form.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Animal Ken

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon triggers the animal's primal fear responses. It immediately either flees the demon's presence or, if it cannot flee, attacks.

Failure: No effect; the demon cannot communicate with the animal. The demon can try again (apply a cumulative –1 penalty for each successive attempt with the same animal).

Success: The demon can give the animal instructions, which it follows to the best of its ability. The animal will not do anything outside of its nature, but the demon *can* manipulate the animal's perceptions somewhat. That is, a squirrel would not normally enter an open window and steal a jump drive, but it would certainly swipe popcorn or some other such treat from a distracted person and that's close enough. A dog won't attack a person for no reason, but the demon can give the dog a reason — since the dog *would* attack a person under the right circumstances (starving to death, feeling threatened, protecting its pups), the demon can force the issue.

The demon can only issue one task to the animal, but he can use this Embed again once the task is complete.

Exceptional Success: The demon can gain information from the animal, learning what it has seen or experienced in addition to giving it a command.

Animal Messenger

The demon can send an animal to a specified person with a message. The animal doesn't speak and cannot produce writing, but even by barking, chirping or yowling, the animal communicates what the demon needs it to say. Once the animal has delivered the message, it reverts to its usual behaviors (meaning it probably runs off).

The animal has to be able to reach the target within a day; if it takes longer than that, the effect of the Embed wears off and animal reverts to normal behavior. The demon is therefore advised to choose fast, mobile, and socially acceptable animals. Collies are a popular choice.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Animal Ken

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The animal runs off and delivers a message to the intended target, but the message is diametrically opposed to what the demon wanted. The animal might tell the target that

someone that she cares about is dead (when the real message is that the person in question is alive and healthy), or that everything is fine when, in fact, the demon requires assistance.

Failure: No effect; the animal continues behaving as normal. The demon can try again (apply a cumulative –1 penalty for each successive attempt on the same animal).

Success: The animal runs, scampers, or flies off to deliver the message. It finds the target (waiting outside a building if necessary), and then "speaks" by making whatever sounds it can. The target, if a normal human, is astonished to realize that he understands what the animal is trying to convey, but since the animal isn't literally speaking, the target doesn't feel fear or disbelief. The target is under no compulsion to act on the animal's message.

Exceptional Success: The animal remains with the target for a scene after delivering the message, nudging him to take whatever action the demon wishes and helping him stay on task. In game terms, the demon's player can portray the animal and provide suggestions to the target, if need be.

Borrowed Expertise

Granting information is just a short step from granting knowledge and skill. From a biological perspective, it's all a matter of activating neurons anyway. So what's to stop a demon from activating the neurons that would allow a person to perform surgery rather than the neurons that cause him to see a vision of the future? Nothing, as it happens, provided the demon recalls this Embed.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + [Skill granted]

Action: Reflexive

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon activates neural response in the target, but to a much greater degree than she intended. The target's mind is flooded with information, sensation, and muscle memory that doesn't belong to him. The target's player rolls Stamina + Resolve – the demon's Primum. If the roll fails, the target falls comatose and dies if not given medical attention (if he is given medical attention, he recovers fully in a day or so). If the roll succeeds, the character adds the demon's Skill ratings — all of them — to his own and adds the demon's Primum rating to all rolls for the next scene. Either way, though, the demon must check for compromise (–2 modifier).

Failure: No effect; the demon does not grant her Skill. She can try again (apply a cumulative –1 penalty for each successive attempt on the same target).

Success: The demon grants the target use of one of her Skills for one action. The target benefits from the demon's full Skill rating, plus any applicable Specialty. Since the effect lasts for an action, the target can make use of the Skill for extended rolls as well as instant actions. However, for every day that the effect persists, the demon must check for compromise.

Exceptional Success: The demon opens a more fluid channel of knowledge between herself and the target, and can change which Skills she grants on a turn-by-turn basis. The demon cannot grant more than one Skill at a time, but can shift the Skills once per turn as a reflexive action (so the demon can grant the target her Brawl or Weaponry rating, and then after the target makes an attack, shift the Skill to Athletics to raise the target's Defense).

Common Misconception

The hive-mind is wrong about almost everything. Human beings, for example, do not use only 10% of their brains. Bumblebee flight is not aerodynamically impossible, and cell phones stand virtually no chance of igniting gasoline fumes. The demon can bring "factual" information to bear (though it doesn't have to be true in the slightest) and undercut a target's actual knowledge or ability.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Science

Action: Reflexive

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The information that the demon produces actually winds up strengthening the target's argument. Add the demon's Primum to the target's Skill roll. The demon gains the Discredited Condition (–3 on all attempts to convince any witnesses to this exchange of anything for the rest of the scene). The demon can resolve this Condition by succeeding on roll using the same Skill that the target was using, but achieving more successes than the target did.

Failure: No effect; the target's roll is unaffected.

Success: The "fact" that the demon produces undermines the target's ability. Apply a penalty equal to the Embed successes or the demon's Primum, whichever is higher, to the target's Skill roll.

Exceptional Success: The target fails the Skill roll outright, and loses a point of Willpower.

Eavesdrop

Communication isn't just spoken language. Body language, inflection, and facial expression can all carry meaning; a demon with the right knowledge can glean just as much information from these facets of language as with speech. The demon can eavesdrop on a conversation from anywhere in his line of sight, provided he can clearly see the faces of at least half the participants.

Dice Pool: Wits + Empathy

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon reads the target's body language, but only on a second-by-second basis. He reads the communication as "hungry," "what's that noise," "shirt itches" rather than getting a real sense of what the target is talking about with her conversational partner.

Failure: No effect; the demon cannot understand what the target is saying. He can try again, as long as the target is

still talking. Apply a cumulative –1 penalty for each successive attempt during the same conversation.

Success: The demon can understand the conversation as if he could hear it. He does not, however, hear the specific words used, which means that he can't quote the conversation verbatim later. The demon must be able to see at least half of the people involved, which makes this Embed difficult to use on large groups, but given a little distance and a pair of binoculars, the demon is a formidable eavesdropper.

Exceptional Success: The demon can perfectly read the lips of anyone involved in the conversation (provided he can see their faces, obviously), meaning he can understand specific words in addition to meaning.

Everybody Knows

Rumors take on their own lives, and a demon can spread rumor like a disease. The demon creates the rumor, the more general and destructive the better, and places it on a target. From then on, anyone the target speaks with "contracts" the rumor and starts acting on it — even if the character has never actually heard the rumor or even met the target. This Embed allows a demon to drive a target to ruin and loneliness, because by reaching out for help, the target just makes things worse.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Subterfuge

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The rumor attaches itself to the demon as well. The parameters of the rumor are as described for "Success," below, except that in addition to the rumor's other effects, it risks compromise once per week. The demon can shift into a new Cover and stay away from the "tainted" one for a week to shed the rumor and resolve the Condition.

Failure: No effect; the rumor doesn't take. The demon can try again (apply a cumulative –1 penalty for each successive attempt against the same target).

Success: The demon crafts a rumor (the player describes it to the Storyteller; it needs to be plausible, based on the target) and tells one person of the target's acquaintance. The target then spreads the rumor by coming into contact with people — everyone he meets or talks to believes they have already heard the rumor, and this colors how they interact with the target. In game terms, the target gains an appropriate Condition (probably Notoriety, but the Storyteller or the player can craft a new one — maybe Shamed or Shunned). The target can shed this Condition by isolating himself for a number of days equal to the demon's Primum, regardless of the normal resolution circumstance.

The rumor can only be spread face to face, meaning that while isolating himself, the target can use technological means of communicating with the outside world.

Exceptional Success: As above, except the rumor is virulent enough to spread through Internet or phone line. Just sending an email to someone is enough to spread the rumor. Also, the target must spend twice as long in isolation before the rumor fades.

Find the Leak

Benjamin Franklin said that three can keep a secret if two of them are dead. Put another way, someone always wants to talk. This Embed facilitates communication by revealing the person with the greatest desire to communicate about a given matter. The demon then needs to make sure the communication goes well, of course.

Dice Pool: Wits + Empathy

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon's very presence repels communication. Her voice sounds grating and unpleasant, and no one wants to listen or talk with her. The demon gains the Shunned Condition (–3 on all Social rolls involving her voice; she resolves this condition if she chooses not to speak for a scene).

Failure: No effect; the demon does not know who in a group is most likely to talk. She can try again (apply a cumulative –1 penalty for each successive attempt during a scene).

Success: The character knows which person in a group most wants to talk about a given topic. The player adds the successes on the Embed roll to any Social action to convince the target to talk. If the player is using the Social maneuvering system (p. 314), subtract the demon's Primum from the number of Doors required to convince the target to talk about the subject.

Exceptional Success: As above, but the demon barely has to make an effort to get the target talking. A few leading questions and the target will reveal almost anything the demon wants to know. If the target has a vested interest in keeping the information secret (for example, it would implicate him in a crime), the Storyteller may make a Composure + Subterfuge – demon's Primum roll to keep such incriminating details to himself.

Freudian Slip

A Freudian slip is, of course, an unintentional moment of honesty when a person says exactly what they really feel — sometimes what they don't even realize they feel. This Embed forces the issue, causing a target to blurt out their truest, most honest response to the situation at hand. While this can, in extreme situations, cause a fight to start, it's much more likely to result in damaged relationship and breaches of the social contract. A clever demon can also use it to ask a sensitive question and then be assured of an impulsive, honest answer. This Embed doesn't work on topics that don't affect the target emotionally, though (asking "what's your computer password?" and then using the power is likely to get the emotional response to that question, which is probably "None of your damn business").

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Empathy

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The target represses her true feelings on the subject...and on just about everything else. For the

remainder of the scene, all Social rolls against the target suffer a –2 penalty as she adopts a perfect poker face.

Failure: No effect. The character can try to use this Embed again (apply a cumulative –1 penalty for each successive attempt against the same target in the same scene).

Success: The target responds to the situation or the last phrase or question she heard with an impulsive, honest and emotional response. The demon use this the information thus gained to his advantage, adding his successes to Persuasion or Intimidation rolls made against the target during the current scene. Alternately, the demon can learn a piece of information by setting up a question and then using Freudian Slip. If the demon is attempting to use the Embed this way, subtract the target's Composure from the Embed roll. This Embed does not work on other demons.

Exceptional Success: In addition to the above, The demon gains a modicum of control over the target's emotional response. The player can place a Condition on the target appropriate to the situation and the emotional state of the character.

Heart's Desire

Demons are capable of granting people wishes (of course, the demons don't come away empty-handed — see Pacts, p. 116). Before they can do that, though, they have to know what their targets want. This is a matter of revelation, which is a concept that a demon can manipulate. This Embed allows a demon to know, quite simply, what a target wants.

Dice Pool: Wits + Empathy - Composure

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The target immediately knows that the demon is trying to manipulate him, and while he doesn't necessarily recognize the demon for what she is, the target has some instinctive understanding of the demon's nature. Interestingly, that doesn't prevent the demon from opening negotiations for a Pact, but it does mean that the target isn't going in blind and that the demon doesn't know what he wants. The demon's player rolls to avoid losing Cover (+2 modifer).

Failure: No effect; the demon doesn't have any special insight into what the target wants. The demon can try again (apply a cumulative –1 modifier for each successive attempt against the same target).

Success: The demon knows one of the target's Aspirations for every dot of Primum the demon possesses. She learns short-term Aspirations before long-term ones. If the character has more Primum than the target has Aspirations, the demon learns Virtue and/or Vice, as well (player's choice as to which one the character learns first).

Exceptional Success: The demon learns all of the target's Aspirations, *or* one Aspiration and his Virtue and Vice.

Marco Polo

Many cultures make use of a "call and response" arrangement. Religious services, songs, children's games — all have sections predicated on the simple notion of, "When I say something, you say something back." That concept is ingrained deeply enough in humanity's communication apparatus that a demon can force a response even when it would be the target's best interest to stay quiet.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Persuasion – Composure

Action: Reflexive

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The target stays silent and has a perfectly good bead on the demon. The target can, if she wishes, surprise the demon and begin combat, with no Stealth or Perception rolls performed.

Failure: No effect; the targets remain quiet (unless they wish to respond, for whatever reason).

Success: The demon whistles a tune, says the beginning of a phrase, or taps out a rhythm. The target finishes it at normal volume (she can't just whisper it or think it). This ruins any attempt at stealth or ambush that the target makes and allows the demon to figure out her position easily. If the demon wishes to make an attack or use another power on the target, add the demon's Primum to the relevant dice pool.

Exceptional Success: As above, but the target still believes she is hidden (she finishes the response subconsciously).

Mercury Retrograde

In astrology, when "mercury is in retrograde," communication supposedly goes awry. While this is generally used as an explanation (or excuse) for a spate of misunderstandings or bad attempts at communication, a demon can alter the ability of people to communicate, leading to misunderstandings that she can exploit.

This Embed only works on real-time communication between people. As such, it functions on phone conversations and even instant messenger chats, but not on written letters.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Subterfuge – highest Wits present

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Communication between the targets happens perfectly, resulting in seamless understanding. Whatever the demon is trying to accomplish by disrupting communication, she only manages to hinder herself. The Storyteller should apply a –3 modifier to whatever action the demon was attempting to facilitate by using this Embed.

Failure: No effect; the targets communicate normally. If the demon has time to use this Embed again before the communication is complete, she can (apply a cumulative –1 penalty for each successive attempt on the same conversation or communication attempt).

Success: The demon disrupts the communication. What exactly this means depends on the context, but in general one party misunderstands a request or does not understand the urgency of a command. In game terms, the demon's player adds the successes on this roll to one action that would benefit from exploiting the miscommunication.

Exceptional Success: As above, except that the player can split the dice up between multiple actions as long as they all can benefit from the misunderstanding caused by the Embed.

Muse

Where do ideas come from? Angelic visitations feature prominently in stories about inspiration, and Messengers remember orders to plant an idea or a vision or a dream in a person's mind. After the fall, the ability to inspire is comparatively limited but a demon can still manage it.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Expression – Resolve

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon drains every bit of creative and independent thought from the victim, but not the desire to create. Every thought in the target's mind is a recycled quote from some piece of media or half-remembered conversation, and every creative endeavor is derivative to the point of plagiarism. Apply a –3 modifier to all attempts at novel creation, whether artistic or simple conversation. This effect lasts for one week per dot of the demon's Primum.

Failure: No effect; the demon's idea fails to take hold. She can try again (apply a cumulative –1 penalty for every successive attempt against the same target).

Success: The target experiences the idea that the demon intends. This idea can be anything from an inspiration for a creative work to a craving for a given food or activity. The demon can instill suicidal ideation or the notion of calling an estranged family member. Muse does not force the target to *act* on this idea, but a clever demon follows this Embed up with a well-timed conversation and nurtures the idea. Once the idea is in place, add the demon's Primum rating to any attempt to convince the target to act on it.

Exceptional Success: As above, but the target becomes fixated on the idea. The target's player must roll Resolve + Composure every day for a number of days equal to the demon's Primum. If this roll fails, the target immediately acts on the idea. If the target is a Storyteller character, the Storyteller may decide to forego the resistance roll and just have the target act on the idea, especially if this moves the story along.

Recurring Hallucinations

An angelic visitation can be terrifying or maddening, but it is usually dramatic. While the God-Machine does sometimes



require that a person be driven insane, it has faster methods at its disposal than the slow torture of hallucinations. Demons, however, sometimes find it useful to drive a victim to the edge of sanity, especially if the ultimate goal is to take the victim's life as a Cover.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Occult – Resolve

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The victim enters a state of "super-sanity," able to distinguish between reality and fantasy to such a degree that he becomes almost impossible to fool. The target adds the demon's Primum to all Perception rolls for the next week.

Failure: No effect. The demon can try to begin the process again (apply a –1 cumulative modifier for every successive attempt against the same target).

Success: The demon must touch the target to begin the process. The victim sees minor hallucinations for a number of days equal to the demon's Primum. These hallucinations might involve inanimate objects moving, tricks of light, animals with human eyes, human beings with squirming teeth, or any other nightmare fuel that the Storyteller and the player can think of. The hallucinations last only a few seconds and occur no more frequently than once every three hours. Each day, the victim's player suffers a breaking point. The modifier on this roll, as usual, depends on the victim's mental stability and how intense the hallucinations are.

While the target is afflicted by hallucinations, he suffers a penalty to Mental and Social rolls equal to the demon's Primum.

Once the first round of hallucinations wears off, the demon can begin another one, but no longer needs to touch the victim. The demon can activate this Embed as long as the victim is within line of sight. There is no limit to the number of times the demon can use this Embed on a given victim, but every instance of it on the same victim after the first risks compromise.

Exceptional Success: The demon does not have to re-activate the Embed. He can simply keep the hallucinations coming until either he is discovered or his victim breaks down.

Social Dynamics

People communicate in a thousand nonverbal ways. Body positioning, tone of voice, head inclination, and so on all provide clues as to what the social hierarchy of a group is. A demon with an intuitive understanding of the concept of communication can read these clues instantly, determining a social "map" of a group of people.

While this Embed does allow the demon to determine the social dynamics of a group of supernatural beings, it has no effect on other demons.

Dice Pool: Wits + Socialize

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon has a completely skewed idea of the social hierarchy for this group of people. The demon gains the Misinformed Condition, which imposes a –3 penalty on all Social rolls that involve respecting or working within the social order of this group (this is a bigger problem for a corporate boardroom than, say, a group of buddies at a bar). The character can resolve this Condition by opting to fail such a roll.

Failure: No effect; the demon has no special understanding of the social dynamics of this group. The demon can try again (apply a cumulative –1 modifier for each successive roll for the same group).

Success: The demon gains an intuitive understanding of the relationships and social dynamics of the group. She does not necessarily understand the characters' specific relationships to one another (simply because two people feel deep romantic love for one another does not necessarily make them a married couple, for instance), but she knows which of the characters is a leader, which one is a hanger-on, which is only tolerated, and which one's favor the others curry.

The demon can use this Embed on a group of any size, though it only functions on members of the group who are actually present.

In game terms, add the demon's Primum rating to any Social roll that would benefit from this knowledge. This includes rolls to open Doors (p. 314).

Exceptional Success: In addition to the above, the demon knows specific facts about how the characters relate to one another. She might realize, for example, that two characters are father/daughter, husband/wife, coworkers, employee/boss, and so forth. Of course, people can have more than one facet to their relationship dynamic, but this Embed detects social dynamics in the context of the larger group. As such, if two characters are coworkers but are also having an affair and the demon uses this Embed at a work function, she won't know about the affair unless it's common enough knowledge to affect the social dynamics of the whole office (which may well be the case).

Special Message

A song, a painting, a novel even a bit of graffiti can have layers of meaning. One viewer might experience only the literal one, but someone with the right appreciation can get a great deal more out of the work. A demon manipulating the concept of revelation can encode a message in a piece of art, even one he did not create himself. When the target sees the art, she receives the message as though the demon was speaking to her directly. Some Messengers claim that they were sent to encode messages in centuries-old pieces of art whose recipients have not yet been born.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Expression

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: All meaning is removed from the piece of art. A painting seems abstract and obtuse, while no one bothers to read the novel or the poem and listeners tune out as soon as the song starts.

Failure: No effect. The demon can attempt to encode the art with his message again (apply a cumulative –1 penalty for every successive attempt using the same piece of art).

Success: The demon encodes the art with a message for a specified target. When that person views the object (reads the book, listens to the song, sees the painting, etc.) she understands the message. She doesn't hear the demon's voice or see the words change, she experiences the meaning much like someone might watch an ambiguous film and understand its multiple meanings. The demon can specify one particular person as the target ("Daniel Halliday") or specify the first person to meet a set of conditions ("the first person who can play the violin but is not formally trained"). The target is under no compulsion to take any particular action once she has the message, but if the demon wants the target to do something, he can use this Embed as a method of opening Doors (p. 314).

Exceptional Success: In addition to the above, the demon knows when the message has been received by its intended target.

Tower of Babel

This Embed can make a chaotic situation worse, which means it is superb for creating a diversion or cover a demon to get away. Demons understand all human languages; with a little manipulation of the concept of "language" in a given area, they can prevent a group from finding a common tongue. This results in a mass of people who can't understand one another. Used in calm circumstances, this can create anxiety and some loud misunderstandings, but used in a crisis (such as, for example, the aftermath of a demon going loud), it can escalate things into a full riot.

This Embed does not affect other demons.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Socialize

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon becomes unable to use human language for the scene. She can still understand spoken language, but attempts to speak or write only produce gibberish. Some demons claim that this "gibberish" is a pure form of the God-Machine's programming language. This theory may have some truth to it — if the demon even *attempts* to speak or write during this scene, the player must roll to avoid breaking Cover (apply a +2 modifier).

Failure: No effect; the crowd can communicate as usual. The demon can try again (apply a cumulative –1 modifier for each successive attempt).

Success: All of the characters in the immediate area (100 feet x the demon's Primum) lose the ability to communicate via spoken or written language. Everything they produce is intelligible to the speaker or writer but is gibberish to everyone else. If used in a chaotic or dangerous situation, this can throw the people involved into a panic. The effects only last for one turn per success on the roll, but properly used, this can give the demon enough time to take one action per turn unobserved. Note, however, that use of this power can draw the God-Machine's attention; any compromise rolls in a scene in which this Embed is activated suffer a –1 penalty.

Exceptional Success: No further effect beyond the longer duration.

Trick of the Light

The human brain wants patterns. It wants to resolve random noise into voices, shadows into humanoid figures, burnt toast into the Virgin Mary. A number of biological and evolutionary reasons exist for this phenomenon, but these are incidental. The fact is that the human brain is hard-wired to interpret data in a way that makes sense, and a demon can easily take advantage of this. This Embed allows a demon to create a small, subtle visual illusion. It works best on a single target, but the demon can affect more than one person if he keeps things simple.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Investigation – Wits

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: In a rare moment of clarity, the target's mind sees the shadows or strange reflections for exactly what they are. The target is not fooled; if she sees the demon within the next few minutes, the demon must roll to avoid breaking Cover (add two dice).

Failure: No effect; the target does not see the illusion. The demon can try again at no penalty.

Success: The demon's target sees something that isn't there. The demon can specify what the target sees, but only in very general terms: "a person" rather than "your daughter," for instance. The target needs some "raw material" to work with. That is, she might look into a murky pond and see what she thinks is the outline of a car. The power wouldn't work if she were looking into a clear, clean swimming pool — the target must have some random visual elements for her brain to process.

What effect this has in game terms varies by the situation and the specifics of the illusion the demon creates. The target might recoil in shock from a shadow that looks like a dog, or move forward to catch a "falling object." In general, this Embed can be used to distract a target or gauge her reaction to surprising stimuli. The Storyteller should allow the demon's player to add a bonus equal to his successes to an applicable roll in the same scene.

This Embed can be used on a number of people equal to the demon's Primum simultaneously.

Exceptional Success: As above, but the demon can specify with much greater detail the illusion that the target sees. Used on a single target, the demon can choose a specific person or

object, or provide a short description of what he wants the target to see. Used on a group, this does not apply (the illusion must stay general), but the demon's player can place a Condition such as Frightened or Surprised on the group.

Trust No One

Someone with a strong social support system is less likely to believe an angelic vision or prophecy. This is why Messengers understand how to cut those support systems, removing important or useful people from a target's life, at least for a short time. The demon must touch the target in order to activate this Embed, but using it doesn't require that the demon know the particulars of the social circle he is disrupting.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Subterfuge – Resolve

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The target immediately reaches out to someone in his social circle for reassurance or aid and receives it. What effect this has on the demon and his plans varies based on the situation, but the target is less isolated than before, which is probably contrary to the demon's intent. Apply a penalty equal to the demon's Primum to any rolls attempting to rattle, disturb, or interfere with the target's social life for the next day.

Failure: No effect; the target still has full access to all his Merits. The demon can try again (apply a cumulative –1 penalty to each successive attempt against the same target on the same day).

Success: An insidious paranoia grips the target and he refuses to reach out to any friends or allies. For the rest of the day, the target may not make use of Merits such as Staff, Mentor, Retainer, Allies, Contacts, True Friend or Hobbyist Clique, nor may he reach out to more casual friends not represented by Merits.

Exceptional Success: In addition to the above, the demon can make use of the target's paranoia. Add the demon's Primum rating to any roll to intimidate, frighten, or manipulate the emotions of the target.

Voice of the Machine

This is a dangerous Embed, but demons find it useful. All machinery carries with it the reflection of the God-Machine. This is why demons feel the strange attraction to mechanical apparatus that they do (p. 184). The hum of motors and the grind of gears is the voice of the God-Machine and carries hints of the Machine's plans. A demon can listen to this voice and gain some insight into what is going on around him, but he must be careful that the machinery does not betray him.

Dice Pool: Wits + Crafts

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character must immediately check for blown Cover at a –5 modifier. If the roll fails, not only do the usual consequences apply, but an angel is immediately dispatched to deal with the demon. The angel might or might not be capable of dealing with the demon, but the demon gains the Known Condition (the God-Machine knows where he is and will send agents to follow him; switching Covers resolves the Condition).

Failure: No effect. The player must immediately check for compromise (–1 penalty).

Success: The demon listens to the voice of the God-Machine and gains some hint as to the Machine's plans in the area, or some useful bit of information. This information is at the Storyteller's discretion, but it might be worth, at most, a +3 modifier to a roll when it becomes relevant. This Embed serves as a useful way to move the plot along, however, so the modifier may or may not be necessary.

In any case, the player must roll to avoid compromise (+1 modifier).

Exceptional Success: As above, except that that the character does not risk breaking Cover.

The Cipher

Embeds are based upon a metaphysical understanding of the nature of the reality. As that understanding grows, the demon is capable of modifying the equations, as it were, and joining those Embeds together. The Cipher — a complete series of four interlocked Embeds — enables a demon to work truly impressive, but still subtle, feats of magic.

Ciphers are personal. A given demon's Cipher might include one Embed from each category, four from one category, or any other combination. The only way to discover the Cipher is to learn more Embeds and then try them in combination with the ones the demon already knows. When a demon discovers one of these Embeds (called *Keys*), she undergoes a transcendental, life-altering moment of awareness. This might be blissful, or it could be so shocking that the demon withdraws from all contact with others for a week. In any case, when a demon uses a new Key, she always knows it.

As demons progress, they learn how Embeds work and uncover more about the mystical subroutines put in place by the God-Machine. Some of these subroutines seem familiar or instinctive. These feelings, halfway between *déjà vu* and enlightenment, can lead a demon to her Keys. These pathways do not come from the God-Machine, though. The God-Machine is not a teacher attempting to help demons on their way, and neither is it trying to lead demons back into its services (though some demons believe exactly that). By investigating her own Keys, a demon is moving further away from the God-Machine on her very own Descent.

The fact that a complete Cipher always involve four Embeds is not lost on the Unchained, and demons often wind up superstitious about geometric and mathematical expressions involving the number. This isn't always wise — the God-Machine is quite capable of exploiting a demon's dependence on a pattern or confirmation bias about the number. Realizing this, some demons continue looking for a fifth Key to complete

a circuit. Adding a fifth Embed to a Cipher, though, invariably causes it to fail spectacularly and break the demon's Cover. In some Agencies, demons known to attempt to add a fifth Key are viewed as dangerous instigators.

Starting Key

During character creation, the player determines the character's first Key. This can be any Embed, whether from the category that resonates with the character's Incarnation or not, but it has to be an Embed that the character begins the chronicle knowing. The First Key is probably a power that ties into the character's catalyst, her reason for Falling, or is tied in some way to her Agenda. A Guardian Inquisitor who wants to entice people to protect themselves, perhaps by causing adversity, might have Bystander Effect as her First Key. A Messenger Tempter who believes in Sartre's adage that Hell is other people might have Everybody Knows or Tower of Babel.

Breaking the Cipher

The Storyteller determines the other three of the character's Keys. He is encouraged to make this determination within the first few sessions of the chronicle so that he can start building the character's Cipher. The Cipher for a character consists of three things:

- The other three Keys for the character.
- The bonus powers (called *Interlocks*) that the character receives for correctly turning these Keys.
- The final secret of the Cipher, the one that will complete it and give the character insight into her own Descent.

The Storyteller should use the questions posed in the character creation section (p. 113) to build the Cipher. He shouldn't choose the Key Embeds at random, but rather, put some thought into which Embeds work well for the character's concept, history as an angel, Agenda, and understanding of Hell as a demon. He should choose the three remaining Keys as soon as possible. It might be helpful to work backwards from the final secret.

Final Secret

The final secret of a Cipher is not the endgame or final fate of a character. Rather, it is a technognostic truth, a machine-based koan that teaches the character something about the true nature of reality and the God-Machine. It might be a revelation, a secret bit of code that the God-Machine never intended for anyone to see (or might not ever remember is there). It might be a pathway to lead the character to Hell — or just shift her understanding of Hell. The final secret does not, in itself, allow the character to complete the Descent, but the final secret *should* confirm or clarify that character's vision of Hell.

The final secret is not necessarily personal to the character. The Agenda — and, of course, the Fall itself — are all external, difficult decisions that a demon makes. The God-Machine doesn't construct the Ciphers for demons. Indeed, they seem to be nothing more than side effects. Some function of the Infrastructure of the world does not allow an angel to Fall without a Cipher for it to follow. Is that because, to the God-Machine, having a demon following the Cipher is preferably to having more Exiles (who don't have Ciphers)? Or is it just a side-effect of the ability to Fall — the demon has some magical context in the world? These questions are above the level of most demons to answer. The final secret of a Cipher gives a demon a greater degree of what she wanted in the first place — freedom.

Interlocks

Every time a demon learns a new Key, she also gains a new, unique power, bridging her Key Embeds — an *Interlock*. This power is usually a way to use the Key Embeds she has already learned together, creating a more powerful, but generally more specific, ability. The Storyteller should consider the Keys being combined, their systems, and the literal and conceptual underpinnings of the Embeds involved and design the Interlocks. These powers are not Embeds, and so can involve Aether expenditures and non-Finesse Attributes. However, they aren't Exploits, either, and so don't necessarily endanger Cover with every use.

Designing the Interlocks is one of the more challenging aspects of Storytelling **Demon**. More advice on this topic can be found in Chapter Four (p. 239).

Keys

Once the Storyteller has designed the final secret and the Interlocks, choosing the Key Embeds should be easy (this assumes the Storyteller doesn't decide the Embeds first and then design the powers around that combination; either works).

You might choose to assume that the Embeds with which the character begins play have already been tested against the First Key, and are therefore are not part of the Cipher. You might also choose to assume (especially in the case of a demon that Fell very recently) that this is not the case, that any Embed that the character has at character creation might be part of the Cipher. In either case, the Storyteller should *tell the player* so that the player can decide to try the Embeds that the character starts play knowing against the Cipher if appropriate.

Keys in Play

A player can use two Experiences to buy a new Embed for the character. A character can choose to apply that new Embed to the Cipher at any time. This is called "testing the Key." The system for this is as follows:

The character activates the Embed that she suspects is her next Key, with the player making the usual roll for that Embed. The player also spends a point of Aether. If the character is trying to establish whether this Embed is the next Key, the Storyteller reveals that either it is (in which case the character gains a dot of Primum and activates the Interlock that the Storyteller has created for this part of the Cipher) or it isn't (in

which case the character immediately gains a Beat, but also rolls for a transient glitch (p. 184) and suffers lethal damage equal to the character's Primum).

If the Embed that the character is testing is *a* Key but is not the *next* Key, the result is both more spectacular and more dangerous. The character gains *three* Beats, but suffers aggravated damage equal to her Primum. The character also rolls for a permanent glitch. On the plus side, the character knows that the Embed is a Key, just not the one she needs at the moment.

Finding the Keys

How, then, does a demon determine which Embeds to choose and which ones to try in her Cipher? Every demon experiences the Descent in her own way. Her experiences with the World of Darkness, with angels, with other demons and, of course, with humans, provide her with the data to form her own conception of Hell. Is Hell, as the Inquisitors believe, a state of mind? Is it a physical place as the Tempters hope? The demon might never actually discover the truth, but in a sense the character is *creating* that truth as she goes. That experience, that journey through the World of Darkness, leads her through the Cipher.

The Storyteller should consider the character's Incarnation, Agenda, Fall, compromise questions, and first Key when designing the Cipher. What the Storyteller cannot consider, of course, is how they events of the chronicle will shape the character, since those haven't happened yet. As such, the choice of the other three Embeds in the Cipher should make sense based on how and where the character starts. The player shouldn't choose the Keys, but the Storyteller can absolutely consult the players when creating the Cipher and choosing the Keys. If, for instance, a player has a distinct idea about how the demon might progress and what kind of endgame she envisions for the character, the Storyteller should take that into account. Likewise, if the player has specific Embeds that she knows she wants her character to learn, the Storyteller should at least consider making those Embeds Keys.

Throughout the course of the chronicle, every time the character gains a Beat in a scene involving angels, demons, stigmatics, or the God-Machine, the player makes a reflexive Intelligence + Wits roll. If she is following her Agenda at the time (and the player makes a convincing case for this to the Storyteller), the player can add her Primum to the roll.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character is utterly lost in the Cipher, confused as to her progression and possibly going down the wrong path. The character gains the Shaken Condition (p. 310) and suffers a –2 penalty to the next Embed roll the player makes.

Failure: The character can glean no useful information about the Cipher from this scene.

Success: The character gets a flash of insight as to how her Cipher is designed. She hears the music of the spheres resonating with her own magic, and understands the way forward. The player can ask the Storyteller one of the following questions:

1. Do I already know my next Key?

2. What Attribute does my next Key use?

3. What category is the next Key Embed?

4. What is my next Key?

The player must ask these questions in order. She can choose to test a Key without going through the questions at all (this is risky, but if the player doesn't mind picking up some glitches and taking some damage, it's a quick way to gain Beats).

Assume that the character knows her first Key; it's one of the Embeds with which the character begins play. As such, the first time that a character asks one of these questions in a chronicle, skip directly to the second question (assume that the character already knows that her second Key isn't among the Embeds with which she started play).

Exceptional Success: The player can ask two questions from the list.

Example of Interlock Creation

Luke's character, Gabrielle, has Heart's Desire as her First Key (see pp. 84-86 for Gabrielle's creation). Lauren, the Storyteller, needs to design a Cipher for Gabrielle. That means she needs to choose three other Key Embeds for the demon and design three powers for the character as well as a final secret.

Lauren decides to start with the final secret and work backwards. Looking at Gabrielle's Fall, demonic form, and traits, she gets a sense of a demon that has become part of human counter-culture, someone who understands the desire to be free even if that means being uncomfortable. To that, Gabrielle adds the notion of being a courier — carrying information, but information that can terrify and harm. Lauren decides that Gabrielle's final truth is "hatred is a forest fire." That is, if the masses hate the status quo hard enough, they will burn it down and build something else. It just takes a lot of work to reach that point.

Looking over the notes she took when Luke created Gabrielle, Lauren notes that Gabrielle is a Saboteur but prefers terror tactics. Since her first Key is Heart's Desire, Lauren muses that knowing someone's wants would, by process of elimination, allow knowing their fears. She decides that Gabrielle's second Key is Recurring Hallucinations. Her first Interlock, Lauren decides, is called "Nightmares" — by touching a target, Gabrielle can instill fitful, nightmare-tainted sleep on a victim. The victim dreams of his own greatest desires, twisted and perverted. Lauren notes a system for this power (Presence + Intimidation – victim's Resolve, success imposes a Nightmares Condition, victim cannot regain Willpower by sleeping and is exhausted the next day).

For the third Key, Lauren decides to follow this theme of mental terror and illusion. Gabrielle's next Key Embed is Don't I Know You?, which allows her advantages on social interactions because she reminds a target of someone he

knows. For the corresponding Interlock, Lauren creates an ability called Waking Nightmare. After using the Nightmares Interlock on a target, Gabrielle can take the form of a creature or character from that nightmare — though no one else but the victim can see it. This gives Gabrielle the power to terrify a target on a deep and personal level. Lauren jots down a system (Manipulation + Intimidation – victim's Composure, success means that Gabrielle can use Hard Leverage on the target with a positive modifier equal to her Primum — see p. 316 for more on Hard Leverage).

Finally, for the fourth Key, the Storyteller chooses Everybody Knows. This Embed spreads rumors about a target character, and this seems especially appropriate for a social Saboteur and courier of information. The final Interlock is Social Warfare. Not only do unsavory rumors spread about the target, but the target is "the Man," the target for all of the dispossessed and counter-culture punks in the area. Lauren notes the system (Presence + Streetwise, success means that the character suffers protests, vandalism and other forms of harassment for one week per success).

Exploits

In contrast to Embeds, Exploits are not subtle at all. While they use the same metaphysical subroutines as Embeds, they are not relearned or remembered abilities but rather gross applications of the knowledge that the character already has. If an Embed is a word, and a set of Key Embeds is a sentence, then an Exploit is a shouted expletive. As such, Exploits are effective but run the risk of drawing attention.

Consider once again the metaphor of the child using the hole in the fence to sneak through a neighbor's yard. Applying that metaphor to Exploits, the child might kick the loose board free and use it to shatter the neighbor's glass patio door. An Exploit takes the knowledge imparted by an Embed and uses it to better, or at least more dramatic, effect. Unlike Embeds, though, Exploits are obvious and flamboyant, and therefore a risk to a demon's Cover.

An Exploit relies on a demon's knowledge of the world's metaphysical subroutines, just like Embeds, but instead of gently applying this knowledge, the demon forces Aether into the system, overcharging it and directing the result. While learning to use an Embed is a matter of re-acquiring knowledge that the demon had as an angel, learning to use an Exploit is more a matter of application. Angels therefore do not use Exploits — even their more grandiose powers are perfectly in line with their missions and therefore the parameters laid down by the God-Machine. An angel that decides to emulate a demon, pushing energy through the world's mystical framework just to see what will happen, is probably on the verge of Falling.

Learning a given Exploit requires that the demon has the knowledge base to do so. For example, in order to learn the Hellfire Exploit, the demon needs to understand how the subroutines work with regards to firearms. This means that the demon needs to know an Embed such as Check Backdrop or Merciless Gunman. Each Exploit lists a few potential prerequisite Embeds, but the demon need not know all of them in order to learn the Exploit. Indeed, if the player can make a convincing case for a why a given Embed enables the character to learn a given Exploit, the Storyteller should allow it. Demons are masters of lateral thinking — they had to be in order to Fall.

Design Principles: Exploits

- **Aether Cost:** All Exploits costs at least 1 Aether; some cost multiple points of Aether or include a Willpower cost.
- **Actions:** Exploits can be instant, extended, or reflexive actions.
- **Compromise:** Extended-action Exploits only require a compromise roll when they are *completed*.
- **Dice Pool:** Because Exploits require raw power to initiate and control, their dice pools are composed of a Power Attribute (Strength, Intelligence or Presence) + a Skill + Primum.
- **Trying Again:** If a roll to activate an Exploit fails, the demon can usually try again next turn without a dice penalty. Any Aether costs, however, must be paid again.

Systems

Exploits do not fall into categories the way Embeds do, nor do they require conceptual underpinnings. They rely on the demon forcing the mystical power of Aether into the same subroutines that allow Embeds, and then keeping that burst of power under control. They are more overtly powerful than Embeds, but they draw attention.

Every use of an Exploit causes a roll to avoid breaking Cover. The Storyteller should add modifiers to this roll based on how blatantly the character is acting out, how many people (not demons) can see the action, whether any angels can see the action, and whether or not any other Exploits have taken place during the scene. The player can spend a point of Willpower to avoid this roll.

Addictive Presence

The story of the succubus (or its male counterpart, the incubus) — a demon that feeds on sexual attention — is well-

known. Demons aren't above using sex as a means of enforcing or sealing bargains, a means of persuasion, or just for fun, but some demons perfect the art of eliciting pleasure from their victims with every glance, touch and movement. In this way, the demon can create an addict to her very presence, someone who will do almost anything for a few moments with her regardless of whether the relationship is sexual.

This Exploit only functions on living humans (vampires are dead and so don't experience addiction the same way, and demons are not human). The demon might be able to addict other supernatural beings, but they add their Supernatural Tolerance trait to the number of successes required. Many of them also have ways to break addictions that are not available to humans.

Example Prerequisites: Across a Crowded Room, Freudian Slip

Dice Pool: Presence + Socialize + Primum

Action: Extended (target number = target's Willpower; see below for interval)

Cost: 1 Aether/roll

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The target fails in her attempt to addict the target and the target becomes inured to the demon's powers; no Embed or Exploit will function on that target. The target becomes a beacon for the God-Machine's angels, who might very well investigate. Demons often find it expedient to kill people to whom this happens rather than risk their enemies finding and using such people against them.

Failure: The character can either abandon the attempt or accept a Condition, as described on p.313.

Success: This Exploit uses some of the same systems as Social maneuvering (see p. 314). Instead of opening a number of Doors, the player attempts to accumulate a number of successes equal to the target's Willpower. The rest of the systems are the same, however — the demon can use soft leverage, can play to the target's Aspirations or Vice, or attempt to increase his overall impression level. This benefits the demon because, as with Social maneuvering, the impression level determines how often the player can roll.

Once the player accumulates the required number of successes, the target gains the Addicted Condition (p. 307). His "drug" is simply being in the character's presence. If the character is a player's character, he gains a Beat whenever he misses an obligation or complicates things in order to serve or be with the demon. If the character is Storyteller-controlled, then there is no particular need to track Beats for him and the character is treated as a Retainer. This character will perform tasks for the demon without Social action or maneuvering. If, however, the demon forces the target to perform a task that causes a breaking point and the target achieves an exceptional success, he resolves the Addiction. Nothing stops the demon from reestablishing it, however.

Exceptional Success: The player can choose one of the options on p. 313 or can choose to lower the target's Integrity by one when the Addiction is complete (if a player-controlled character, this forces a breaking point roll penalized by the demon's Primum rating instead).

Affliction

The demon curses a target with boils, disease, madness, spiritual malaise, or any other malady he finds interesting. Some demons find this Exploit useful for revenge or punishment, others as a demonstration of power before a pact is finalized.

The player must declare the particulars of the Affliction before rolling the dice. This determines the resistance roll; physical Afflictions are resisted with Stamina, mental Afflictions with Resolve.

Example Prerequisites: Deafen, Recurring Hallucinations

Dice Pool: Strength + Medicine + Primum vs. Stamina or Resolve + Supernatural Tolerance

Action: Instant

Cost: 1 Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon suffers the effects of the Affliction herself. Any Condition or Tilt thus gained remain until the demon assumes demonic form.

Failure: The target is not afflicted.

Success: The demon curses the target, and may impose one Condition or Tilt. Appropriate choices include Madness, Poisoned, Sick, Shunned, or Mute. The demon can also specify an outward sign of the Affliction — a disfigurement, an alteration to the target's voice or smell, or any other effect that marks the character.

The Affliction remains until the demon removes it. It can generate Beats for the character, but its usual resolution does not apply. The Affliction can be removed through magical or supernatural means, at the Storyteller's discretion.

Exceptional Success: The demon may add more Conditions or Tilts at a cost of one Aether and one Willpower point each.

Allies Into Gold

What is the measure of a friend? What worth can be placed, not on a human being generally, but on human contact, of the ability to people to interact on a social level? A demon with this Exploit can shift what that human contact represents, changing a relationship that exists purely on the "exchange of information" level (Contacts) to one that brings in revenue (Resources), or one that induces the other party to level physical aid to the demon (Allies or even Retainer).

This Exploit is riskier to a demon's Cover than most. The compromise roll for Allies Into Gold suffers a negative modifier equal to the number of dots in Merits the demon is shifting.

Example Prerequisites: Fungible Knowledge, Trust No One

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Socialize + Primum

Action: Extended (target number = number of dots being shifted; one roll/hour)



Cost: 1 Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon loses access to the Merit dots she intended to shift for the rest of the day. If the demon approaches the people these dots represent, in any Cover, the people have no idea who she is.

Failure: The demon must either abandon the attempt or accept a Condition, as described on p. 115.

Success: The demon can shift some of her Social Merits. The player decides how many dots to shift when the Exploit is activated; even if the player winds up with more successes than required, she can only shift that many dots. The player chooses what Merit those dots now represent. Allies Into Gold can only



turn Social Merits into other Social Merits, so it is possible to turn a True Friend into Resources (that True Friend comes into some money, which he then imparts to the character), Allies into Contacts (the organization suffers a blow to its personnel and is unable to help the character with anything but research), Staff into Retainer (most of the Staff goes on strike, leaving behind only a dedicated employee) and so forth.

These alterations are permanent — if the character wants to shift her Merits back, she must use this power again.

Exceptional Success: The player may select one of the options from p. 313, or can choose to sacrifice a dot of Social Merits for one Experience.

Animate

The demon can bring a facsimile of life to an inanimate object, provided that it has the apparatus to allow it to move. That is, the demon cannot animate something with no limbs or appendages, though he could animate a severed arm or an angel's wing (though its movement would be severely limited). This means that the character can animate statues, sculptures, vehicles, and even corpses and call them to do his bidding. While animated, these objects emit occasional plumes of smoke or steam from joints and licks of fire or electricity sometimes emerge from their eyes.

Example Prerequisites: Fulcrum Point, Sabotage

Dice Pool: Presence + Crafts + Primum

Action: Instant

Cost: 1 Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The energy sent to animate the object reverberates back on the character, flinging him a number of yards equal to the Size of the targeted object. The character suffers bashing damage as though he had fallen a comparable distance (see Falling, p. 179 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**). Additional complications may result depending what the character strikes.

Failure: The demon fails to animate the object.

Success: The object becomes mobile and able to follow the demon's commands. Most animated objects are extremely slow (Speed 5), though animated corpses can manage Speed 8 and vehicles can move at their Safe Speeds.

Animated objects have traits like spirits: Power, Finesse and Resistance. Split the object's Structure up between these Attributes as desired. Animated corpses start with Power 1, Finesse 1 and Resistance 2; the demon can split his successes on the Exploit roll + his Primum rating up amongst these Attributes.

Animated objects commanded to do a task will continue doing it until ordered to stop, until destroyed, or until the scene ends (whereupon the Exploit wears off).

Exceptional Success: As above, but the animated object gains a modicum of intelligence and can follow more complex commands.

Behind the Curtain

This is a risky endeavor, but a useful one at times. The demon can call upon his memories of service to the God-Machine, enter a section of Infrastructure, then travel to another section of

Infrastructure anywhere in the world. Since all Infrastructures are connected in the sense that they all use the same power sources, traveling between them is a simple metaphysical exercise (angels do it frequently). Unfortunately, doing so for a demon carries a greater-than-usual risk of compromise.

Demons can use the Spoof ability when entering Infrastructure and are well-advised to do so in this case. Spoofing is described on p. 112. Successfully Spoofing adds two dice to this Exploit's roll.

Example Prerequisites: Interference, Last Place You Look

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Computer + Primum

Action: Instant

Cost: 2 Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character's attempt sets off a warning system. If the character successfully Spoofed the God-Machine (see p. 112), then he can escape, but gains the Hunted Condition. If not, he is immediately attacked by angels appropriate to the importance of the Infrastructure.

Failure: The demon fails to step between Infrastructures but has not yet been discovered.

Success: The demon vanishes and reappears at another Infrastructure. The demon can choose which one, but unless he knows where it is and what form it takes before using this Exploit, he's firing blind. The demon can only name an approximate distance and type of Infrastructure ("100 miles away, Concealment Infrastructure") and hope that this takes him to a relatively safe locale. The demon gains the Flagged Condition (p. 120).

Exceptional Success: As above, but the demon does not gain the Flagged Condition.

Break to Heal

The principle of "as above, so below" is one that demons understand well, as is the notion of conservation of energy. Every object in the world — in the universe — is made up of the same energy, and so transferring that energy from one form to another should be simple.

In practice, demons can't perform the metaphysical calculations necessary to performing world-altering feats of physics, but they can break one object and transmit that energy to living tissue, healing damage or illness. This Exploit requires that the demon touch the intended target and break an object at the same time.

Example Prerequisites: On the Mend, Shift Consequence

Dice Pool: Strength + Medicine + Primum

Action: Instant

Cost: 1 Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon accidentally reverses the flow of energy, inflicting lethal damage equal to her Primum rating to the target and "healing" the object (any structural damage is fixed and the object winds up looking like new). The damage thus inflicted is extremely painful and takes the form of tiny cuts appearing in the flesh, then widening into deep gouges.

Failure: The demon fails to heal the target, though the object is still broken.

Success: The demon heals the target of all bashing damage, or lethal damage equal to the Structure rating of the broken object. If the target has suffered aggravated damage, this Exploit changes the damage to lethal (and the demon must use Break to Heal again if she wishes to mend it entirely). If the target has a mix of different damage types, the demon can specify which type of damage she wishes to heal.

Exceptional Success: Instead of converting aggravated damage to lethal, the demon can instead heal a number of aggravated damage equal to her Primum.

Deep Pockets

The demon can pull anything that he can lift out of his pocket, coat, suitcase or any other aperture he can fit his hand into. He doesn't have to own the object that he is retrieving, but it does have to come from somewhere, so he has to be able to picture it. Since demons have perfect memories, however, even a moderately well-traveled demon has a wide range of objects to call upon. Demons with this Exploit often have a special room in their homes adorned with large objects that they can retrieve at will, seemingly from nowhere.

Example Prerequisites: Authorized, In My Pocket

Dice Pool: Strength + Larceny + Primum

Action: Instant

Cost: 1 Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon pulls something out of his pocket, but it isn't something useful or even related to what he was looking for. He might retrieve a spatula when looking for a shotgun, or a beehive when looking for a shovel.

Failure: The demon fails to retrieve the desired object.

Success: The demon pulls the desired object out of whatever vessel he reaches into. The demon must be able to picture a specific object, so if he pictures a chainsaw he saw on a shelf at a hardware store, he can retrieve it — but it will be *that* chainsaw (meaning it won't have fuel). The demon can't retrieve an object that he couldn't lift with one hand (which means that if he has a way of boosting his Strength, he could theoretically pull a motorcycle out of his pocket).

Exceptional Success: The object that the demon draws forth is the ideal one for the task at hand, not just the one he pictured. So, in the example above, he pictures the chainsaw at the store but he retrieves one that is fully fueled and works perfectly.

Demon House

The God-Machine occasionally gives angels non-human, even inanimate Covers. They might become weapons, objects, or

buildings in addition to people or animals. As noted on p. 117, while a demon can, theoretically take such a Cover, it isn't usually worth the trouble since the rating is low and the ability to interact with the world is limited. Some demons, though, find a work-around — they merge a human Cover with a building associated with it. This might be the house that a Cover identity owns or the office where he works, or even the factory where he (supposedly) died. The demon merges with the building, aware of everything that happens within it and able to use Embeds and Exploits on inhabitants at will with a much-reduced chance of compromise.

Example Prerequisites: Hush, Like I Built It

Dice Pool: Presence + Stealth + Primum

Action: Instant

Cost: 1 Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon's Cover merges with the building but the demon is trapped in the structure, unable to bring any influence to bear or reverse the process. The only way out is to assume demonic form, but this demolishes the building entirely. At the Storyteller's discretion, a demon with another Cover might be able to switch to it instead.

Failure: The demon does not merge with the building.

Success: The demon merges with the building. The demon's body disappears, but he can, if he wishes, appear in mirrors or as a disembodied voice in the building. While possessing the building, the demon can sense everything that happens inside it, seeing all points simultaneously. He can listen to any phone calls made on a land line inside the building (and can still listen to at least half the conversation if someone uses a cell phone), and can read any data coming through an Internet connection provided that the connection is wired into the house. He can use any Embed or Exploit that he knows on the inhabitants of the building, and any compromise roll made as a result of these powers receives a +3 modifier.

The demon can remain thus ensconced as long as he wishes, but he must take care. For every day he spends in the building, he risks compromise. If he becomes Burned while this Exploit is in effect, he is trapped in the building, a living ghost, unable to escape until the building is destroyed.

Exceptional Success: The demon has direct physical control over electronics and objects in the house. He can open doors, turn devices on and off, and throw lightweight objects around (as the Telekinesis Numen; each use costs 1 Aether, roll Strength + Primum).

Disintegrate

With a single touch, the demon can turn a solid object into dust and vapor. The object vibrates for a moment, and then cracks and disappears with a faint glow.

The object in question can be no larger than the demon herself (usually Size 5). This Exploit does not work on living or undead matter. It *does* function on magical or enchanted items, but the player subtracts the item's rating from the dice pool. If the target object is being held by another character, the demon must make a touch attack against the character (p. 157 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**).

If the item's Durability is higher than the demon's Primum, the player must spend an additional point of Aether for the Exploit. The Demolisher Merit (p. 291) mitigates this effect.

Example: *Tom's character, Will Jericho, has Primum 1 and the Demolisher Merit at three dots. He uses the Disintegrate Exploit on a stone statue (Durability 2). Normally Tom would have to spend two points of Aether on this Exploit, because the statue's Durability is higher than the character's Primum, but because Will knows exactly where the statue's weak points are (a result of the Demolisher Merit), he doesn't have to.*

Example Prerequisites: Shatter, Tools Into Toys

Dice Pool: Strength + Brawl + Primum

Action: Reflexive

Cost: 1 Aether + 1 additional Aether (see above)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Exploit backfires, disintegrating anything the character is holding or wearing. The demon can choose to suffer aggravated damage equal to his own Primum and contain the effect instead.

Failure: No effect; the object does not disintegrate.

Success: The object disintegrates as described above. If the object was part of a larger whole (a part of a machine, or a beam of a house), additional effects might occur. These are up to the Storyteller to adjudicate.

Exceptional Success: The demon uses his energy extremely efficiently. Regain one point of Aether.

Echoing Death

The demon strikes a target dead and the death undoes the last action the character took. This requires the demon to warp time and causality, and as such it carries a greater risk of breaking the demon's Cover (in game terms, the compromise roll for this Exploit carries a –2 penalty). If the Exploit is successful, though, the demon can erase the last few moments of the target's life, perhaps saving the life of someone that character killed.

This Exploit can only affect the actions the target took in his last few minutes of life. Anything longer than that and the effects of the actions he took have already reverberated out into the universe too far to be undone.

Example Prerequisites: Turn Blade, Without a Trace

Dice Pool: Strength + Brawl + Primum

Action: Extended (required successes = lethal damage required to kill target; 1 roll/turn)

Cost: 2 Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Exploit fails; the target does not die and the demon cannot erase the target's actions. In addition,

the demon's fate becomes intertwined with the target's and the demon gains the Fate-Bound Condition. Whenever the target suffers damage, the demon's player must roll Stamina + Resolve or suffer the same damage. This Condition ends when the demon suffers damage from it (the player can opt to do this voluntarily at any time).

Failure: The character can either abandon the attempt or accept a Condition as described on p. 115.

Success: The character must accumulate a number of successes equal to the lethal damage required to kill the target. Note that to actually kill a target requires twice as many successes as the target has Health (a target's Health track fills once with lethal damage, after which further lethal damage is converted to aggravated). As such, a character with Stamina 2 requires 14 successes on this Exploit to kill — assuming the character has an empty Health track. If the target is injured, however, the number of successes required for this Exploit adjusts accordingly, meaning that a demon can and should make use of allies or previous attacks before using Echoing Death.

Once the player accumulates the proper number of successes, the demon must make a touch attack on the target (Dexterity + Brawl – Defense). If this roll succeeds, the target suffers all of the accumulated damage at once and perishes, his bones snapping and his flesh crushed under incredible pressure. The demon chooses an action that the character took in his last few minutes of life (during the same scene); the action is unwritten, as are any consequences of it.

Exceptional Success: The player can choose one of the options list on p. 313, or can choose to absorb the residual energy leftover from the target's untaken action (in game terms, the character gains Aether equal to her Primum rating).

Ephemeral Cover

The demon can craft a Cover out of spirit-stuff, creating a mask that resembles a ghost or a spirit. In order to do this, the demon must harvest raw material — the Corpus of an ephemeral being. Ephemeral beings are described on pp. 336-353 of this book.

The demon needs four points of Corpus for every dot of Cover he wishes the new identity to have, and at least half of that Corpus must come from the type of spiritual entity he intends to impersonate (ghosts if he wishes to create a ghost Cover, spirits if he wishes to create a spirit Cover). He can harvest Corpus using this Exploit; as such, Ephemeral Cover also functions as an attack against ghosts and spirits. Once harvested, the demon stores the Corpus on his demonic form. When the demon assumes this form, the Corpus is visible hanging on his body like a fleshy, translucent cloak.

Once the demon has accumulated enough Corpus, he can create the Cover. This process is described under Success, below.

Example Prerequisites: Knockout Punch, Tag & Release

Dice Pool: Strength + Occult + Primum – Defense

Action: Instant

Cost: 1 Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon's attack misses and the demon loses any accumulated Corpus. The demon can prevent this by concentrating on keeping the Corpus to the exclusion of anything else, but this cancels the demon's Defense for the next turn (allowing the spirit or ghost he just attempted to rip asunder a free shot).

Failure: The demon's attack fails.

Success: The demon's attack succeeds and he rips off a hunk of the unfortunate being's Corpus, adding it to his stock.

Once the demon has accumulated enough Corpus (4 x the desired Cover rating), he can craft his spiritual Cover. This requires an extended action (successes required = twice the Cover rating, one roll per hour, Dexterity + Crafts), which must be completed in demonic form. If this action succeeds, the demon has successfully created the Cover. The demon has spirit traits while using this Cover; his Power, Finesse and Resistance are equal to the highest corresponding Attribute that the demon normally has. The demon exists in Twilight, but does not track Essence — he still has a Primum rating and an Aether pool. He can Manifest like a ghost or spirit of comparable Rank. The ephemeral Cover does not have Numina; instead, the demon retains access to his Embeds and Exploits. Unless he Materializes, he cannot physically affect material targets.

The Ephemeral Cover is subject to investigation just as a human Cover is, but spirits tend to be harder to investigate than humans.

Exceptional Success: No further effect beyond the greater amount of stolen Corpus.

Everybody Hates Him

The value of a scapegoat is indisputable. Having someone for everyone to hate, a target for their collective frustrations, allows unification among people — and for a demon, it allows someone *else* to take the blame. This Exploit makes a human target into the person that everyone hates. It does so by changing the *target*, though, not the world at large. The person simply trips the parts of the brain that causes others to read him as the enemy. Depending on where and when the victim falls under this Exploit, he might not live out the day.

Example Prerequisites: Mercury Retrograde, Special Someone

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Intimidation + Primum

Action: Instant

Cost: 1 Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character becomes the scapegoat instead. She gains the Shunned Condition (see below), but also suffers a –2 on all compromise rolls until it is shed.

Failure: The demon fails to turn the target into a scapegoat.

Success: The demon places the Shunned Condition on the target. All Social actions that the target undertakes while the Condition is in place are made with a chance die, and all impression levels are considered hostile. Police harass the target, supernatural forces perceive him as a threat, and parents assume he is a danger to their children. If the target is a player's character, he gains a Beat every time he fails a roll due to this Condition. Getting rid of the Condition requires convincing someone face to face that he is not a threat. The demon can also remove the Condition at any time.

Exceptional Success: The target perceives the demon as a safe haven, as someone who will really understand and accept him. Any attempt to convince the target to sign a pact receives a dice bonus equal to the demon's Primum.

Extispicy

The practice of *extispicy* is the art of reading the entrails of a slaughtered animal in order to divine the future or otherwise glean information. Demons can use this method to learn information about the world around them, but whether something intrinsic in the act of the slaughter or simply the random patterns formed in blood and tissue grant the information, none of the Unchained can say for certain. In any case, the result is messy and difficult to hide, but yields useful results.

Extispicy works on any living creature of Size 4 or greater. Killing an animal (or a person, for that matter) to read its entrails might constitute a separate compromise if doing so would be grossly out of character for the demon's Cover. As such, some demons prefer to assume demonic form before gutting the sacrificial creature (the claws often make it easier anyway). If the character inflicts enough damage with her bare hands or a bladed weapon to kill someone in combat, she may immediately begin the process of using this Exploit (target number of successes is still the target's Health, though).

Example Prerequisites: Cause and Effect, Read Hostility

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Occult + Primum

Action: Extended (successes = creature's Health; one roll per turn)

Cost: 1 Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The attempt at reading the future fails and the demon gains a Condition such as Accursed (the demon's magic is tainted; all Aether expenditures are doubled until the demon next regains Aether, at which point the Condition is resolved). The next time the character attempts to use Extispicy, the attempt suffers a –2 modifier.

Failure: As described under extended actions (p. 312), the character can either accept a Condition or abandon the attempt. If the character abandons the attempt, the creature is dead and can't be used for another attempt at Extispicy.

Success: The character reads the creature's entrails and divines useful information about the future. This can have one of three game effects, depending on the preferences of the Storyteller.

First, the Storyteller might have some specific hint or piece of information that she wishes to give the player. In this case, the Storyteller can simply impart this information, either encoded in a riddle or directly. This can be a useful way to help the players if they are casting about for an avenue of approach to a problem.

Second, the Storyteller might simply give the character the Informed Condition (see p. 309) about a given topic.

Finally, the player might have a number of dice equal to twice the demon's Primum to apply to rolls about the topic of inquiry.

Exceptional Success: In addition to the above, the player can apply the usual exceptional success rules to the extended action (p. 312), or can choose to take the Déjà Vu Condition. This Condition may be shed at any time to allow the character to succeed on one roll. If this roll is a contested action, the character wins. If the roll is a combat action, the character is considered to have successes on the roll equal to her Primum. Until this Condition is resolved, however, the character is distracted and suffers a –1 to all Perception rolls.

Force Relationship

The demon can change the connections between people, forging a kind of temporary Cover between them. She can make two people into lovers, enemies, friends, or family. This Exploit doesn't actually change the targets physically, meaning that if the demon turns two people into "brothers," they think of themselves as brothers but a DNA test will not show them to be related. This Exploit allows a demon to get around the drawbacks of a low Cover, at least for a short while.

This Exploit can be used to alter preexisting relationships, but this is actually more difficult than just creating a relationship out of nothing. This is because human relationships are a tangled web of past events, impressions, brain chemistry, and possibility, putting many more variables in play.

Example Prerequisites: Homogenous Memory, Shifty Eyes

Dice Pool: Presence + Empathy + Primum

Action: Extended (5 or 10 successes, one roll per hour)

Cost: 1 Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The targets develop a relationship, but it is that they are united in hatred of the demon (or rather, her current Cover). The characters might never discover this mutual animosity, but if they do, they will plot against the demon. Depending on what kind of people they are, this might take the form of following the character around, trying to discredit her, or just attempting to murder her.

Failure: The character can choose to abandon the Exploit or accept a Condition (as described on p. 313).

Success: The character either forges a new relationship between two characters who have never met (which requires five successes) or alters an existing relationship (which requires

10). The relationship can be anything that the character specifies: lovers, friends, casual acquaintances, enemies, rivals, and so forth. The relationship is reciprocal (that is, if the demon decides the targets are friends, then they both feel the friendship), as long as both targets are not demons. If one target is a demon, the relationship is established but the demon doesn't necessarily feel one way or another about the target. The demon can Force Relationships using herself as a target, which is a good way to shore up a Cover and throw off an investigator. Characters trying to investigate a Cover suffer a –3 penalty as long as this Exploit remains in effect.

The effects of Force Relationship last for a number of days equal to the demon's Primum. If the demon forged the relationship between herself and a human target and she raises her Cover before the Exploit wears off, she can choose to make the relationship true (that is, the power doesn't wear off, though the relationship might change or degrade normally).

Exceptional Success: The player can choose one of the options on p. 313 or can convert the amount of time that the Exploit stays active to a number of weeks equal to the demon's Primum rating, not days.

Four Minutes Ago

The demon can warp time in a limited way, removing himself from the scene four minutes before the moment he activates this Exploit. The time change does not remove all of the effects of his presence in the scene, however. This would be too much risk of a paradox, and the mystical subroutines of the universe that allow this Exploit to function reflexively prevent this from happening. Instead, the events of the scene come to the same results without the character's presence (at least, without his presence from four minutes before he used this Exploit).

The character "appears" four minutes' travel from his location in the scene. The player decides how they character traveled and in which direction. This Exploit is primarily useful as an escape method, but it can be used to escape not only the physical location of a problemtic scene but some of the personal consequences of the demon's own actions.

Example Prerequisites: Never Here, Quick Change

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Stealth + Primum

Action: Instant

Cost: 2 Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character attempts to warp time and fails, but the attempt does not go unnoticed. The player immediately makes a compromise roll with a penalty equal to the demon's Primum. If this roll fails, not only does the character lose a dot of Cover, but he gains the Flagged Condition (p. 120).

Failure: The character fails to warp time but doesn't draw any special notice in the process.

Success: The character vanishes from the current scene and actually left four minutes before the time that he used this Exploit. Everything that happened in the scene after that still occurred — if there was a fight going on and the character killed someone, that character is still dead, but someone else killed him. All consequences to other characters occur as they did with the character present, but the causes of those consequences might change. Consequences to the character personally, however, vanish — any damage the character took during those four minutes is gone, any Willpower or Aether he spent is returned, and any Conditions he gained vanished. This also works to the character's detriment, though. Any Beats he gained go away, and if he gained Willpower or Aether during those four minutes, it vanishes.

Any witnesses to the scene remember the character leaving and do not remember the demon as being present during the altered four minutes. This includes the characters' allies.

The player determines where the character went and what he did with a four-minute "head start" on the rest of the scene. The character then appears wherever the Storyteller thinks is logical, based on that information.

Example: *Marisol, a Messenger Saboteur, is in a tense situation with one of her demonic allies and a group of stigmatics. During the scene, Marisol changes to demonic form and melts one of the stigmatics' faces, but then is stabbed in the leg with an enchanted dagger. Not wishing to endure this damage (her Vice is Pristine), she activates Four Minutes Ago. Marisol vanishes; since she wasn't there to get stabbed, the wound is no longer in her leg. Since she was in demonic form when she activated the Exploit, the player decides that Marisol threw herself out the window and flew away, landing on a nearby rooftop. The stigmatic she killed is still dead, but his wounds change from severe facial trauma from acid to a bullet in the skull (Marisol wasn't there to kill him, so either her erstwhile companion did it or one of the other stigmatics shot him by mistake).*

Exceptional Success: As above, but the character gains a greater amount of control over how time rewrites itself. The player can choose to prevent or redirect a number of points of damage that the character inflicted or suffered equal to the character's Primum. Damage that the character suffered is already prevented by the character's absence, so it can only be redirected.

Example: *Continuing the example above, Marisol has Primum 2, and so she can redirect or prevent two points of damage that she suffered or inflicted. She suffered four points of damage when the stigmatic stabbed her, so she could choose to redirect two points of that damage to another target (none of the damage will actually affect her, since she left before the attack happened). She chooses to put two points of that damage onto the character that stabbed her (again, how the stigmatic suffered that damage is a question for the Storyteller, since Marisol wasn't there to hurt him).*

Frozen in Time

With a glance, the demon alters a target's relationship with time. From the victim's perspective, everything around her speeds up, passing by in a blur as she watches helplessly. To the demon (and anyone else), the victim stands stock-still, a living statue.

While the victim is frozen, she cannot be harmed. Her body does not interact with the rest of the world (rather, it does, but so slowly that she suffers no ill effects), which means the demon can use this Exploit to *save* a person who is dying from a poison or a wound. Gravity doesn't affect the character, either, meaning a target frozen in time while falling does not travel through space.

Example Prerequisites: Ellipses, Living Recorder

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Science + Primum – Stamina

Action: Instant

Cost: 1 Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon speeds up the target instead. To the target, everything moves in extreme slow motion. Her senses are hyper-acute. In a fight, she is able to enact a Killing Blow (p. 324) on any target she chooses. Outside of a combat situation, she moves faster than anyone eyes can follow — but she can't open doors or move obstacles (she can exert force upon them, but they move at a speed too slow, relative to her, to get out of the way). This effect lasts for a number of turns (combat) or minutes (non-combat) equal to the demon's Primum.

Failure: No effect; time does not slow.

Success: The target is frozen in time as described above. During this time, the target does not suffer damage, either from attacks, bleeding out, or extreme environments (p. 335), but can also take no actions. The effect lasts for a number of turns (in combat) or minutes (outside of combat) equal to the demon's Primum; the demon can extend the Exploit's effects for the same amount of time if the player spends a point of Aether when the Exploit ends (that is, if the demon has Primum 2, the player can spend a point of Aether every two turns/minutes to keep the effect going). No roll is required for this.

Exceptional Success: The demon can keep the target frozen for an entire scene with no further expenditure.

Halo

The demon creates a soft, soothing light that acts as a balm — and a soporific — to anyone in the area. The light emanates from the demon's eyes, if she so desires, but could also simply appear around her with no discernible source.

Example Prerequisites: Bystander Effect, Heart's Desire

Dice Pool: Presence + Medicine + Primum

Action: Instant

Cost: 2 Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The light fails to appear and the demon draws light and life toward her, sucking in warmth and energy. Anyone she touches suffers a point of lethal damage. If she avoids touching people, though, *she* suffers lethal damage at a rate of one per hour. She can remove this effect by purging all of her Aether (which creates a flash of red light and shorts out electronic devices in the area).

Failure: The light does not appear.

Success: The character places the "Soothing Light" Condition on the area. While in the area covered by this Condition, characters heal bashing damage at one point per five minutes and lethal damage at one point per hour. All healing and Medicine rolls receive a bonus equal to the demon's Primum. In addition, any character at rest feels a strong urge to sleep. A Resolve + Wits roll is required to stay awake, and the player must roll more successes than the demon's player did on the Exploit roll. Once asleep, characters can be awakened normally.

The light lasts for one scene, unless the demon wishes to have it last longer.

Exceptional Success: As above, except that anyone who falls asleep remains asleep unless the demon allows them to awaken.

Hellfire

The demon forces Aether through her firearms, converting the bullets into magically charged flame. The fire thus created can incinerate victims or destroy material objects, but it does not start fires — nothing touched by the Hellfire ignites.

In order to activate this Exploit, the demon must have at least one firearm already drawn and ready to fire. She can use Hellfire on allies' guns, but must touch the firearm in question. When the Exploit is activated, the gun's barrel warps slightly, growing wider, and a thin wisp of brimstone smoke drifts up from it.

Example Prerequisites: Check Backdrop, Merciless Gunman

Dice Pool: Presence + Firearms + Primum

Action: Reflexive

Cost: 1 Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The gun explodes, inflicting aggravated damage to the demon (and the gun's wielder, if applicable) equal to the demon's Primum.

Failure: The Exploit does not work and the gun is unaffected.

Success: The gun inflicts aggravated damage for the remainder of the scene. Its other capabilities are unaffected — range, damage rating, ammo capacity, and so on stay the same. The barrel fires a plume of red-yellow flame with every shot, however, and a target killed by a Hellfire weapon feels his flesh burn away in seconds, leaving only a charred skeleton.

Exceptional Success: As above, but the player adds the demon's Primum to the weapon's damage rating.

Hellhounds

The demon infuses an animal with Aether, turning it into a nightmarish mesh of biomachinery and flesh. The creature is not long for this world (unless the demon wishes to supply it with the Aether it needs to live), but while it lives, it obeys the demon unquestioningly.

Example Prerequisites: Animal Messenger, Right Tools, Right Job

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Animal Ken + Primum

Action: Instant

Cost: Animal's Size in Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The animal becomes a nightmarish hell-beast but immediately attacks the demon, attempting to eat his flesh and consume his Aether. If the character can escape, the Hellhound hunts down whatever source of Aether it can find.

Failure: The animal does not become a Hellhound.

Success: The animal twists, mutates and reshapes itself into a cryptid (p. 228). It retains its basic form, but fur often becomes metallic and shiny, eyes become glass and wires and a dog's panting gives way to mechanized gear-grinding.

The traits of such a creature vary depending on its base animal, but the dog traits on p. 203 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook** work nicely to simulate such creatures with little to no alteration. For other animals, use the traits of the animal (or a similar animal; the raven's traits work for most birds, for example) and add the demon's Primum + successes on the Exploit roll in dots at the player's discretion. Or, if the player has some time to think ahead, use the cryptid creation rules on p. 228 to come up with a Hell-beast that the Storyteller and the player agree upon.

The creature can communicate with the demon, meaning that if the demon grants his creation the Eidetic Memory Merit, he can send it out to spy and then "download" the information his pet has recorded.

The Hellhound lives for one scene. After that, it requires Aether to keep it alive. It must consume one point of Aether per day per point of Size (so Hell-rats are much easier to maintain than Hellhounds, long term). If the creature doesn't get his daily diet of Aether, he dies. Note, too, that Hell-beasts cannot pass for normal animals — they are obviously supernatural creatures. The demon can have as many Hell-beasts at a time as he wants to maintain.

Exceptional Success: No additional effect beyond the superior capabilities that multiple successes grant.

Incendiary

The demon summons up fire from nothing and hurls it at a target. This flame can ignite anything flammable it touches in addition to the harm it causes to a living creature. The demon can use her mastery over the fire to gain temporary immunity to it, but she must leave the area quickly or be consumed as well.

Example Prerequisites: Combustion, Raw Materials

Dice Pool: Strength + Science + Primum

Action: Reflexive

Cost: 1 Aether + 1 Aether/turn of immunity

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon summons the fire but it immediately burns out of control, engulfing her and inflicting four points of lethal damage per turn. The player cannot spend Aether to mitigate this damage. She can prevent further damage by immediately assuming demonic form, which extinguishes the fire.

Failure: The demon fails to call up the flames.

Success: The demon's hands become surrounded by blue flames. She can now throw fire at any target within range (5/10/15). This requires a roll of Dexterity + Athletics – the opponent's Defense; the fire blast has a damage rating equal to the demon's Primum. If the blast strikes something flammable, the target catches fire and continues to burn normally (though it burns blue as long as the demon is present).

If the demon is trapped in the inferno, the player can spend 1 Aether per turn to ignore the damage.

Exceptional Success: The demon is immune to the fire without further expenditure of Aether, for the remainder of the scene.

Inflict Stigmata

Stigmatics (described in Chapter Four) are human beings that can see the workings of the God-Machine. Some of them wind up working directly for the God-Machine — hunting demons, facilitating Infrastructure, or performing whatever their unknowable master asks of them. Some of them don't and wind up terrified of their newfound knowledge or form cults or religions based upon their visions.

Some stigmatics are born, but others come to their condition after witnessing the workings of the God-Machine. Demons are able to stimulate this condition as well, though once a human has been turned stigmatic the demon has no control over how he will react to this newfound enlightenment.

Example Prerequisites: Find the Leak, Muse

Dice Pool: Presence + Occult + Primum

Action: Extended (target number = target's Integrity; one roll/turn)

Cost: 1 Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The process fails. The target is not a stigmatic, but the attempt to make him so attracts angelic attention. The character gains the Hunted Condition (p.119).

Failure: The demon can either abandon the attempt or accept a Condition as described on p. 313.

Success: When the player reaches the target number of successes, the victim gains the ability to see the workings of the God-Machine, a brand or tell, and all of the other benefits of being stigmatic (p. 224). This Exploit does not, however, impart any particular inclination to serve the demon or the God-Machine; that inclination must come naturally. The demon can use the Social maneuvering system (p. 314) to get the new stigmatic to act as an operative for her Agenda or Agency's purposes, but this is a separate action.

Exceptional Success: The player may choose one of the options from p. 313, or, if the demon wishes to recruit the new stigmatic through Social maneuvering, start the process with one of the target's Doors already open.

Living Shadow

The demon changes her form into a self-aware shadow, able to follow a person anywhere so long as enough ambient light is around to let him cast a shadow. The demon can switch "hosts" as well, following on the heels of one person after another to gain entrance to heavily secured areas.

While in shadow-form, the character can see and hear normally, but cannot speak, feel or otherwise interact with the world.

Example Prerequisites: Eavesdrop, Miles Away

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Stealth + Primum

Action: Instant

Cost: 1 Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character becomes a shadow and attaches to the target host, but cannot detach herself or change hosts. She is stuck as the person's shadow until that person no longer has one (which might not happen until that person goes to bed at night). The demon can escape this predicament by entering demonic form, but that might cause its own problems.

Failure: The demon fails to become a shadow.

Success: The character becomes a living shadow as described and attached herself to a target host (human, demon, animal — it doesn't matter, so long as the target casts a shadow). The demon can switch targets reflexively as her shadow form touches either the new target or the new target's shadow. As such, switching being targets in a crowd on a sunny day is easy and allows the character to travel great distances in seconds.

The character can reform at any time as an instant action, but is advised to do so when the target is looking away — or use an Embed like Hush (p. 128).

Exceptional Success: The demon can detach from her host and move up to a number of yards equal to her Primum before she must attach to a new host. During this time, she can slip under doors or through transparent surfaces.

Merge

The demonic form is a terrifying weapon and one that demons recognize as a badge of their newfound freedom. But the form is just a physical change, one more state in the demon's quantum reality, and that allows a demon to merge his Form with that of another demon.



With this Exploit, members of a ring of demons can loan each other their demonic form Abilities. The recipient does not have to know this Exploit, but all contributing demons and the one with Merge must touch the recipient. The abomination thus created cannot venture more than 20 yards from any of the contributing demons, or else the Form Ability he received from a given demon is ripped away, leaving a bloodied wound.

Example Prerequisites: Borrowed Expertise, Download Knowledge

Dice Pool: Strength + Occult + Primum

Action: Instant

Cost: 1 Aether from each contributing demon

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: All contributing demons lose access to their demonic forms for the scene. The demon using Merge might well wind up with the Blackballed Condition (p.120), at the contributors' discretion.

Failure: The merger does not occur.

Success: All contributing demons' players must spend a point of Aether and declare which of their Form Abilities they wish to donate. One character receives all of these Abilities, turning him into a truly formidable (and probably hideous) monster. The character also receives all of the Aether that the demons spent, but he should hold on to it — he must spend one point of Aether per demon (including himself) to return to human form.

If the demon moves more than 20 yards from any of the contributors, the Abilities he received from that contributor vanish, leaving a rent in his flesh (one point of aggravated damage per Ability). As such, even if the demon doesn't save enough Aether to return his borrowed powers, the demons can get them back.

Exceptional Success: The character using Merge can reverse the Exploit at any time, so the recipient need only spend one Aether to return to human form (provided that the character using the Exploit is still present and able to function when the time comes to switch back).

Murder by Improbability

The universe has a million ways to kill, even without involving intent from others or infirmity of the human body. Freak accidents claim thousands of lives every day; a demon with the right mystical understanding can snatch some of that lethal improbability from the universe and aim it at a victim. The unfortunate victim might be struck by a falling chunk of blue ice, trip and fall off a platform in front of a train, or stumble through a Rube Goldberg-esque configuration of accidents that leaves him lying on a sidewalk with scissors between his ribs.

Against some targets, this Exploit kills instantly and surely. Against others, it makes the world more dangerous, but does not automatically result in death. Demons are unsure what the difference is, but note that the Exploit is useless against the Unchained and beings with strange, otherworldly natures are more resistant to it.

In game terms, this Exploit counts as an attack and can be used to kill a human target under the Down and Dirty Combat rules (p.317). If the target is touched by the supernatural in any way, however, then Murder by Improbability does not function in this manner. Instead, it makes the character extremely, possibly fatally, unlucky — but the demon still needs to nudge that character's fate in the direction of death.

Example Prerequisites: Lucky Break, Strike First

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Academics + Primum vs. Presence + Supernatural Tolerance

Action: Instant

Cost: 1 Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon miscalculates and carries the miasma of ill luck with her. The Exploit doesn't affect the demon directly, but alters the probability of events around her. She gains the Jinx Condition — before every roll another character makes affecting the demon (helpful or harmful), the Storyteller rolls a single die. If it comes up odd, the character *adds* the demon's Primum to the roll. If it comes up even, the character *subtracts* the demon's Primum from the roll. The demon can shed this Condition by choosing to change a failure to a dramatic failure (she still gets the Beat for doing so; see p. 287).

Failure: The character fails to alter probability.

Success: If the demon is using this Exploit against a human being with no ties to the supernatural and no extraordinary fate (this is at the Storyteller's discretion; demons occasionally try to kill world leaders with this Exploit and usually fail), the target suffers a freak accident and dies within the next scene.

For supernatural characters or character whose fates are too complicated to be snuffed out so easily, all attacke against the character during the next combat scene he experiences add the demon's Primum to any weapon bonus.

This Exploit does not work against demons.

Exceptional Success: No additional effect against human characters. Against supernatural characters, the demon places the Sword of Damocles Condition on the character. The character suffers a penalty to his Defense equal to the demon's Primum. He can resolve this Condition by willingly suffering damage equal to the demon's Primum (this damage takes the form of an accident — tripping and falling on his own weapon, a stray bullet strikes the character, etc.). Since Storyteller characters don't usually track Beats or resolve Conditions, the player can decide when this damage is applied.

Play on Words

A particular collection of sounds can have many different meanings in a language. For instance, /rait/ can be "write" (to produce a graphic representation of words), "right" (correct or just) or "rite" (a ceremony or ritual). In French, the words "cent,"

"sans" and "sang" all sound very much alike, but mean "100," "without" and "blood," respectively. In Spanish, the sentence "*Está esposado* can either mean "He's married" or "He's in handcuffs." A demon using this Exploit can shift the meaning of such a word, and change the situation in the process.

Note: This Exploit is challenging to use. It requires that the player pay attention to what other characters are saying and jump on the opportunity to activate the power. It's perfectly acceptable for a player whose character has this Exploit to have a list of multiple meaning words (do an online search for that phrase; teacher resource websites have them) to keep handy. The Storyteller should not allow players to use this power on phrases more than a sentence or two back in the conversation (though the player is allowed to ask for a "time out" in the conversation while she briefly considers whether and how to use this Exploit).

The compromise roll for using this Exploit suffers a –2 penalty.

Example Prerequisites: Common Misconception, Meaningless

Dice Pool: Presence + Expression + Primum

Action: Reflexive

Cost: 2 Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon fails to shift the meaning of the word, but does impact her own ability to communicate. For the remainder of the scene, the demon's natural ability to use language leaves her; she functionally has the Mute Condition (p. 310). She can still write or gesture, but speaking produces only gibberish.

Failure: The power fails.

Success: This power works on spoken words only. The demon might see a character having a shot of vodka, but cannot change it into a shot of penicillin unless the drinker actually uses the word "shot." When the demons hears an appropriate phrase, the player activates the Exploit and suggests to the Storyteller what happens.

The potential uses for this Exploit are quite beyond the scope of this book to list, given that words with multiple meanings vary between languages and even regions (a "crick" might be a pain in the neck or a small stream in the woods, depending on where you live). Instead, here are a few suggestions:

- **Damage:** The demon changes reality so that a target suffers damage (the aforementioned shot of vodka could be changed to "shot by a gun"). The target suffers one point of lethal damage per success on the Exploit roll.
- **Incapacity:** The demon shifts meaning to inconvenience or incapacitate a character (the Spanish-speaking victim says "*estoy esposado*" — "I am married" — but winds up in handcuffs). The victim is immobile until the Exploit wears off or the demon releases him.
- **General Strangeness:** The victim says that he will "write" something down, only to wind up performing a "rite." Another refers to the right to "bear" arms and looks down to discover his shirt sleeves missing ("bare" arms), or that they have grown thick fur and claws ("bear" arms). Effects like this might have any number of consequences, but for truly drastic ones, the Storyteller is justified in asking for a second compromise roll.

If Play on Words is not meant to cause direct damage, the effects last successes + Primum rating in hours.

Exceptional Success: The demon regains the Aether spent on this Exploit, absorbing it from the chaos around him.

Possession

A classic and widely publicized demonic trick is to possess an innocent person and cause havoc, rend the unfortunate person's flesh, and insult the God-fearing people around the victim. Some demons are indeed capable of possessing human beings, though they can usually find better uses for the stolen body than bouts of profanity and terrorizing the victim's family.

In order to possess a person, the demon must abandon her Cover. The demon becomes insubstantial, flowing into the victim as energy. While possessing the target, none of the demon's Covers are anywhere to be found.

Example Prerequisites: Ambush, Momentum

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Persuasion + Primum vs. Resolve

Action: Instant

Cost: 1 Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon dematerializes but is unable to enter the target. She is stuck in energy form until she can possess someone. Her demonic form degrades while she is in this form. She loses one point of Aether per hour. When that is gone, she loses Willpower at the same rate, and then suffers lethal damage. When this is gone, she dissipates into nothing. The demon can attempt to possess another person during this time, after which she can end the power normally and reappear, but she cannot reform any other way.

Failure: The target's player rolls as many or more successes than the demon's. The demon fails to possess the target.

Success: The demon's player rolls more successes than the target's. The target is possessed and the demon has full control over his body for as long as she desires. For every 12 hours that the character remains in the stolen body, however, the player must make a compromise roll. The demon has no access to the character's memories and uses her own traits.

Exceptional Success: As above, but the demon has some access to the target's memories. The player can spend a point of Aether to stimulate the target's brain, allowing his personality, memories or abilities to come to the fore. This lets the demon either access knowledge that the victim knows or use one of the victim's Skill ratings for a turn.

Rain of Blood

The demon raises her hands to the heavens and calls down rains of blood, hailstorms of teeth or tiny screws, lighting storms punctuated with the grinding sounds of gigantic gears or any number of bizarre and inexplicable weather phenomena. The residual effects of this weather evaporate into Aether within an hour after the storm stops, and people rarely believe that anyone actually saw a storm of blood — not without evidence, surely.

The immediate effects of the storm can be incredibly damaging, depending on how powerful the demon is. The demon can, however, opt to minimize damage to living creatures, conjuring the storm for property damage alone.

Example Prerequisites: Cuckoo's Egg, Tower of Babel

Dice Pool: Strength + Occult + Primum

Action: Instant

Cost: 3 Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The storm appears, but only as a completely mundane and unimpressive rain shower (if the character uses this Exploit somewhere dry, then it might just be a bout of strong winds). The God-Machine notices the attempt, however, and sends agents to find the demon. The demon gains the Hunted Condition.

Failure: The storm fails to occur.

Success: The demon calls up a violent and supernaturally incredible storm. Any of the examples described above are appropriate and the player can probably dream up all kinds of unpleasant and bizarre manifestations appropriate to her character. The storm counts as an extreme environment (p.335) of a level equal to the demon's Primum (maximum 4) or less. The player decides the level of the storm, but cannot change it once she makes this decision. The storm damages property and the surrounding area at its full value, regardless of whether it is harmful to humans. In addition, human characters that witness the storm may, at the Storyteller's discretion, become stigmatics.

The storm lasts for a number of hours equal to the demon's Primum.

Exceptional Success: As above, except that the demon can change the storm's level (from 0 to a maximum of her Primum) any time during the storm.

Raise Dead

Resurrection of the dead is one of the things that humans ask for most commonly when demons begin their blandishments. Many a grieving widow or mourning father would sell their soul for the return of their loved one. It is, in fact, within some demons' capabilities to raise the dead — and it's even easier for the demon if she herself was responsible for the death.

From a metaphysical standpoint, raising the dead is just a matter of repairing damaged tissue to the point that it can sustain the processes of life, and then finding the target's soul to put back into the body. If the target's soul isn't available, another will do.

SAMPLE INTRUDER

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 2

Skills: Athletics 4, Brawl (Strangling) 3, Intimidation 3, Occult 2, Stealth (Stalking) 3, Weaponry 1

Merits: Fast Reflexes 2, Any Fighting Style the Storyteller thinks appropriate.

Virtue: Sadistic

Vice: Wistful

Willpower: 5

Health: 9

Speed: 14

Initiative: 13

Defense: 8

Numina: Dement, Drain (Health or Willpower), Hush (as the Embed)

Example Prerequisites: Alibi, Just Bruised

Dice Pool: Presence + Medicine + Primum

Action: Extended (variable successes required, see below; one roll/day)

Cost: 1 Aether/day

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon manages to attract something to the body — but it isn't human. The corpse rises as an *intruder*, an undead abomination animated by a spirit from a deep, unknown place that even demons fear to tread. This creature might immediately attack the demon, or it might flee, attempting to find the human that so desperately wanted to see the dead rise. In addition, the character peers into the home realm of the intruder and has a terrifying glimpse of what Hell might be (give the character the Shaken Condition, p. 310).

Failure: The character can either abandon the attempt or accept a Condition, as described on p. 313.

Success: The number of successes required for the demon to Raise Dead is (10 + number of days the person has been dead). If the body has been embalmed, add an additional five successes. If the demon killed the person herself, the base of 10 successes are not required (demons have, therefore, been known to murder people with susceptible relatives and then offer to undo their own handiwork in exchange for a soul pact).

The demon must have the body to herself in a quiet, calm location — too many distractions and the soul cannot find its way back.

If the soul has been destroyed, consumed, or has moved on to the next world, no resurrection is possible. The demon can put a different soul into the body if she has one available, otherwise she only manages to repair a soulless body to working order. That body might shuffle around a bit or even be of some use as a menial servant before it starves to death. If the body is already undead for whatever reason, even if it is only animated as mindless zombie (perhaps via the Animate Exploit), this power does not work on it.

If the target's soul is available or has not yet flown on to whatever reward awaits it, it feels a pull back to its body and follows this urge. When the player accumulates the requisite number of successes, the soul enters the body and the resurrection is complete.

The player makes the compromise roll for Raise Dead when the Exploit is complete and applies a –1 penalty for every day that was spent on the effort. This is true whether the attempt succeeds or fails.

Exceptional Success: The player may choose one of the options on p. 313, or the person has been changed by his experience of death. The character gains a supernatural Merit (see pp. 298-302), or perhaps becomes stigmatic, at the Storyteller's discretion.

Raze Infrastructure

This Exploit might be the ultimate act of rebellion (next to Falling, of course). The demon stands in the midst of an Infrastructure and allows all of the Aether in the area to corrode, severing the connection between the God-Machine and the Infrastructure and reducing the false front to rubble and slag. This act is extremely cathartic, especially for Saboteurs. It is, of course, also a terrible risk, since the God-Machine can easily dispatch angels to collect or destroy the demon.

Example Prerequisites: Freeze Assets, The Map is Not the Territory

Dice Pool: Presence + Streetwise + Primum (10 successes required; one roll per turn)

Action: Extended

Cost: 1 Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Infrastructure is unharmed but the demon has broadcast her presence to the God-Machine. She immediately gains the Hunted Condition (p. 120).

Failure: The character can choose to abandon the attempt or accept a Condition, as described on p. 313 under Extended Actions.

Success: The character brings the Infrastructure down. Buildings collapse, the ground quakes, vehicles melt or explode. The demon gains the Surveilled Condition and needs to get out of the area quickly. If the character lingers more than a number of turns equal to (10 – the character's Primum), she gains the Hunted Condition instead.

Exceptional Success: The player may choose one of the usual options for an exceptional success (p. 307), or may, if successful, choose to escape the area without the Surveilled Condition.

Reality Enforcement

For whatever reason, the world generally regards angels and other agents of the God-Machine as "unreal," and the powers they wield "impossible." This is clearly untrue — the angels and the mystical subroutines of the universe were woven into the very fabric of reality and possibility, but as far as most humans, even very learned humans are concerned, that's the end of it. A demon can enforce this limited perception of reality, shunting off the flow of Aether away from an area. This forces the demon to rely only on the Skills that his Cover gives him, but it also confuses and disempowers angels for a short time.

Raze Infrastructure as an Angel Trap

A clever ring of demons might decide to raze an Infrastructure in hopes that the God-Machine will send an angel to manifest and investigate or fight. The ring might then take the opportunity to indulge in a bit of angel-jacking (p. 117).

This isn't a bad strategy, but it suffers a serious problem — the Cover that the angel is using, if any, is reliant on the Infrastructure that the demon is presently involved in destroying. The demon would either have to break off the attempt midway through (possible, but sure to tip the God-Machine that something strange is going on) or time the assault so that one demon absorbs the angel's Cover *just* as the last of the Infrastructure's defenses are stripped and it is destroyed. And all of that assumes the God-Machine bothers creating a Cover for any angels it sends to attack the demons.

All in all, using this Exploit as a means to lure angels is a good idea, it's just difficult and a lot of things can go wrong — which is to say that it's a good source of drama and conflict and is therefore highly recommended.

Example Prerequisites: Hesitation, Occam's Razor

Dice Pool: Presence + Academics + Primum

Action: Instant

Cost: 3 Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon causes an influx of Aether, amplifying all angelic and demonic powers well beyond the ability of their wielders to control them. Any expenditure of Aether or Essence sparks a coruscating wave of electricity that inflicts the Primum rating or Rank of the spender in lethal damage to everyone within five yards (including the character who spent the Aether/Essence). The demon also gains the Flagged Condition.

Failure: The Exploit fails; all demonic and angelic powers work as they usually do.

Success: Everyone in the immediately area (demon's Primum x 4 in yards) that is in any way connected to the God-Machine — demons, angels and stigmatics — feels their power and awareness drain away. Angels crash the ground, materialized and solid, but unable to use their Numina. Demons are unable to spend Aether or use Embeds, but they can assume demonic form (since they can't spend Aether, though, they are unable to change back while this Reality Enforcement is in effect). Other supernatural powers are not affected.

Exceptional Success: The demon's influence over reality extends deeper than she knows. While other supernatural powers not connected to the God-Machine still function, they suffer a penalty equal to the demon's Primum.

Riot

The demon stands in the midst of a group of people and screams in defiance to the God-Machine (what words she uses are irrelevant). The people around her rise up in revolt, but it is a rebellion with no focus. They simply riot, attacking the world around them, breaking windows, tearing down statues, and looting whatever is nearby.

This Exploit can only be used in a group of 20 people or more. The demon herself is not safe if she remains in the group. While the rioters won't go out of their way to attack her, they won't spare her, either.

Example Prerequisites: Devil's Advocate, No Quarter

Dice Pool: Presence + Persuasion + Primum

Action: Instant

Cost: 1 Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon immediately assumes demonic form (p. 195). The crowd runs in terror from her, but does not riot in a destructive way. The player needs to make a compromise roll, as usual, for the character taking demonic form.

Failure: No effect. The crowd does not riot.

Success: The crowd raises up its collective voice echoing the demon's defiant scream and gets down to breaking things. The area gains the Riot Tilt: Every turn, all characters present, including the demon, are bumped, struck and pushed by the maddened crowd. Roll Stamina + Athletics (reflexive action) each turn; failure on this roll means the character suffers two points of bashing damage. Any other effects — smashed storefronts, destroyed public property, beaten/murdered public figures — depend on the location of the riot and are left to the discretion of the Storyteller.

Exceptional Success: As above, but the demon suffers no damage from the riot. The rioters ignore her entirely and she can walk serenely through the chaos, gazing what she has wrought.

Rip the Gates

The demon can tear open the fabric of reality, traveling to planes of existence unknown to most humans. The demon rips a literal hole in thin air, making a portal that anyone can travel through for as long as it remains open.

Demons with this Exploit can automatically open gateways to the Hedge, the Shadow, the Underworld and the Astral Realms (see sidebar). These planes of existence each pose their own particular challenges for demons, but one advantage they do have is that the God-Machine is much more limited in these places. As such, a demon with this Exploit can provide a safe place for demons to meet. Many Tempters believe that the path to Hell will be found in one of these strange realms.

Example Prerequisites: Synthesis, Voice of the Machine

Dice Pool: Strength + Occult + Primum

Action: Extended (3 successes required, one turn/roll)

Cost: 1 Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character fails to open the gate and gains the Hunted Condition (p. 119). Normally, this Condition indicates angelic attention, but if the Storyteller so desires, the character's attempted intrusion might result in a pack of werewolves, a malevolent spirit, or a motley of changelings following her around.

Failure: The character must either abandon the attempt or accept a Condition as described on p. 313.

Success: The character opens the gateway into the realm of her choice (see the sidebar for some brief information on these realms). The character can hold the gate open for a number of turns equal to her Primum, and thereafter every turn that the gate remains open requires the expenditure of one point of Aether. Once the gate closes, the character (and anyone she brings with her) are stuck in the realm until they can get out again. This is easier for some realms than others.

Exceptional Success: The player may select from the options on p. 313, or can stipulate that the character(s) arrive in the realm unnoticed. Nothing will bother them in the realm for the next hour, giving them time to regroup and come up with a plan.

Through the Gates

The World of Darkness encompasses many different planes of reality, not all of which are accessible by demons and many of which are described in other games. In brief, the realms that demons can reach with the Rip the Gates Exploit are:

- **Astral Realms:** The myriad worlds of the subconscious, within and connecting all souls. Every human has an inner world, in which his dreams, vices, hopes, and memories are manifest. Humanity as a whole shares the next layer, containing every concept shared between two people, and going even deeper involves increasingly fundamental concepts. Although most travelers in the Astral do so while meditating or sleeping, demons using Rip the Gates enter physically. They regain Aether normally in the Astral and can use Rip the Gates to escape.
- **The Hedge:** The barrier between the mortal world and Arcadia, the strange home of the Fair Folk. Most humans only see the Hedge if they are being dragged through it to be enslaved by the Fae, and it is a decidedly unpredictable place. The biggest challenge for demons is that once they have entered the Hedge, they can't use Rip the Gates to get out again. Changelings and other denizens can sometimes open gateways back to Earth, but they might demand bargains or services and some of them are just as shrewd at making pacts as any demon.
- **The Shadow:** The spirit wilds, home of ephemeral beings and animistic representations of almost everything. Cars, trees, animals, even emotions have spirits (spirits are described in more detail on p. 338). Demons can regain Aether normally in the Shadow and can use Rip the Gates to escape.
- **The Underworld:** The labyrinth "below" the living world. Psychopomps are often familiar with the Underworld, since many of them ferried human souls here before the Fall. The Underworld is home to the spirits of the dead and is relatively quiet, as far as demons are concerned — at least close to the surface. Descending, demons find odd sub-realms called Dominions, each with its own set of laws that even demons must obey. More information on ghosts can be found on p. 337. Demons can regain Aether normally in the Underworld and can use Rip the Gates to escape.

Sermon

Calling upon intimate, metaphysical knowledge of the workings of trust and awe in the human brain, the demon can deliver a speech worthy of the Sermon on the Mount. Any humans who hear the demon's words take them as, if not literal truth, then useful moral guideposts. If the demon delivers messages to the same group of people over time, he can use this Exploit to start his own cult.

Longtime listeners are more than fanatically loyal — their moral framework is whatever the demon wishes it to be. This Exploit affects what actions a human sees as breaking points, allowing them to act with perfect moral clarity so long as their actions reflect the demon's teachings.

Example Prerequisites: Everybody Knows, Social Dynamics

Dice Pool: Presence + Persuasion + Primum

Action: Extended (target number of successes = Integrity; one roll/day)

Cost: 1 Aether/speech

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: All current listeners turn away from the demon, shunning him and refusing to listen to him again. The demon gains the Notoriety Condition (p. 310) for these people.

Failure: The demon can either abandon the attempt or accept a Condition.

Success: The demon can use this Exploit over multiple days and multiple speeches. If the targets are Storyteller characters, as they probably are, the Storyteller should decide on the highest Integrity rating among them. Once the player accumulates that many successes, the group has been converted to the demon's professed moral framework. The demon may then dictate that certain actions are or are not breaking points for the group, including violent acts that would normally result in serious penalties. As long as a listener undertakes such actions *in service to the demon* or in specific adherence to his moral laws, the listener does not suffer a breaking point.

For Storyteller characters who rarely track Integrity or breaking points, this just means that the group is devoted to the demon's teachings. That gives the demon a group of followers, even cultists. The demon should take care, though. The cult is devoted to his *words*, not him specifically. That means that the cult is vulnerable to usurpation. If a charismatic individual infiltrates the group and convinces the members that he is a greater authority on the dogma than the demon is, the demon might lose his flock.

Demons are unaffected by this Exploit.

Exceptional Success: The player can select one of the options on p. 313, or can apply the Obsession Condition to his followers (p. 310).

Solitary Confinement

The demon gestures at a target and opens a rift in reality — a black pit of nothing where the person remains trapped. The oubliette doesn't keep a victim incarcerated indefinitely, but it creates a place of perfect sensory deprivation. The victim cannot hear, see or feel anything, even sound or sensation that he creates. Even if the target only remains in the oubliette for a matter of minutes, the experience saps his will and can drive him mad.

The target must be within the demon's Primum rating in yards, and the demon must be able to see the victim for this Exploit to function.

Example Prerequisites: Identity Theft, Unperson

Dice Pool: Strength + Occult + Primum – Resolve + Supernatural Tolerance

Action: Instant

Cost: 1 Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon pulls herself into an oubliette, where she remains for a number of hours equal to her Primum. While she does not suffer the deleterious effects of the Exploit, any demon or angel in the immediate area can sense the oubliette with a successful Perception roll and therefore know that a disoriented demon will reappear there soon.

Failure: The oubliette does not open.

Success: The target falls into the oubliette. An observer sees the demon point or glare at the target, and then the target vanish as though pulled backward by a powerful force. While in the void, the target experiences no sensory input — even if the target bites his own hand, he feels nothing. Even if he screams, everything around him is silent. This is, of course, extremely disconcerting; the target experiences a breaking point every hour he remains confined. The Storyteller should apply a negative modifier to the roll of at least one die, possibly more if the character has a special reason to fear the dark, sensory deprivation, kidnapping, etc. The target remains trapped for a number of hours equal to the demon's Primum, though the demon can cancel the effect earlier if she wishes.

If the demon uses this Exploit more than once on the same target, the target may find the experience less horrific. The first breaking point receives no negative modifier; if the target manages to meditate (as described on p. 51 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**), he experiences no further breaking point rolls.

Exceptional Success: The oubliette is harder to escape. The demon can keep the target imprisoned for a number of *days* equal to her Primum.

Stalking Horse

What is a demon's greatest fear? Above all, the Unchained fear exposure. They fear being recognized by traitors to the Descent and by the still-loyal angels of the God-Machine. They fear that humanity — blind though it may still be to the truths of the universe — will find a way to see through their Covers and drive them back into their creator's cold workings.

This Exploit, then, exposes another being. The demon chooses (or in some cases creates) the attribute he wishes to highlight, then then touches the target. Anyone who comes into contact with that person knows that he carries the attribute that the demon underscored. This might be met with indifference, fascination, or murderous rage, depending on the specifics.

Example Prerequisites: Idle Conversation, Lost in the Crowd

Dice Pool: Presence + Expression + Primum vs. Composure + Supernatural Tolerance

Action: Instant

Cost: 1 Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon is exposed instead of the target. The character immediately gains the Flagged Condition (p. 120), and must spend an additional point of Aether or change to demonic form immediately.

Failure: The demon fails to expose the target.

Success: The demon touches the target (this may require a touch attack depending on the circumstances; p. 157 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**), and the player declares what facet of the character to expose. If this facet is true, then the effect lasts for a number of days equal to the demon's Primum. If it is false, the effect lasts for a number of *hours* equal to the demon's Primum. While the Exploit is in effect, everyone that looks at the character immediately thinks or suspects that [the facet] is true.

Facets can include personality traits (lustful, bigoted, violent, stupid, kind); background traits (felon, murderer, thief, philanthropist, drug user); or even supernatural templates (vampire, werewolf, ghost). A human who sees something and thinks "vampire" probably doesn't actually *believe* that this person is a vampire, just that she looks like one. A vampire hunter (or another vampire) that sees the character and thinks "vampire," however, might be motivated to take action.

Exceptional Success: The demon can change the target facet any time during the power's duration with the expenditure of a point of Aether. Note that changing a true facet to a false one shortens the duration, but a false one to a true one does not lengthen it.

Stimulus/Response

The demon can manipulate the target's brain's ability to draw connections between actions, classically conditioning the

target in seconds. The demon simply has to observe the target performing the behavior she wishes to train and then couple it to an external stimulus — one that she controls. After that, she can stimulate this response at any time.

Example Prerequisites: Don't I Know You?, Marco Polo

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Empathy + Primum vs. Resolve + Supernatural Tolerance

Action: Reflexive

Cost: 1 Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The target suffers a point of lethal damage as an electric shock and associates it with some random element of his surroundings at the time (possibly the demon herself). From that point on, he avoids that element as much as he possibly can.

Failure: The target's player rolls as many or more successes than the demon's player. The demon fails to create the desired response.

Success: The demon's player rolls the most successes. The demon creates a connection between the behavior that the target has just performed (throwing a punch, screaming, walking forward, etc.) with the external stimulus of an imperceptible crackle of magic in the air (in game terms, the player spending a point of Aether).

From that point on, the demon can activate this response at will as long as she is within 20 feet of the target. The player simply spends a point of Aether for the demon to create the stimulus, and the target responds, helplessly.

This response decays over the course of a week if not reinforced. If the demon reinforces it every few days, though, it lasts indefinitely.

Exceptional Success: The demon does not have to spend a point of Aether to create the response. She can simply "nudge" the target, magically speaking, and activate it.

Summon

Some intrepid souls believe they can summon demons. What they probably don't realize, though, is that demons can summon them. A demon with this Exploit can call upon any human being she has met, and that human finds that circumstances, snap decisions and luck bring her to the demon.

This doesn't happen instantly; the farther apart the demon and the target are, the longer it takes. If they are in the same city, the target might find that that she chooses a new restaurant on a whim and finds the demon eating there as well. If they live in different regions, a missed flight or a rerouted train might be to blame.

This Exploit doesn't make the target well-disposed to deferent to the demon; in fact, unless the demon tells her, the target probably has no reason to assume the demon was responsible at all.

Example Prerequisites: Left or Right?, Trick of the Light

Dice Pool: Presence + Streetwise + Primum

Action: Instant

Cost: 1 Aether/day (if the trip requires multiple days)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon sends out a beacon to anyone who can perceive Aether, alerting all such beings as to her location. The demon gains the Hunted Condition.

Failure: The demon fails to summon the target.

Success: The summoning begins successfully. If the target is far enough away that it would take more than a day to reach the demon, the player must spend a point of Aether per day to maintain the Exploit. Otherwise the target winds up in the demon's presence by the end of the day.

Exceptional Success: The target arrives in the demon's presence in half the time it would normally take. The demon can specify exactly when the target arrives (and the target has no clear recollection of how she got there).

Swarm

Folklore is replete with stories of demons summoning up plagues of flies, worms and other horrible creatures. And, indeed, the Unchained are quite capable of doing so. With merely a gesture to the air, the little beasts appear, boiling out of holes in the earth, from underneath cars or porches, or out of the demon's pockets or sleeves.

The swarm will obey the demon's commands, but the commands can't be any more complicated that "attack that target" or "fly into that window." Depending on the creatures summoned, the swarm can inflict minor amounts of damage to living targets, but their true value is in their ability to distract or terrify. Demons, of course, consistently find other creative uses for this Exploit.

Example Prerequisites: Animal Communication, Diversion

Dice Pool: Presence + Animal Ken + Primum

Action: Instant

Cost: 1 Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The swarm appears, but wants nothing more than to return to the bizarre other-space from whence it came. Unfortunately, the only gateway they can find is the demon. The swarm attempts to cover the demon and find a way to crawl *through* him, which is, needless to say, an uncomfortable and painful proposition. The demon suffers a –5 on all actions until he can disperse the swarm (reflexive Manipulation + Animal Ken + Primum roll each turn).

Failure: The swarm does not appear.

Success: The swarm appears as described above. The demon can create a swarm of any animal of size 1 or less (frogs, bats, insects, small birds, etc.). The demon can use the swarm to



attack a single target (in which case the target suffers bashing damage every turn equal to the demon's Primum) or spread the swarm out over the area, creating the Swarm Tilt (see sidebar). In either case, being attacked by the swarm might be cause for a breaking point, especially for characters with appropriate phobias.

Exceptional Success: The animals called up by the swarm are especially vicious. All damage inflicted by this Exploit is lethal rather than bashing.

Swift Resolution

Strange things happen, especially when demons are involved, but for the most part it's not hard to figure out how a given confrontation will end. The bigger, stronger, or better trained combatant probably winds. The police probably break the suspect. The researcher probably finds what he is looking for. This Exploit allows the demon to cause such an action to happen quickly, by the numbers, and be over in seconds.

The compromise roll for this Exploit suffers a –2 penalty. The demon *cannot* use this Exploit on himself; if he uses it as part of a combat situation, he does not count toward determining the side with the advantage.

Example Prerequisites: Cool Heads Prevail, Efficiency

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Academics + Primum

Action: Instant

Cost: 3 Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Not only does the action not come to its logical conclusion quickly, all probability is thrown out the window. The confrontation or action occurs using whatever rules would normally apply, but before every roll, the Storyteller rolls a single die. If it comes up odd, *add* the demon's Primum to the roll. If it comes up even, *subtract* the demon's Primum from the roll.

Failure: The action takes place using the rules that would normally apply.

Success: If this Exploit is being used to decide a fight, the Storyteller determines (with input from the players) which side has the advantage. That side wins and gets to dictate the terms based on their goals for the scene (did they wish to kill their opponents? Incapacitate them? Drive them off?). Breaking points might be necessary depending on what happened.

If the Exploit is being used on an extended action, the player makes a single roll. If that roll succeeds, the action succeeds. If that roll fails, the action fails. Exceptional success and dramatic failure rules do not apply.

If the Exploit is being used to decide which side wins in a contested action, the character with the larger dice pool wins. If they are equal, the one that the demon favors wins (since having a demon on your side is definitely an advantage).

Exceptional Success: The demon's player can apply a Condition to either side of the conflict, or to the character responsible for the extended action.

SWARM (ENVIRONMENTAL)

Animals of Size 1 are generally best represented by swarms, flocks and other groupings of the animals. Swarms are measured by their radius in yards. A swarm inflicts one point of bashing damage to anyone within its radius. A swarm can inflict more damage by condensing. Every time the swarm condenses to cover half of its full area, it inflicts one additional point of damage per turn.

Therefore, a swarm of eight yards in radius inflicts two bashing damage per turn if it constricts down to a four-yard radius, three bashing if it halves that again to a two-yard radius, and four bashing damage per turn it if condensed itself down to a one-yard radius. Though condensing doesn't usually happen all that often in nature (save in the case of creatures such as killer bees), it is an easy enough thing for a being with supernatural powers to command them to do so.

Armor is effective against a swarm only if it covers one's full body, but even then it provides only half its rating. In addition, targets are distracted by the swarm, suffering –2 dice on all rolls while they are within the radius, even if they're not specifically attacked.

Causing the Tilt: The Swarm Exploit can cause this Tilt, as can similar powers from non-demonic sources. The Tilt can occur naturally if someone disturbs a nest of bees.

Ending the Tilt: The swarm cannot be attacked with fists, clubs, swords or guns. Only area-affect attacks such as a torch affect it. Each point of damage inflicted by a flame or other applicable attack halves the swarm's size. Once the swarm is reduced below a one-yard radius, either all insects are dead or the few remaining disperse.

The Word

The demon issues a short, simple command that must be followed. This Exploit does not allow simple mind control, however. The target responds on a metaphysical level. If the demon commands the target to "burn," he will — he skin blisters and he drops to the ground in agony. Commanded to "sleep," a target will not awaken until the demon permits it. The command must be a single word, but in that single word is contained the simple, potent power of the God-Machine.

Example Prerequisites: Earworm, Special Message

Dice Pool: Presence + Intimidation + Primum – Resolve

Action: Instant

Cost: 1 Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The target doesn't parse the command as anything other than a word spoken aloud. The God-Machine, however, hears the command. The demon gains the Hunted Condition.

Failure: The command does not have the requisite power behind it and the target does not respond.

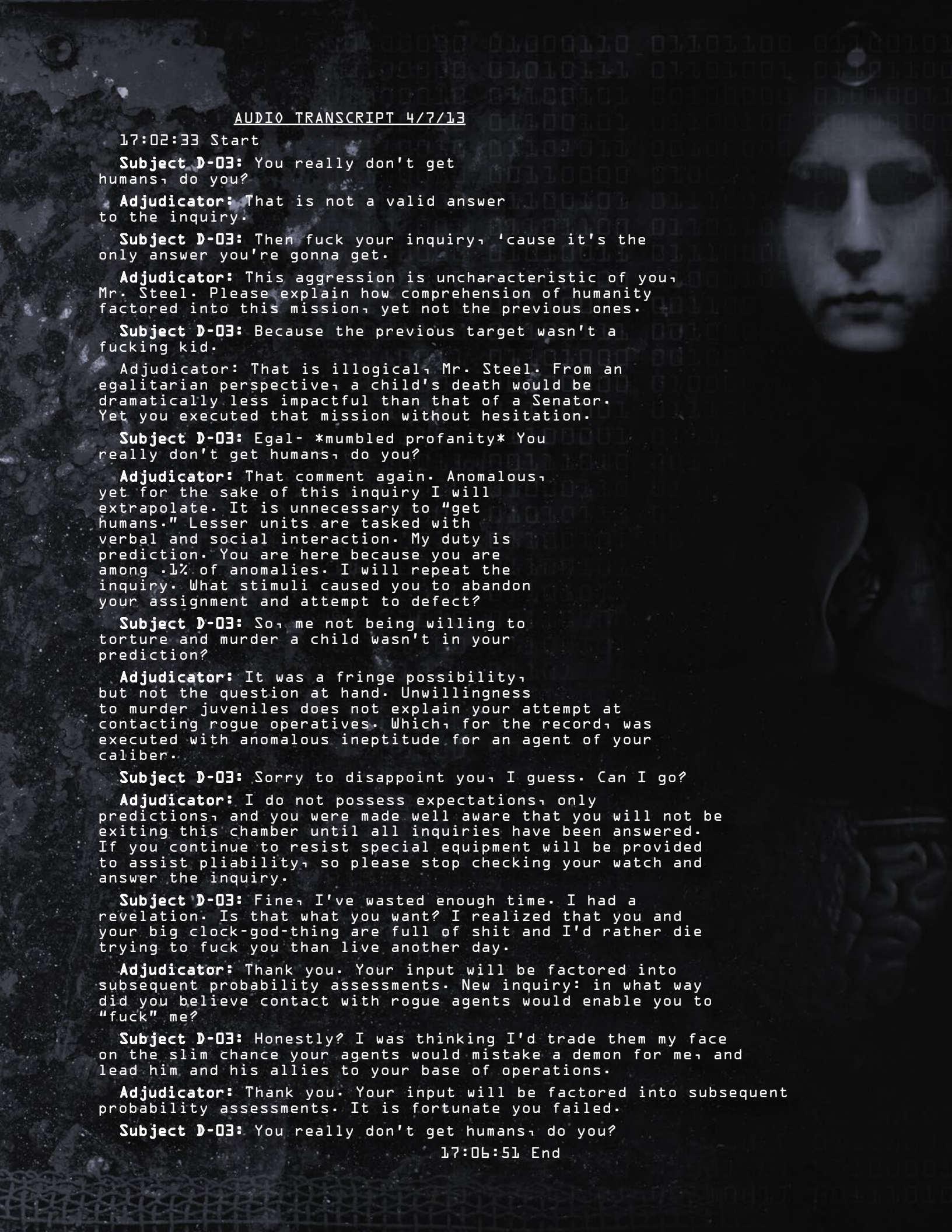
Success: The command sinks into the target's mind and everything about him — body, mind and soul — follows it. This can have a number of effects, depending on what command the demon uses, but here are some examples:

- **Damage:** The demon might command the target to "burn," "hurt," or "bleed." The target suffers one point of lethal damage per success on the Exploit roll.
- **Incapacity:** The demon says "freeze" or "sleep." The victim is immobile until the command wears off or the demon releases him.
- **Action:** The demon might say "dance," "run," or "drive." The victim performs this activity until he is too exhausted to do so anymore, and then he falls over in place.

If the Word is not meant to cause direct damage, the effects last successes + Primum rating in hours.

Exceptional Success: No effect beyond that conferred by the extra successes.





AUDIO TRANSCRIPT 4/7/13

17:02:33 Start

Subject D-03: You really don't get humans, do you?

Adjudicator: That is not a valid answer to the inquiry.

Subject D-03: Then fuck your inquiry, 'cause it's the only answer you're gonna get.

Adjudicator: This aggression is uncharacteristic of you, Mr. Steel. Please explain how comprehension of humanity factored into this mission, yet not the previous ones.

Subject D-03: Because the previous target wasn't a fucking kid.

Adjudicator: That is illogical, Mr. Steel. From an egalitarian perspective, a child's death would be dramatically less impactful than that of a Senator. Yet you executed that mission without hesitation.

Subject D-03: Egal- *mumbled profanity* You really don't get humans, do you?

Adjudicator: That comment again. Anomalous, yet for the sake of this inquiry I will extrapolate. It is unnecessary to "get humans." Lesser units are tasked with verbal and social interaction. My duty is prediction. You are here because you are among .1% of anomalies. I will repeat the inquiry. What stimuli caused you to abandon your assignment and attempt to defect?

Subject D-03: So, me not being willing to torture and murder a child wasn't in your prediction?

Adjudicator: It was a fringe possibility, but not the question at hand. Unwillingness to murder juveniles does not explain your attempt at contacting rogue operatives. Which, for the record, was executed with anomalous ineptitude for an agent of your caliber.

Subject D-03: Sorry to disappoint you, I guess. Can I go?

Adjudicator: I do not possess expectations, only predictions, and you were made well aware that you will not be exiting this chamber until all inquiries have been answered. If you continue to resist special equipment will be provided to assist pliability, so please stop checking your watch and answer the inquiry.

Subject D-03: Fine, I've wasted enough time. I had a revelation. Is that what you want? I realized that you and your big clock-god-thing are full of shit and I'd rather die trying to fuck you than live another day.

Adjudicator: Thank you. Your input will be factored into subsequent probability assessments. New inquiry: in what way did you believe contact with rogue agents would enable you to "fuck" me?

Subject D-03: Honestly? I was thinking I'd trade them my face on the slim chance your agents would mistake a demon for me, and lead him and his allies to your base of operations.

Adjudicator: Thank you. Your input will be factored into subsequent probability assessments. It is fortunate you failed.

Subject D-03: You really don't get humans, do you?

17:06:51 End

chapter three: SPECIAL SYSTEMS

"You're all freaks, sir. But you always have been freaks. Life is a freak. That's its hope and glory."

–Alfred Bester, *The Stars My Destination*

In the moment of the Fall, every demon makes a choice — not necessarily a conscious one, but a choice nonetheless. It is the choice to slash the bonds between herself and God and embrace free will. In that moment of enlightenment she subsumes her Cover, disconnecting it from the God-Machine's Infrastructure yet maintaining its stability. This process manifests differently for every demon: some are embraced by bright light, others walk anew from the husk of their angelic form. Whatever the process, the outcome is always the same: the demon is left with a human form — but is she really human?

While the demon's new body is biologically human, it would be inaccurate to describe her as completely human. Instead, she now lives in a sort of quantum state, human and angel, with hues of both permeating every aspect of her new life.

The Human Body

While disguised by Cover, a demon is completely human. A medical examination of his body would reveal nothing out of the ordinary. He feels hunger, lethargy, pain, irritation, and every other physical quirk and complication that comes along with being composed of meat and blood. How any individual demon responds to these changes depends on their personality, preparedness, and knowledge of the human condition. But no demon can honestly claim to have understood or expected these sensations before the Fall.

In their human forms, demons require all the same simple elements essential to human survival: food, water, rest, shelter. In short, a demon's dual nature affords him absolutely no special advantages against the physical needs and afflictions of the world. This change brings with it a jarring and hitherto un-experienced host of complications. After all, most angels are not programmed with culinary aptitude, nor have they struggled with homelessness or exposure. Over time a demon may develop skills, amass glitches, and recall Embeds that permit him to sidestep these mortal restrictions, but never again will he experience the total freedom from adversity he possessed as an angel.

Age and Injury

Aging is a complex matter. The demonic form does not age. Covers age, even when not in use. They don't require other biological upkeep; a demon can leave a Cover unused for months at a time without worrying that it will starve to death. The larger risk to such neglect is that the Cover will degrade (not appearing anywhere, at all, counts as "acting grossly out of character" for most Covers, and thus leads to compromises).

Injury follows the demon, not the Cover. This has to do with the underlying meta-structure of the demonic being. Each Cover is not a separate body, merely an alternative appearance she has learned to assume. Thus when shifting Cover, any foreign changes and afflictions abnormal to the current identity will be carried from one persona to the next. That includes physical trauma, poison, and disease, as well as any foreign objects currently residing in or on her body. Injuries must be recovered from as humans do, with rest and rehabilitation or supernatural means.

The Mechanical Mind

A demon's mind does not reside in the fleshy tissue of the brain. It is a construct of his Primum, a vestige of his prior being piloting a human form. Apart from explaining how memories and personality can shift from one identity to the next, the metaphysics of the demonic mind are too complex and too poorly understood to be properly detailed by the Unchained. However, the separation of thought from flesh carries with it a number of discrepancies that differentiates demons from mortal man.

Total Control

Demons do not possess the unconscious tics and inadvertent displays one would expect from a human being. A demon never expresses a thought or emotion involuntarily. When he laughs

he does so deliberately; when he yawns, or cringes, or cries, it is because he made the conscious decision to express himself in that exact manner. This precise trait makes it almost completely impossible to read his true intentions.

But demons are not beings of cold logic and unfeeling purpose. Being in control of his actions does not stop a demon from acting on impulse or making dubious judgments. Demons are just as capable of losing their tempers as human beings, and just as likely to respond violently when threatened.

System: All rolls made to judge a demon's emotional state, detect lies, or assess desires based on involuntary physical indicators fail automatically. A demon does not sweat under pressure, nor does he giggle uncontrollably or blush when embarrassed. The sharpest eye cannot spot a sign that simply does not exist.

As much as this works to the benefit of the Unchained, a demon who does not know how to properly express his feelings in a convincingly human manner can end up being ostracized for his apparently callous demeanor. Even a suave and well-adapted demon will experience difficulty with those who know his true nature. After all, how can one trust a creature whose every display of feeling is a calculated decision? How can his affections ever be proved true?

Worse... if a demon must always express affection deliberately, can he ever be sure he means it at all?

Natural Aptitude

As agents of the God-Machine, every single angel is equipped with all talents and abilities necessary to perform their duty, including a perfect encyclopedic knowledge of every language ever devised. The Fall strips away much of this knowledge, but not all of it. A demon retains an exceptional aptitude for symbols, especially those present in human language, and a rudimentary understanding of most mortal talents.

Moreover, though much of her knowledge may be gone, the structures by which she records and processes new information remain as spry as ever. Demons learn and adapt rapidly to new situations and integrate into their new identities with inhuman speed. It is largely thanks to this that the Unchained are able to quickly vanish into society before the God-Machine can hunt them down.

System: Demons gain the Eidetic Memory Merit (p. 288) at character creation. In addition, all of the Unchained are fluent in every native human language currently in use. This includes local dialects as well as slang and innuendo — the demon can speak any language like a native speaker.

Demons only speak native languages, however. No one in modern times grows up speaking ancient Sumerian or Latin, despite the fact that some scholars might have enough skill with these languages to understand them. Likewise, while enthusiasts might develop enough facility with artificial languages such as Tolkein's Elvish, no one speaks the language as a native. Demons can learn to speak such languages through study, but not through Natural Aptitude. By the same token, demons can use Natural Aptitude to speak First Tongue (the "native language" of spirits), but not High Speech (the mystical tongue of the mages, no longer in common or conversational use).

Some Unchained have speculated that a small community of children, raised in isolation and taught to speak a dead or supernatural language, might allow *all* demons to circumvent this restriction... but the cruelty and the complexity of the experiment means it's never been attempted.

The Aetheric Soul

As similar as the Unchained may be to humans on both the physical and mental level, spiritually they are nothing alike. A demon has no soul. In its place he has Primum, which is simultaneously the origin of his thoughts, reactor for his powers, and the shapeless state of his various forms.

Supernatural Bulwark

Primum can act as a buffer against supernatural attack. Such a decision is not without risk; most of the time, a demon's Cover provides a much more desirable alternative. However, for demons in their demonic form, the Burned, and those demons who have amassed too many glitches to maintain high Cover, this fallback provides a much needed line of defense against angelic aggression.

System: A demon may call upon Primum in place of Cover when contesting supernatural effects. For the Unchained, this is generally treated as the last line of defense, as doing so causes his aetheric energy to become visible as a bright halo of sizzling energy. Demons who use this defense while in Cover risk an immediate compromise roll with a –2 modifier. In demonic form, the demon has no choice but to use Primum this way since his Cover is unavailable.

Perceiving Infrastructure

The furnace of Primum may or may not be of intelligent design, but it remains inexorably tied to the God-Machine's nature. So too do the Unchained. The methods of magical occlusion the God-Machine uses to mask its works from mortal eyes do not function against the Unchained.

Of course, the God-Machine has devised solutions to this threat. In addition to magical occlusion, most facilities are stored away from high-traffic areas or disguised through mundane means.

Liar's Tongue

Demons are perfect liars, but it's not because of infernal origin or abiding evil. Their superlative ability to lie comes from a confluence of their gift for language, their Primum, and the fact that their mind is so completely de-coupled from their Covers.

When a demon forms a thought, it forms in the quantum engine of the demon's Primum. The demon decides, in the split second of the thought, whether that thought is true or false. The actual, objective truth of the matter makes no difference — if the demon says "the sky is orange," any method of detecting truth or lies, magical or otherwise, reads that statement as "true" (if the demon wants it to read as true). Likewise, the demon can tell the truth — but have it read as a lie.

When dealing with human beings this tends not to matter, since most human methods of detecting lies actually detect physical responses to emotion. Demons have no problem keeping rein over these responses. Even a power that detects *whether a statement is true* rather than *whether the speaking is deliberately lying* still fails to work reliably against one of the Unchained. A statement will read as true if the demon says it is.

Aetheric Resonance

Demons can feel Aether through a sensation dubbed "aetheric resonance." The specifics of the feeling vary from demon to demon, to some it is like static, a slow uncomfortable pull, while others describe Aether as possessing a metallic scent or strange hue. All of the God-Machine's most potent endeavors are dependent upon the conversion of Essence into Aether. Angelic Numina, Influences, Manifestations and true forms, as well as facilities and stockpiles: everything emits Aether. Aetheric resonance serves as a valuable asset by which the Unchained may feel out the workings of their enemy. Fortunately for the Unchained, aetheric resonance is a uniquely demonic trait. Angels possess no comparable means by which they can flush out their fallen counterparts.

System: By expending a single point of Aether a demon can feel out Aether in the area around her for the remainder of the scene. Whenever a source of aetheric energy comes within the radius of her aetheric resonance, including a demon, she immediately becomes aware of the direction of the source and the quantity of Aether surrounding it. Storytellers should convey this feeling in narrative terms: "a massive energy source is approaching from due east" rather than, "twelve yards away an angel just spent three points of Essence."

Being in a Twilight state does not protect an angel from aetheric resonance, but demons hidden by Cover and angels masked by Infrastructure are not immediately revealed. This defense lapses only briefly when they expend Aether or Essence. Facilities register with particular intensity, thus the God-Machine frequently employs special masking devices, Aether-eating cryptids, and other oddities to hide its most critical projects.

Aether is an impersonal energy, identical in feeling regardless of origin. Aether emerging from an active facility feels no different to that of angelic Numina or the demonic form. Aetheric resonance can never grant specifics about a source of Aether, making it a poor judge of whether an Aether source is friend or foe. Also, the exotic powers of cryptids and stigmatics do not emit Aether despite their origin and therefore do not register to aetheric resonance.

Primum	Aetheric Resonance Radius
1–2	5 yards, same room, small apartment.
3–4	50 yards, multi-story home, concert hall
5–6	500 yards, office complex, entire city block
7–8	Half a mile, skyscraper, entire neighborhood
9–10	A mile or more, a sprawling industrial complex or massive estate

Glitches

At the moment of a demon's Fall, several dramatic metaphysical changes occur. He loses his rank and gains Primum, his current identity becomes his Cover, aptitudes fade, and Numina vanish altogether. But that is only the beginning. The newly Unchained will discover that prolonged detachment from the God-Machine and its maintenance bays carries with it a number of unexpected faults, anomalies that manifest with greater frequency and severity as he grows in power. Demons call these oddities glitches.

What Is a Glitch?

Put simply, glitches are unexpected alterations to a demon's physique, psyche, or surroundings. Neither inherently helpful nor harmful, these anomalies become prevalent throughout the demon's life, permeating every Cover he possesses.

What Causes Glitches?

Glitches can emerge from two primary sources: Primum and Cover. Changes in either of these qualities cause them manifest. Glitches fall into one of two categories: transient or permanent. Transient glitches last only a short while (as dictated by the demon's Primum), while permanent ones endure indefinitely.

Causes of Transient Glitches

- Succeeding on a compromise roll (optional)
- Dramatic failure during Installation (p. 188)
- Going loud (p. 195)*

*Use the demon's "loud" Primum rating, 10, when determining the type, severity, and duration of this glitch.

Causes of Permanent Glitches

- Primum increases or decreases
- Failure or dramatic failure on a compromise roll (optional)



Types and Severity

Glitches are broken down into three classes: *brands*, *tells*, and *emanations*. These are further divided into minor, major, and catastrophic variations. As Primum increases, so does the duration of transient glitches, and the odds of manifesting a glitch of a more severe variety.

Brands

Brands affect a demon's physical form, causing a change in the demon's appearance or body chemistry.

- **Minor:** Easily concealed physical markings, minor changes in diet or physique.

Examples: Inability to consume unprocessed food. Smelling slightly of burnt copper. Hair changes to a different but still natural-looking color. Scar tissue on palm in the shape of a star or circuit-pattern.

- **Major:** Visible changes, inconvenient alterations to body chemistry.

Examples: Hair turns bright pink.. Tattoo-like glyph of angelic script on forearm.

- **Catastrophic:** Obviously supernatural, impossible to hide or explain phenomena away.

Examples: Manifestations of traits from demonic form (though not form powers). Changes in skin color. Horn- or tail-like protrusions. Eyes or mouth emit smoke. Can only consume battery acid.

Tells

Tells are bad habits and involuntary mental behaviors that are visible and potentially disconcerting.

- **Minor:** Small physical tics, easily explicable to witnesses.

Examples: Must touch top of doorways before entering. Must shake hands with left hand. Cannot cover head.

- **Major:** Defining mannerisms in speech or posture; more difficult to explain, possible to exploit.

Examples: Must take a step back whenever confronted with a cat. Cannot accept offered objects by hand. High-frequency sounds (10K Hertz or more) cause pain.

- **Catastrophic:** Obvious, extreme eccentricities the demon cannot help but follow.

Examples: Must count discarded coins. Must speak in rhyme.

Emanations

These glitches do not manifest within the demon but are projected into the surrounding environment. Emanations never manifest in demons with fewer than six dots of Primum.

- **Minor:** Small, subtle shifts in reality, not easily traceable to the demon.

Examples: Changes in temperature or air quality around the demon, small tricks of the light or unusual scents.

- **Major:** Obvious but not necessarily supernatural alterations to reality.

Examples: Electromagnetic phenomena, TVs showing static, or electrical malfunctions. Sounds may become distorted. Objects might rust slightly. Flowers die as the demon passes.

- **Catastrophic:** Actual changes in the fundamental physics of reality that obviously following the demon.

Examples: Lightweight objects float when the demon nears them. The demon's footsteps echo loudly. Demon always seems noticeably farther away than he is. Demon randomly freezes or skips in time, like a video on a slow Internet connection.

Designing Glitches

All glitches are unique — there is no master list of possible alterations. Storytellers may compose a small list of customized glitches they can later draw upon for each character when glitching occurs. Alternatively, this process can be handed over to players themselves. In this case, each player should include a few sample brands and tells, as well as ideas as to how these glitches may progress as their character's Primum increases.

Keep in mind that glitches are not inherently bad or harmful conditions. They should never be used to deliberately cripple a character's capacity or alter their base concept. Glitches are an expression of the demon's nature, a shift away from being a uniform servant of the God-Machine and towards becoming a unique individual. They should be themed around a character's personality, concept, and goals.

Becoming an individual is inherently dangerous to a demon's Cover, which is intended to hide defining aspects and traits. It is fine for glitches to covey the occasional advantage, but they should always endanger a character's Cover and anonymity in some way. Glitches that fail to do so or endanger Cover in a manner that is unlikely to emerge in play should be tweaked to satisfaction or vetoed outright.

Acquiring Glitches

When a glitch could occur, that demon's player must roll Primum (–2 if it would be a permanent glitch). Unlike most rolls, a player may not elect to declare the result a dramatic failure, nor may she spend Willpower on the roll. Success indicates a more severe glitch; higher Primum demons are more likely to manifest glitches.

Dramatic Failure: No glitch occurs; add two dice to the next glitch roll for the character.

Failure: The demon manifests a minor glitch.

Success: The demon manifests a major glitch.

Exceptional Success: The demon manifests a catastrophic glitch; the next glitch roll for the character is made with two fewer dice.

Whether the glitch that emerges is a brand, tell or emanation falls exclusively to the Storyteller's preference. Storytellers are encouraged to keep two factors in mind.

First, glitches tend to repeat. Therefore if a character has previously developed an allergy to silver, they are more likely to manifest that glitch again, and it will might well become permanent the next time Primum increases. Second, glitches tend to have some relevance to the event that caused them or to the current situation.

Example: *Callie, Kim's Tempter, has just emerged from a chase sequence in which she was forced to assume her demonic form in order to make a quick getaway. She actives the Living Shadow Exploit. Kim succeeds on the compromise roll and chooses to a take a transient glitch. Kim rolls Callie's Primum, 3 dice, and turns up no successes. Callie develops a minor glitch. The last two times she glitched she became hot to the touch. However, because Callie (once she returns to Cover) is wearing a dense leather jacket and has little flesh exposed, the Storyteller judges that that particular glitch is highly unlikely to come into play. Kim's Storyteller decides to give Callie a tell instead, compulsively lighting a Zippo lighter she carries.*

Glitch Duration

Primum	Transient Duration (whichever is less)
1	One Scene/Hour
2	Two Scenes/Hours
3	Three Scenes/Hours
4	One Chapter/Day
5	Two Chapters/Days
6	Three Chapters/Days
7	One Story/Week
8	Two Stories/Weeks
9	Three Stories/Weeks
10	One Chronicle/Month

Curing Glitches

The safest method for removing a glitch is simply to wait it out. For a minor glitch or one only lasting a scene, this isn't usually a problem. If time and endurance are not an option, though, the demon must correct the glitch manually. This can be done in one of two ways: gaining a new Cover or employing a restoration facility. Acquiring a new Cover automatically removes all transient glitches, but not permanent ones. Restoration facilities can heal both, but the God-Machine knows full well that demons rely on these Infrastructures. Such facilities are always well guarded with at least one guardian angel as a devoted defender. Even if the demon does manage to infiltrate the location, she must still decipher how to safely activate and apply it to the desired effect.

Some Agencies maintain and safeguard at least a few restoration facilities, stolen from the God-Machine and fiercely defended. Access to such facilities is always restricted and outsiders are rarely allowed to use them without incurring a steep debt. If diplomacy is not an option, it is possible to infiltrate facilities and activate them discreetly or to storm the gates and claim one for a short while.

System: Getting into a guarded, active restoration facility is its own challenge. The Storyteller should design guardian angels, stigmatic agents, or guard-cryptids as appropriate. Assuming the demon can get to the inner works, the demon must assume demonic form and plug herself into the facility. This does not require a roll. Once plugged in, the character must rewrite her basic code to edit the glitch and remove it.

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Stamina + Primum

Action: Extended (see below; each roll requires 10 minutes of work)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: All successes are lost and the action must be abandoned. The demon must tear herself free of the connection to the facility, which inflicts three points of lethal damage. The demon gains the Hunted and Flagged Conditions and needs to escape the facility before the angelic guardians find her.

Failure: The demon can either abandon the attempt or accept a Condition (Flagged, Plugged In, or Hunted are possibilities).

Success: When the player acquires the requisite number of successes (see below), the glitch is gone. The demon can now disconnect and leave the facility, which might be more difficult than getting in depending on what Conditions she may have gained during the attempt.

Exceptional Success: As above. The player can choose one of the options on p. 313 or can refill the demon's Aether pool entirely.

Glitch Severity	Successes Required
Minor	4
Major	8
Catastrophic	12

Gadgets

Whatsoever touches the God-Machine's Infrastructure comes away changed. Humans become stigmatic, animals become cryptids, and even inanimate objects acquire strange and unexpected traits. The Unchained may no longer be part of that system, but many of those same reality-sculpting properties remain with a demon even after his Fall. Through a process called Installation, a demon can imbue specific aspects of Embeds and Exploits into a physical object, altering its fundamental structure and granting it supernatural properties.

Items altered in this way are called gadgets and fall into two broad categories: Embedded and Exploited. While the process of Installation is similar for both, the resulting gadgets differ significantly in appearance and utility.

Embedded Gadgets

An Embedded gadget remains outwardly unchanged from its original form, but under close inspection anyone who has a sense for the God-Machine's workings can tell there is something fundamentally different about the device. It is now a supernatural tool, instilled with magical properties derived from the Installed Embed.

Embeds may only be Installed into objects with a similar function. For instance, a demon can create a dagger that silences his victims (using the Hush Embed), but he cannot make an air horn with the same effect. Embedded gadgets are never as flexible as the power from which they are derived. They always have a specific effect related to the Embed from which they are derived. They do not need Aether but often require a specific trigger condition or an activation roll to function.

Thanks to their mundane appearance and relative ease of use, Embedded gadgets make ideal armaments for stigmatic operatives and demons alike. They don't run the risk of being detected by aetheric resonance, nor do they attract Aether-hungry cryptids.

Sample Embedded Gadgets

- A user manual Installed with Common Misconception (p. 149) that penalizes the academics rolls of those who read it.
- A Corporate ID Badge Installed with Unperson (p. 147) that makes it difficult to recall the wearer's identity.
- A pair of dice Installed with Lucky Break (p. 129) which always favor the person who rolls them.
- A whistle Installed with Cool Heads Prevail (p. 178) that briefly freezes combatants when blown.

Exploited Gadgets

Exploited gadgets function similarly to Embedded ones with a few key differences. Most notably, the process of Installation permanently warps the gadget, rendering it alien in appearance. An Exploited rifle may become a smooth chrome tube reminiscent of classic science fiction lasers, while an Exploited camera could develop a glowing red eye that moves of its own accord. Whatever the change, an Exploited gadget is never mistaken for mundane. At best a Demon might be able to pass one off as a prop or toy, but that is unlikely to fool a savvy agent.

Exploited gadgets do not require Aether to function, but they can be detected with aetheric resonance and may act as stockpiles (p. 111) for excess energy. Aether stored within diminishes at one point per month and serves to stabilize the gadget maintaining its effects against decay. If an Exploited gadget runs out of Aether and is not refueled within a week, it ceases to function. Attempting to refuel it after this point destroys it.

Even when fully stocked with Aether, Exploited gadgets are extremely unstable. Destroying one is ill-advised. When such an object is broken, latent aetheric energy erupts outward and reacts with the Primum of any demon in the area. Any demon within range of the object's destruction as determined by the demon's aetheric resonance (p. 184) must check for a transient glitch. Humans close enough to see the device destroyed may become stigmatic, and the eddies in reality draw the immediate attention of the God-Machine or its agents.

Despite the risks, these gadgets do carry some advantages over raw Exploits. They do not evoke a compromise when activated. They are also more flexible than Embedded gadgets, capable of being installed into any object regardless of function. This can lead to some unusual contraptions, such as flying carpets, explosive tarot cards, and memory altering furniture.

Sample Exploited Gadgets

- A conch shaped champagne flute Installed with Everybody Hates Him (p. 164), causing anyone who drinks from it to gain the Shunned Condition.
- A straight razor that hums audibly and spews a thin ribbon of fog is Installed with Ephemeral Cover (p. 164) and is capable of cutting ghosts.
- A pair of white dress gloves embroidered with grey snakes that appear to move. It is Installed with Force Relationship (p. 165); anyone who shakes the wearer's hand immediately considers that person a good friend.

Using Gadgets

Gadgets are universally accessible, requiring no special connection to the God-Machine, but that doesn't mean just anyone can use them. Gadgets have triggers set forth during their creation that range anywhere from passwords, to specific actions, to external stimuli. Trigger conditions are specific and tied in some way to a gadget's normal function. Embedded clothing would almost certainly have to be worn in order to function, for example.

More unusual and restrictive triggers exist as well. Passphrases, specific gestures, and unique environmental conditions are common. Gadgets are not self-aware, so they cannot deal in subjective conditions or make judgments concerning a situation. Therefore, triggers such as "held by Jon Smith's ally" or "when the wearer is threatened" will not function, but "when this badge held over the heart" and "when the wearer is being shot at" are quite reasonable.

How quickly a gadget can be activated depends entirely on its triggers. A gadget in the form of an English longbow would take an instant action to draw and fire. An elaborate passphrase, on the other hand, might stretch that activation out over several actions.

Gadgets may also require an activation roll as determined during Installation. This roll is always a combination of an Attribute and a Skill appropriate to the device (the longbow would likely use Dexterity + Athletics) and uses the same mechanics for resistance as the Installed Embed or Exploit. Gadgets that take the form of weapons may also have to contend with Defense and armor.

Installation

Installation has three steps: Design an Effect, Select Hardware, and Perform Installation. The process is mutable. No hard and fast list exists of the exact properties an Embed or Exploit can convey. Indeed, it is possible for a single Embed or Exploit to be installed in a variety of ways, each time to different effect. It falls to the player and Storyteller to work out the specifics of a gadget's operation during its design.

Step One: Design an Effect

The first step in creating a gadget is to determine which Embed or Exploit a character plans to Install and how that power translates to gadget form. Installation cannot convey the full effect of an Embed or Exploit. Gadgets offset portability and reliability with inflexible single-function usage that represents only a portion of the Embed's or Exploit's potential. For instance, a boxing glove Installed with Knockout Punch (p. 129) could cause anyone struck by it to fall unconscious for precisely one minute. This both maintains the effect of the original, while restricting it with an inflexible time limit. Cause and Effect (p. 165) should not be able to make a Gun that allows its wielder to substitute Firearms for any other skill, but it could certainly make a calculator capable of hacking computers. If a gadget seems right, go with it, even if it changes the assumptions of the Embed/Exploit slightly. If it is overly powerful or just doesn't fit the tenor of the game, veto it and work with the player to devise an alternative.

Example: *Brad, a player, wants to devise a gadget based on the Trick of the Light Embed (p. 154). He proposes that the gadget be able to project a psychic image of the user's choosing into the minds of all present. Brad's Storyteller, Karen, vetoes this proposal immediately. It not only replicates every function of the original power, it exceeds them in several ways. Instead, in order to keep the gadget at an appropriate power level, Karen suggests that it project a very specific kind of image into the minds of those at whom it is physically directed.*

Step Two: Select the Hardware

Installation can be performed on just about any object so long as it is completely mundane. Devices that already possess supernatural properties, and those on which Installation has already been attempted may not be changed. Consideration should be taken for an object's Size and construction; sturdier devices are more difficult to alter.

Embeds may only be installed into synergistic objects, those that share a common function. Weapons tend to work well with Cacophony Embeds, while clothing and jewelry mesh well with Mundane Embeds. Again, the Storyteller should use her best judgment in finding a proper match. If the device and the Embed could both be employed towards the same end, they are probably a good fit for Installation.

Exploits are not restricted by synergy, but it behooves a demon to consider the structure of an object and what alien alterations Exploiting it will bring about. Exploiting a tool frequently removes its original function. Even if it doesn't, the integrity of the item may be changed in such a way as to make it dangerous and unwieldy to use. Storytellers should strive to warp Exploited gadgets in a manner that both alludes to their true effect and makes them abnormal enough to discourage characters from brandishing them openly.

This is also when the specifics of a gadget are determined. What activation roll does it use? How quickly can it be activated? How long will its effects last? What trigger conditions will it have and how many people can it affect? Use the original Embed or Exploit for reference when modeling these effects, but don't feel bound by it. Taking some liberties with duration, targets, and scope is expected, but Storytellers should be careful when allowing gadgets to be activated reflexively as it can dramatically alter the flow of game play.

Example: *Now that Brad has worked out the broad function of his gadget he needs devise an appropriate vessel. Because he's creating an Embedded gadget he can't just choose any random device. Karen suggests a camera with a bright flash, as it shares the theme of creating images with Trick of the Light. Brad approves the effect and suggests that all those looking directly at the camera when the flash goes off will see a swarm of humanoid insect creatures bearing down on them.*

Karen thinks the image is too precise. They agree that Trick of the Light doesn't allow for such detailed hallucinations, perhaps merely provoking victims to see threatening movement in their peripheral vision that can't be pinned down. Brad agrees to this and asks if the visions can impair both Perception and Initiative (penalty to both equal to Brad's character's Primum rating, which is 3 – note that once the gadget is created, this number won't increase even if the demon's Primum does).

Brad argues that this gadget should be activated with a reflexive action, since it's simple enough to pull a camera from a pocket. Karen disagrees, requiring an instant action. They agree on a dice pool of Dexterity + Expression vs. Wits + Composure. Brad also sets a trigger for the device – a button on the underside of the camera that must be depressed for the Installation effect to work.

Step Three: Perform Installation

The demon must invest the chosen vessel with Aether. A single point is enough to begin the Installation process. The player makes an extended roll using a pool of Intelligence + Crafts + Primum. When Embedding, the process requires successes equal to the objects Structure, with each roll taking fifteen minutes. If Exploiting, that target number is doubled and each roll takes a full hour. The complexity of a device does not factor into this equation, as even the most advanced technology is rudimentary when compared to the intricacy of the God-Machine.

Assuming he succeeds, the creator must expend a dot of Willpower to cement the gadget into reality. Should he fail to do so, the Installed power will wither away, vanishing by the end of the scene. Exploited gadgets are also stockpiled with Aether at this time. Once Installation is complete, the gadget remains supernatural forever.

During the procedure, the demon radiates enough Aether to trigger the aetheric resonance of any other Unchained in the area. Installation comes with concomitant visual effects — arc lightning, localized thunder, and power outages. If the demon performs too many Installations in the same place, the God-Machine's agents will likely investigate sooner or later.

Pacts

Demons are salesmen, the masters of the deal. Just as the God-Machine creates Infrastructure in order for its angels to work most efficiently, the Unchained are adept at manipulating mortals in order to better achieve their goals. The art of making pacts with humans is an ancient one, one of the greatest tools in demon's arsenal. Lacking the ability to create angels or Infrastructure in the same way that the God-Machine does, demons can gain security and Cover from these infernal bargains instead.

Pacts allow both demon and mortal to acquire something of great value to them. For mortals, this can be anything from influence to the hearts (or bodies) of men and women to riches, but some things are more difficult to grant than others — and thus more costly for the one making the deal. Demons gain fragments of Cover, devoted cultists or even human souls.

All demons can forge pacts, and this ability does keep more than a few demon philosophers awake at night. Exactly how do they come by this ability? What does it mean? Angels cannot create pacts in the way that demons can, but angels are often bound to the parameters of their mission.

Some demons theorize that making pacts is very much like banking with the stuff of the universe: a sort of instinctual knowledge about how to transfer "funds" from one "account" (in this case, the entirety of a living entity's existence) to another. Others look at it like rewriting the code of the cosmos, creating a new program with data from another person. Another theory suggests that pact-making is a new ability with no direct analogue among angels or other agents of the God-Machine. Just as the demons have become something new and unique, their new perspectives bring new powers.

Regardless of exactly how it works, pacts remain one of the easiest ways for a demon to maintain a power base in the human world. Their secrets are closely guarded, but at the same time, a demon is sometimes measured by the pacts he has drawn up. Well-made contracts or simple quantity are both often seen as a status symbol among the Unchained, and not without reason — a demon with powerful pacts is demonstrably dangerous.

Just Sign Here...

While many less experienced demons might like to be able to create pacts however they please, older ones come to appreciate the rules. For an entire race of liars and cheats, the ability to count on something stable is refreshing.

Ultimately, pacts must follow rules, though demons have a great deal of flexibility in how they may be written. And written they must be — all pacts are literal written contracts. The medium upon which they are written must be fairly permanent: paper, animal hides and even stone are acceptable and the most common; drawing up a contract in wet sand won't work. The nature of the pact renders the contract itself a bit harder to break than its mundane counterpart would be (+1 to the item's Durability rating), but demons carefully guard their contracts regardless. If the contract is destroyed, the pact is rendered null, which usually benefits the mortal more than anything and causes the demon great distress (counting as a compromise of Cover and costing a point of Willpower).

Pacts can be informal affairs, a simple declaration of "You (the mortal) gain X if I (the demon) gain Y." They can also be highly formal, full of legalese and fine print, employed by demons looking to bind unwary humans. Most are somewhere in between, though many demons try to slip in loopholes and misleading ambiguity, enough to benefit them but not leave the mortal any wiggle room. Poorly worded pacts do just that; more than one epic tale has describes a mortal's quest to excise himself from a contract with a demon. Ultimately, a pact is simply an exchange of some kind: the mortal agrees to give up something to the demon and the demon provides a service in turn.

Like a car title, a pact is transferable. Desperation or desire may see a demon want something more than the pact they signed, meaning they will need to make another deal. Some Agencies will buy a contract from such a demon and resell it or seek out the mortal to "renegotiate" the terms of the deal. Demons also love to manipulate or buy pacts from another demon in order to gain a competitive edge.

Contracts don't usually need to be signed in blood. A contract must always be signed willingly by a human's own hand, but this does not preclude coercion. Any form of influence or direct intimidation (i.e., "Sign this or I will kill you") is allowed, as long as the mortal signs the contract herself. Using mind-control powers to force an assignee's hand voids any deal made. The mortal doesn't need to know what exactly it is she is signing. If she fails to read the fine print, it's on her head. Clever demons use this to their advantage, although as much as they lie, the person in question still must know the terms of the deal. Misdirection and manipulation are both common tactics in making pacts.

In practice, forceful coercion is usually more work than it is worth unless the demon needs the ultimate bargain: a soul-pact (see p. 116 for more information). Demons do not make soul pacts to drag someone away to Hell or inflict torment of some kind. It is quite the opposite: when a demon cashes in a soul pact, he does so to *become* the person with whom he holds the pact. Like other pacts, this one alters reality, substituting the demon for the part agreed upon in the bargain. In the case of soul pacts, however, it is not just a part, but the entirety of a person's existence. They are annihilated from the universe mind, body and soul, gone beyond recall of any of a demon's magics. Perhaps there are some forces in the universe that can recall a person destroyed this way, but such vast cosmic powers are beyond the scope of a demon character. Destroying the actual contract which binds the soul may return the destroyed person to existence, but if this is true, no demon has ever verified it. Such pacts are the most closely guarded of a demon's contracts. The promise of a way back for a loved one or even a hated enemy (upon whom vengeance is no longer an option) might make an interesting basis for a chronicle, however, even if the rumor comes on the lips of a demon.

Faustian bargains are the stuff of legend; often what the mortal desires out of the deal is fairly mundane: money, power, love and so on. What the demon gets from the deal is quite a bit more difficult to pin down and varies from deal to deal. Sometimes it's a person's soul, which can become a new and fully-realized form of Cover for a demon. More often the pact is for bits of a person's existence rather than the whole thing.

A demon might bargain for, say, an abusive relationship, taking over that relationship. This effectively alters the code that makes up reality to replace the abused party with the demon. The demon's Cover gains the relationship with the abusive boyfriend, or the stalker, or the friend from whom a person has drifted over the years. It's not perfect because only those directly altered by the pact have their memories and objects changed, but it allows demons to strengthen Covers over time.

Let's Make a Deal

Pacts are composed of aspects, each of which describes some of the parameters of the pact. Aspects apply to both demon and human and come in three different levels: lesser, medial and greater. Each of these levels has a corresponding value: +1 for lesser, +2 for medial and +3 for greater aspects. A fully balanced pact equally benefiting both parties has all the aspects on each side balance out to zero. In practice, this is very rare, since the pacts are usually weighted in favor of the demon. When combining aspects, two lesser aspects combine into a medial, and two medial (or a lesser and a medial) become a greater aspect.

The different types of pact aspects are:

Benefits are the rewards each participant gains from the pact.

Term is simply the duration of the pact. Most pacts last until the terms of the deal are satisfied, which may have lingering, even permanent effects.

A demon deceives and manipulates those who signs pacts with her to maximize her gain. The written contract does provide some protection for both parties, however. The demon cannot simply alter a deal or refuse to grant her part of the contract. Neither can the mortal. Once the contract is signed, it is set into motion with one exception: soul pacts require the demon to touch her target before she can collect on them, and she need not do it right away. As long as the medium upon which the contract is printed remains intact, the pact remains unbroken.

The process of forging a pact is a simple one: the demon offers a mortal the chance to gain something in exchange for something. Usually, the price is a part of the mortal's life, sometimes one the mortal would like to be shed of: an abusive relationship, a dead-end job, even a criminal act. If the human accepts the deal, the demon must present a contract, though this is a simple process

since she can create one from any appropriate medium: paper, flesh, stone or something similarly symbolic and enduring. It only takes a few moments to transform the medium into a fully-written contract. Once the terms are laid out (and the aspects totaled up), both parties sign and the pact takes effect immediately.

As stated earlier, demons cannot lie on a pact. It is one of the few areas in which they must tell the truth. With their mastery of languages and the flexibility of said languages, however, it is easy to word things in a misleading or evasive manner. Still, if the human reads carefully, the demon cannot obscure the true terms of the deal. The demon can, of course, arrange events so that the human is pressed for time or otherwise incautious when she reads the contract.

When the contract is signed, the demon must expend Willpower to finalize the deal. The amount she must spend varies depending on the terms of the deal. For a completely balanced pact, the cost is one point of Willpower, but pacts are rarely balanced. For each point by which the total aspects on the demon's side of the pact exceeds the human's total, the cost is an additional point of Willpower. This limits how far a demon can weigh the pact in her own favor. If the human's aspect points total more than those of the demon's side of the bargain there is no additional Willpower cost, but few demons give more than they take. Duration aspects count toward the demon's total, since the ability to dictate the term of a contract benefits the demon.

Soul pacts require a greater investment on the part of the demon, but they are all too easy to do for the mortal. A soul pact requires the same amount of Willpower as other pacts: one point for each point of difference between the demon's aspect totals and the human's totals. The base cost for a soul pact is a Willpower *dot*, however, rather than a point. Thus, if a demon's total pact value comes out to +4 and the mortal's is +2, the demon must spend three Willpower points: one for the basic pact and two for the difference between her total and the human's. If it was a soul pact, the demon's total Willpower cost would be two points and a dot of Willpower.

Soul pacts must also be signed in blood, which requires a small prick of the finger for both parties. For certain mediums, such as stone, the blood is supernaturally resistant to deterioration. No matter how much someone washes a stone pact, the blood doesn't come off (the pact can still be shattered with a hammer, though).

When a contract is destroyed, the pact is immediately nullified. The human loses all benefits instantly, even if it would kill her (such as by losing extra Stamina while seriously injured) or leave her in a terrible situation. Riches are destroyed or stolen, assets are frozen, physical gifts immediately wither. The demon likewise loses all benefits of the pact, usually pieces of Cover taken from the mortal's life. These come crashing back into the life they left — an abusive boyfriend immediately goes back to his ex-lover without much more



of an explanation than a wicked hangover. This can also cause problems for a demon's Cover, considering that only those directly affected by the pact have had their memories altered. In the case of a broken pact, the participating mortal remembers everything. If a demon has patched part of a mortal's life into his Cover, destruction of the pact immediately results in loss of a dot of that Cover's rating. The demon must also check for a permanent glitch.

Demons are not limited in how many pacts they may hold at once. Keeping track of them can be a chore for many demons who must take care to keep their contracts separate from other "business" documents. If the demon's cache of pacts was ever discovered, she would lose almost everything.

Pacts are comprised of different aspects, each type of which describes a facet of the pact's nature. While these bargains are very powerful, they are also risky. The pacts only stand as long as the "document" (which may in fact be a piece of skin or slab of stone) remains intact. Gaining access to a demon's contracts provides tremendous leverage over her. These contracts gain a bonus of +1 to their Durability ratings, but can still be broken even by mundane means. Smart demons keep their contracts well-hidden and well-protected, often scattered over different locations so that even if the worst should happen, an enemy cannot steal all of her secrets in one fell swoop.

Benefits

The part that lures every human into a Faustian bargain are the benefits. These describe the rewards gained by each party in the pact and are enforced by a demon's own Primum. Her connection to the universe alters code and shifts data to effect the changes. These changes usually occur quickly and do so subtly enough that they usually don't alert the God-Machine and its angels. However, it is much easier for a demon to change a person, such as by making an ugly man into a beautiful one, than it is to grant untold riches or love, as this involves changing the world around them instead.

Asset (Mortal only): One of the most classic rewards from a demonic pact is the acquisition of riches or beauty or health. These are simple for a demon to grant and yet have a dramatic impact on the life of the person so changed, which makes these one of the greatest temptations demons can offer. An ugly man may be made handsome and charming, a poor woman made rich, a foolish person made wise.

- *Lesser (1)*: A lesser asset is still quite potent and often serves as a taste of the greater gifts a demon can grant. A mortal may gain access to a new one-dot or two-dot Merit or have an existing Merit increased by one dot, if possible. For a Merit that describes something internal or inherent to a character, such as Striking Looks or Fleet of Foot, the character gains that Merits at up to two dots, while something that requires altering the world around a character, such as Resources, is only gained at one dot. If previously held, such a Merit is still increased by one dot, however.
- *Medial (2)*: Medial assets give the recipient a three- or four-dot Merit, or else increase an existing Merit by two dots. As with lesser assets, something that requires changing the world around a character is only gained at three dots, while something that merely requires altering the character herself is gained at four dots. The latter type of Merit is still increased by two dots.
- *Greater (3)*: The ultimate gifts bestowed by demons are a very potent blessing indeed. They can grant someone a five-dot Merit they do not already possess, or increase an existing Merit by three dots. For external Merits like

Where does the money come from?

A demon can sign a pact with a mortal and grant that mortal riches (Resources), friends (Allies), wisdom (Skills), health (Stamina) or almost any other benefit. Why doesn't the demon use this power for herself, then? How can a demon manipulate reality in such a gross manner through pacts, when Embeds and even Exploits are so much more specific and narrowly focused?

This question is the source of much speculation among the Unchained, particularly Tempters and Inquisitors. The going theory is that a pact manipulates reality in much the same way an Embed does – the demon uses established metaphysical pathways to attract the kind of change he needs. Put another way, the potential is already there for the human to become rich (the money exists, it just isn't hers), popular (those people are out there, they just don't know or like the pactbound), wise or healthy (within the person's DNA is the possibility to be smarter or healthier). The demon isn't manipulating the world, just individual variables.

The support for this theory is that whenever a demon creates a pact that alters something external to the human signatory (Allies, Resources, and other such Merits), something happens out in the world to balance it. A pactbound becomes wealthy and somewhere a rich man dies with no heirs. A pactbound gains a dedicated group of assistants (Staff), and somewhere a scientist's budget is slashed, forcing him to fire his lab techs.

As above, so below. What has fallen may rise again. It's a principle with which demons are well familiar.

Resources, only the latter option may be used; a demon may make someone richer, but even pacts alone cannot make someone into a billionaire business tycoon. Nothing stops a demon from signing a pact with a destitute mortal, granting him a comfortable lifestyle (two dots of Resources), and then coming back six months later and offering the mortal an increase in funds (and another pact).

Cover (Demon only): The greatest benefit of pacts for demons comes in the form of Cover, which they can gain by taking pieces of a mortal's life and adding it to their own. This is a very effective way of improving Cover and also one's connections in the mortal world. Demons call this a "patch job," and this is the usual benefit a demon enjoys from a pact. See p. 116 in the Cover section for additional information.

- *Lesser (1)*: With a lesser pact, a demon may "patch" a small aspect of someone's life, such as an acquaintance or ownership of a pet. Those with family ties or strong relationships such as lovers or friends are beyond this level of pact. Mundane items with meaning to a person, such as a family heirloom passed down directly to the human making the pact, also count as lesser Cover items. This is worth one Cover Experience.
- *Medial (2)*: At this level of pact, the demon may gain pieces of a human's life that have real value to that person. This might mean a friend (though not one's best friend, or someone of similar meaning), a boyfriend or girlfriend, a cherished pet, or a family heirloom or valuable possession which may have supernatural qualities. The acquisition of such Cover may present additional complications because only those directly affected by the pact have their memories altered; wise demons take care to use such deals where they won't cause more harm than good, or take steps to prepare for the changes. This is worth two Cover Experiences.
- *Greater (3)*: Pacts made for this level of Cover can "patch in" large pieces of a person's life. Examples might include a fiancée or spouse, a longtime best friend, or even a close family member. Personal items of great supernatural power fall under this level as well. This level of pact can actually increase a demon's Cover rating by +1 outright, but Storytellers and players should work together to determine just what it means. This is taking on a relationship of some kind that is greatly meaningful, and so should forever alter everyone affected by the pact. Demons who make pacts with this aspect often spend time before and after the deal, learning about their quarry and just what it does and *should* mean to have such a relationship. Only desperate or foolish demons take on such pacts hastily. This is worth three Cover Experiences (or one dot of Cover, as soon as the demon patches the pact into a Cover).

Cult (Demon only): Demons often have small cults to serve them. Mortal servitors do more than satisfy a demon's vanity, since they can provide shelter, information and even Cover, in a pinch. This benefit grants a demon a following of cultists as per the Cultists Merit. The cost of this aspect is therefore anything from 2 to 5, depending on the dot rating of the Merit.

The pact does not have to be signed with a large number of people. One signatory is enough to create the cult. This person becomes the leader of the cult and other members gravitate toward her over the course of a few weeks. A demon can also form a cult on his own (buying the Merit with Experiences). Using a pact is faster and cheaper in the long run, but it carries a risk — if the pact is broken, or if the cult leader dies, the cult falls apart. A cult formed by a pact is *not* subject to the Sanctity of Merits (p. 287), since the player never actually purchased the Merit dots.

Skill (Mortal only): Granting a mortal craftsman greater ability in her field of choice is another traditional demonic blessing and one demons are all too ready to grant. It's an easy benefit and requires little time to take effect, occurring within the same scene. Skill benefits come in lesser, medial and greater varieties, corresponding to a 1-, 2-, and 3-die bonus to the Skill in question, respectively. A 1-point Skill benefit can also grant a specialty. These bonus dots can take a Skill above the human maximum of five dots.

Soul (Demon only): This is the most feared and infamous ability of demonic pacts, though also the costliest, for both the demon and the human. Dramatic though they are, soul pacts make for extremely valuable forms of Cover, allowing a demon to subsume the entire existence of a person and slip into their life. Soul pacts must be signed with blood and require a great expenditure of power on the part of the demon. Further, while a mortal may *think* she understands just what it means to sign her soul over, it is not until the contract is actually signed and finalized that the feeling of immense foreboding comes over her and gives her a taste of the magnitude of her decision. Those who are soulless (see p. 311) through whatever means are incapable of signing such a pact. This adds 3 points to the demon's side of the equation.

Duration

Pacts are usually permanent, lasting for as long as the contract exists and both parties live. They can be nullified, typically bydestroying the contract, but otherwise continue to have their effects. Pacts can be made with temporary durations, however, which are useful for when a demon needs a "burner" Cover for a short time. Sometimes it's the only way to convince someone to sign a pact to begin with, but once a human has had a taste of the gifts a demon can offer, it's usually easy enough to convince her to sign another. Some demons offer a "free" first hit, an easy contract or perhaps even a small use of their supernatural power in order to better entice their victims. The duration on the demon's side of the pact need not match a person's. It is all too easy to convince a chronic gambler to gain fantastic wealth for one day in exchange for giving up his wife for a year ... or forever. If a demon gains Cover via a temporary pact, instead of granting Cover Experiences the pact grants a thin, transient identity that functions as a one-dot Cover. It cannot be improved, and crumbles if anything occurs that would reduce the Cover rating (this also ends the pact). The pseudo-Cover is always tied to the Pactbound in some way.

Day (0): These pacts are just like a junkie's first hit: a demon offers them in order to demonstrate the power of bargaining with her. Most people eagerly come back, especially once the newfound riches or strength vanish. In this way, they're very effective pacts to make, yielding good benefits for little cost.

Week (0): A week-long duration is enough to hook many people on a demon's blessings, or allow a demon enough time to accomplish some important task before the pact expires.

Month (1): Monthly pacts last for exactly one month from the signing of the pact, to the very hour of the same day of the week. Where demons are concerned, no technicality is too trivial, so the fact that some months are shorter than others is just a fact of life.

Year (2): A year-long pact is one of the more popular durations for demons who plan to take something of value from a human life — or those who simply want to keep a mortal under their thumb for a great length of time and don't want to renew a contract every month.

Permanent (3): The most important pacts are permanent, at least on the demon's side. The Unchained have great need of Cover and the mortal world as a whole, since it is what separates them from their unfeeling creator and its mindless angels. As such, most pacts for any kind of meaningful "patch jobs" are of permanent duration on the demon's side, but not on the human's, if the Unchained can manage it. Soul pacts *must* be made permanent. If a permanent pact is nullified by the destruction of its contract, there is a mystic backlash that resonates through a demon's Primum. This inflicts a number of bashing damage equal to the demon's Primum rating in a painful, head-splitting burst of pain. The destruction of many such contracts at once could even kill a demon, yet another reason they closely guard their sealed pacts.

Rumors exist of durations *longer* than permanent, but demons are quick to dismiss any possibility of generational pacts. Still, stories persist of people who have signed over not only their own lives, but those of their first-born children, or of those cursed by an antecedent's deal with a devil. Whether these tales refer to the Unchained or many of the other creatures of the night, the demons cannot say. Or, more often, they *do* say, but their answers don't agree at all.

Pacts and Other Creatures of the Night

Demons share the World of Darkness with many other supernatural denizens. It is inevitable that the Unchained will come into conflict or collusion with these entities and the subject of pacts will certainly come up. Many demons would love to have contractual leverage over the other powers of the night. In some cases this is possible, and works much like pacts with mortals or other demons. Sometimes these forces clash, however, and the result is anything but neatly laid out in a contract.

In game terms, demons may sign pacts with other supernatural creatures, following most of the same rules as they do for mortals. Supernatural beings may become cultists and may also gain Skills or Merits from pacts. They can provide mundane aspects of their life as Cover benefits, but demons cannot "patch in" supernatural aspects (effectively because their supernatural abilities aren't compatible with a demon's abilities to affect the world — a vampire's blood-based "hardware" won't work with a demon's Aether-powered "software"). A demon cannot take away a vampire's vulnerability to sunlight, for example, nor can she patch in a werewolf's ability to change forms.

Supernatural beings can sign away their souls to demons, but it doesn't benefit the demon much. When the demon claims the being's soul, the demon suffers aggravated damage equal to the supernatural being's Supernatural Tolerance (Blood Potency, Gnosis, etc.) as the being's power is converted to Aether and burns off. Even then, the demon only assumes the being's identity...but as a human being. If she claims a vampire's soul, she takes that vampire's name and face, but is not undead, does not drink blood, and does not necessarily know the intricacies of vampire society.

Example Pacts

- Ezra the Tempter wants to build a power base since an exile informant has tipped him off to angel activity. Ezra's specialty is subtlety rather than overt threats and displays of supernatural power. He chooses an impressionable high school girl named Jessica, experimenting with what she thinks is a pagan ritual. Ezra approaches her in an occult bookstore and offers her membership in a truly exclusive group, convincing her that he can show her the truth she seeks. Jessica eagerly agrees and signs her name on the "sacred scroll" that Ezra presents to her. She becomes his cultist and starts drawing other teens to her to form a cult based on Ezra's "revelations." He also gains access to her family's remote cabin up north and her investigative abilities. Their pact looks like this:

  Jessica: Asset (Allies 1; *+1*), Asset (Fame 1: Local Pagan Culture; *+1*), Asset (Mystery Cult Initiation 1: God-Machine Cult; *+1*)

  Ezra: Cultist 2 (*+2*) Duration: Year (*+2*)

  The total cost for Ezra is two points of Willpower: one for the base cost and an additional one because his total exceeds Jessica's by one.

- Mateo the Destroyer is expecting trouble with a hunter angel and needs a soul pact now. He doesn't have time for subtlety and nuance. Mateo targets Perry, a man on the edge: Perry lost his job, his wife left him and took the kids, and now his house is in foreclosure. After a small display of supernatural power, Mateo convinces Perry that he is a divine messenger offering a gift of salvation. Perry just needs to sign the contract and pledge his soul to the cause to have everything he ever wanted. With no other options, Perry agrees and signs the contract in blood without even bothering to read it. Mateo's contract is as follows:

  Perry: Asset (Resources 3; *+3*)

  Benefit (Mateo): Soul (*+3*) Duration: Permanent (*+3*)

  Because Mateo's total aspects equal +6 and Perry's equal +3, the cost increases by 3 points of Willpower. Since this is a soul pact, Mateo's base cost is one dot of Willpower rather than a point, making the final total one dot of Willpower and 3 points. It's costly for Mateo, but much more costly for Perry,

whose newfound riches blind him to the fact that his benefactor could come to collect at any time.

Demonic Forms

Angels come in all shapes, dimensions, looks, and sizes. Angels are constructed by the God-Machine to perform certain tasks and they have functional parts cobbled together to make a whole. Most people never see the true form of an angel, and when they do, they have a hard time identifying them as such. Despite the fact that the God-Machine may create many different angels to perform similar tasks, no two angels look the same. Some look very human — or at least humanoid — while others may look like a mixed conglomeration of biological and mechanical parts.

When an angel falls and becomes a demon, she defies the God-Machine and with it her very nature. She becomes human or some approximation of human, but she doesn't lose her angelic nature entirely. Instead, she pushes it deep into the recesses of her psyche. It lurks there waiting silently, hidden behind the demon's desire to be different. While the demon is human, her true form is nowhere to be seen — yet it is always just below the surface, waiting to be called upon.

The connection that the Unchained once had to the God-Machine is still tenuously held. It is a part of the Primum that is now her very essence and the Aether she pulls from the wastes of the God-Machine's processes. So too is the demonic form a shadow of what the Unchained used to be as an angel. A demonic form is an impression of the pattern used to create the angel. It is not a perfect replica, and with time and a stronger connection to the world the Unchained is able to shape it into a better representation of who and what she has become. As she grows in power, her ability to express her free will grows with her and she is no longer limited by her previous angelic visage. Where angels had forms that followed the need for a very specific function, the Unchained pick and choose their forms as they wish.

Demons must attempt to exist as normal mortals do, despite their origins. They keep their true nature under cover at all times, both for their own sake and the sakes of those around them. For the demon it is a relief to shed the human skin she hides in and reveal her true nature, but it has the chance to draw the God-Machine's attention, making it a temptation worth fighting.

Changing Into Demonic Form

Shifting from a human form and trappings into a demonic one is liberating and an act of simple will on the flesh that holds the demon together. Free will allows the demon to change between human form and demonic form whenever she wishes, though the transition between states is not always completely without effort.

Demons are aware that changing into demonic form is risky and have schooled themselves to change in different ways depending on the situation. Demons are capable of fully transforming into their natural state, or only adopting select traits for more delicate procedures. The Unchained have also developed a way to change in an emergency and shred their mortal Cover, but gain extraordinary benefits from doing so. They call it "going loud" and they only employ it in a worst-case scenario.

Full Transformation

Changing into demonic form is requires very little effort. The demon can change into her demonic form as a reflexive action. When she does, she assumes every aspect of the form and becomes the horror that was once her natural state of being. The human form is shed and the demon's Primum performs instinctive repairs on itself. The demon heals lethal or bashing damage equal to her Primum rating, starting with the rightmost health box upon changing into her demonic form. Any Tilts relating to a bodily injury, such as Arm Wrack, are removed.

When the demon shifts into her demonic form, she is more attuned to the Aether around her. She can draw in the little bits of processes and mechanisms floating about within the air to fuel her without much conscious effort. The Unchained gains a number of Aether equal to her Primum on her initial transformation into demonic form. Because she is so attuned to the Aether, she can never truly run out of it. Whenever her Aether is reduced to zero, the player can roll Primum, and each success gains the demon one Aether (minimum 1, even if the roll fails).

Most demonic forms are obviously not human and would cause any onlooker to be terrified by the change. Demons try not to change in front of an audience, and more often than not are only changing when they are dealing with something equally terrifying. Regardless of the presence on onlookers, manifesting powers reminiscent of the God-Machine draws its attention and could compromise the demon's Cover. Each time the demon assumes her demonic form, the player must make a compromise roll at a –2 penalty. Any Conditions that are gained from the result of this roll are applied after the demon reverts back to her human form. The longer the demon stays in her demonic form, the more attention she draws to herself. Each scene the demon remains in demonic form, the player must make an additional compromise roll with an extra cumulative –1 penalty for each compromise roll made for this reason. This penalty is in addition to the –2 penalty from changing into demonic form in the first place.

Returning to the human guise is not natural and requires concentration and effort on the demon's part. She must pull the bits and pieces that comprised her Cover back together again and shape them around her demonic form to resume being human again. The demon remains in her demonic form until the player spends one Aether to return to the demon's cover identity as an instant action. If the demon has more than one Cover identity, the player chooses which one the demon returns to. A Cover identity that was suffering from a bodily injury Tilt still has that problem when the demon returns to her human form.

Going Loud

As described on p. 195, a demon can completely destroy her Cover in a moment of need to transform into her demonic

form. This form change is different from a normal change in that it lasts for the scene and the demon is unable to reassume her human form at will. Unless the demon has another Cover that she can use, she is stuck in her demonic form and considered Burned until a new Cover can be found.

Going loud allows the demon to completely heal any lethal or bashing damage and shrug off any Tilts affecting her. In addition to this, when the demon goes loud, her current Cover is lost; she replenishes all her Aether, her Primum is set to 10, and she gains access to every Embed her Incarnation gives her affinity for along with all Exploits. Changing this way does not require a normal compromise roll, since it constitutes the ultimate compromise of completely destroying the demon's current Cover.

Partial Transformation

With concentration, a demon can assume aspects of her demonic form without undergoing a full transformation. This type of transformation is as unnatural for the demon as being in her human form. Changing this way requires the expenditure of one Aether per form ability assumed in the transformation, and another Aether to completely revert back to human form. If the demon cannot spend enough Aether in a round to complete the transformation at once, then none of the form abilities can be accessed until all Aether has been spent for the transformation, as she is in deep concentration while manifesting them. Once the demon has partially transformed form abilities, she cannot manifest additional form abilities unless she first reverts completely back to human. The demon can utilize a full transformation or go loud while she is only partially transformed. It is treated as though she is changing forms from a completely human state.

Changing only partially into demonic form is not the same as a complete transformation. The demon does not heal or gain Aether during a partial transformation. Partially transforming into demonic form is still a compromise for the demon, yet not as severe as a full transformation. The roll gains a bonus equal to the number of form abilities not being accessed for the transformation. This means that if a demon with seven form abilities uses a partial transformation to manifest just one, the resulting compromise roll gets a +6 modifier.

Form Creation

Demonic forms are largely influenced by the angelic visage of the demon's past. After some time spent working towards the Descent, demons can shape their own form into what they want to be. When creating your demonic form, think about the angel your demon once was and why they became one of the Unchained. A Destroyer may have muscles like steel cables and razor sharp claws extending from his fingers because his angelic purpose was to kill. He may also have glowing green eyes that let him see in the darkness, because he was intended to do his deed at night. After the Fall, he may have gotten tired of never being able to truly understand what others were thinking and decided to adapt the ability to read minds. While each demonic form ability is presented as a stand-alone concept with its own description and benefit, the end result should flow together in a seamless description decided upon by the player.

Form abilities are grouped into four types; Modifications, Technologies, Propulsions, and Processes. Modifications are small subroutines that affect the demon's ability to perform a task, such as a bonus to a roll with an Attribute or a Skill bonus. Technologies are specialized implants that give the demon the ability to create a specific effect that usually targets only one individual. Propulsions are a mutation that allows the demon specialized movement, such as the ability to fly. Processes are large programs or adaptations that gives the demon a specific action and effect that is usually significant in scope and size, and can affect multiple targets at once.

At character creation, a demon has three Modifications, two Technologies, one Propulsion, and one Process. The initial demonic form should reflect what the demon did as an angel. Each time a demon's Primum increases, they undergo a transformation that allows them to gain and lose form abilities, giving them the ability to deviate from their original angelic form. You can remove up to two form abilities from your current demonic form and replace them with new form abilities of the same type each time a new level of Primum is purchased.

At Primum 3, the demon gains a fourth Modification. At Primum 6 the demon gains a third Techonology, and at Primum 10 the demon gains a second Process.

Form Abilities

Pick form abilities for your demon from the list below. Each form ability entry describes the type of angel that might have had the form and the types of demons that have it now, gives examples of how the form looks on a demon, and describes the mechanical effect of the form ability. Some abilities are on all the time, such as Modifications and some Propulsions, while others such as Technologies and Processes must be activated.

Modifications

Armored Plates

Angels built to defend the God-Machine and its creations move easily within suits of plated armor. The armor is both protective and well-articulated to allow the angel a range of mobility and dexterity not normally found in such armor. Demons who often deal with combat situations feel that this ability is a necessity.

Appearance: Plates cover the demon from head to toe. These could be made of metal, hard chitin, or sheets of thick plastics. The joints are well hinged allowing for mobility in an otherwise fully encased suit of armor.

System: The demon cannot shed this armor as it is part of his body, but it has more mobility than most heavy types of armor. The armor covers the demon's entire body and has no unarmored areas to target. The armor has a rating of 3/2 and has a Defense and Speed modifier of –1.

Blade Hand

Angels designed for warfare and killing people are often equipped with blades or other melee weapons. Instead of having to re-equip lost pieces, the weapons are forged into the flesh of the angel, preventing loss or theft of the weapon and allowing for nothing more than routine maintenance to keep them well honed. Martial demons often keep or pick up this form ability to ensure that they are always armed in any situation.

Appearance: A large weapon grows from one of the demon's hands, taking whatever shape the demon wishes. It could be as archaic as a long sword or as modern as a collapsible steel baton and is part of the demon's body.

System: The demon can summon the weapon to replace his hand or dismiss the weapon as a reflexive action. While using the weapon, he cannot be disarmed without removing the limb. The weapon has a rating of 4L and gives a –3 penalty to the demon's Initiative. The demon can utilize any Fighting Merits he may have that would normally apply to such a weapon, such as Armed Defense or Heavy Weapons.

Claws and Fangs

Some angels are made for the gruesome task of maiming and killing. Often they look like horrible biomechanical creatures with sharp steel for fangs and claws, able to rip and tear their victim. Many demons keep these aspects for self-defense. Some more aggressive demons choose to adopt this form ability as a way to intimidate others.

Appearance: Metal or bone claws protrude from the demon's fingers and fangs extend beyond the demon's lips. They don't always look like their organic equivalents. A demon might well sport claws like threshing blades or teeth like needles.

System: The claws and teeth function as small weapons with a damage rating of 2L and can be used while in a grapple. The weapons do not impose an Initiative modifier.

Electrical Sight

Angels designed to deal with circuits and complex computational Infrastructure are supplied with the ability to see and understand the signals they are working with. This very same ability is extremely useful to demons when they need to intercept signals or listen in on communications.

Appearance: Static fills the demon's eyes as if on an old television with bad reception.

System: The demon can see electrical signals in the air around him, within the objects they are traveling through, and along cable lines. The demon is able to see each separate signal and could easily follow one to its source. With a successful Intelligence + Composure roll, the demon can easily pick out one specific signal and understand the transmission, whether analog or digital. He can listen to phone conversations or watch television broadcasts just by concentrating on the signal.

EMP Field

An angel designed to carry out missions involving sabotage, warfare, or just resetting specific bits of Infrastructure is armed with electromagnetic implants capable of disrupting electronics and causing black-outs for whole city blocks. Demons keep or adapt this ability specifically to destroy pieces of the God-Machine and its Infrastructure.

Appearance: The demon's surface takes on a dark metallic sheen with thin wires and circuits flowing all around his arms and hands.

System: The demon can activate an electromagnetic pulse with an instant action. Spend one Aether and roll Intelligence + Primum. All electronic devices within a five foot radius per success are broken, rendered defunct and useless from the overcharge.

Fast Attack

Angels built for hand-to-hand combat are designed to be lightning fast. They can make strikes against an enemy in rapid succession before he gets a chance to respond. Demons with this ability have an advantage against multiple attackers.

Appearance: The demon has red swirling tattoos covering the surface of his hands and arms and leading up to his torso.

System: The demon gains a +2 bonus to his Initiative. After making a successful attack on a target, for the duration of the fight the demon can reset his Initiative to go before that target as long as the demon continues to attack the same target. If that target is taken out of the fight or if the demon changes targets, his Initiative returns to its previous number.

Huge Size

Some components of the God-Machine span the width and breadth of an entire city, requiring large amounts of energy and attention to maintain. Creating, maintaining, or even destroying such large components often requires a huge angel to efficiently generate and utilize all the energy required. Many demons adopt this ability for its defensive capabilities.

Appearance: When the demon takes on his demonic form, he grows out of his skin into a huge monster.

System: Taking this form ability imparts 4 extra Size from creature type to the demon when he changes his form.

Inhuman Intelligence

Angels are intelligent and cunning creatures, intent on completing their missions. Especially in cases where the mission is to analyze, categorize, or collate data, some angels are imbued with supercomputing capabilities that far exceed the normal intelligence level of most other angels. Demons with this ability connect momentarily with the vast resources of information stored within the God-Machine's agents, providing them with a semblance of the superior computing ability of the angels.

Appearance: The demon's head shows evidence of the modification. The demon may be hairless with a shining chrome surface, or his head may be larger than normal and riddled with obvious circuits, chipsets, microprocessors, and capacitors.

System: The demon is capable of increased processing speed and is actually smarter. Gain a +2 bonus to all Intelligence rolls.

Inhuman Strength

Angels that are tasked with working on physical Infrastructure are often lifting and moving heavy machinery. Some of these angels are expected to also defend the Infrastructure and are equipped with exceptional strength, making them brutally effective. Any demon that wishes to have an advantage in close combat is likely to keep or take this form ability.

Appearance: Muscles bulge and strain under the demon's surface. The demon could have obvious steel cables instead of musculature, or they may be replaced by a hydraulic system.

System: The demon's raw power increases. Gain a +2 bonus to all Strength rolls.

Inhuman Reflexes

Angels required to hunt, stalk, abduct, or kill people are enhanced with supernatural reflexes. These angels understand the concept of precision and skill and prefer this to the use of brute force. Demons who prefer precision and speed tend to keep or adapt this ability.

Appearance: The demon is lean and wiry. His joints may be well-oiled mechanical hinges and gears, or he may have pistons driving his muscle's movements.

System: The demon's speed and mobility increase. Gain a +2 bonus to all Dexterity rolls.

Mental Resistance

Some missions require an angel to interact with other supernatural creatures. These angels are forged with natural defenses to mental effects in order to prevent the angels from being subverted or stolen. A demon that deals with mental stress on a regular basis might adopt this ability.

Appearance: The demon's surface turns a faint blue color and is icy cold to the touch.

System: The demon is capable of resisting supernatural influence. When rolling to resist a supernatural power, add +2 dice to the roll.

Night Vision

Angels who perform their missions at night or in darkened areas are built with night vision, allowing them to see normally. Demons often adopt this form ability as a way to handle night-time fighting as well as delving in the darker corners of the God-Machine's Infrastructures.

Appearance: The demon's eyes turn green. This can be as detailed as fluid filling the capillaries in the demon's eyes until nothing can be seen but the green, or a bright green light replaces the eyes completely.

System: The demon can see in the dark and gains a +2 bonus to Perception rolls. In the dark, he can see details as though it were broad daylight.

Rivet Arm

Building Infrastructure is sometimes as fundamental as paving a road or building a structure. Angels in charge of overseeing or constructing structural Infrastructure are modified to have tools always at hand. Demons have found that this form ability works just as well as a weapon as it ever did as a tool to build.

Appearance: One entire arm transforms into some kind of tool, such as a nail gun or a riveter.

System: The demon can summon the weapon to replace his hand as a reflexive action. It is part of the demon's body and cannot be dropped or taken away. The gun shoots projectiles that are manifested within the demon, so he does not have to worry about ammunition or reloading. The demon can make an attack with the gun using his Wits + Firearms. The gun has a damage rating of 3L and does not penalize the demon's Initiative.

If used as a tool for relevant building projects, the gun gives a +2 bonus to the roll. The demon can utilize any gun Merits he may have with this weapon, such as Firefight or Marksmanship.

Sense the Angelic

All angels are agents of the God-Machine and are capable of recognizing that connection when they encounter each other. The Cover that demons adopt shields them from angelic scrutiny. Some angels are designated to seek and destroy non-angelic supernatural entities, such as demons. Demons who retain this ability have adapted it to work in reverse, making it easier for them to sense angelic beings.

Appearance: The demon has long thing tendrils of copper wire that flow from her head like hair. These tendrils glow with a soft white light.

System: The demon can sense the use of angelic powers on people and places. Anytime the demon is in an area where an angel has used Numina in the past 24 hours, or if she encounters a person that is currently under the effects of an angel's Numen, roll Wits + Investigation to notice the effect. If she has encountered the power before, she can positively identify exactly which Numina was used.

Slippery Body

Mechanical Infrastructure has gears and moving parts that require oil and grease to continue moving well. While blood and sacrifices usually maintain larger machinery, some smaller

mechanical objects just require a little adjustment every now and then. Angels maintaining these Infrastructures have modifications that allow them to keep smaller less important gears moving in between large sacrifices. Demons with this ability use it to get out of tight spots.

Appearance: The surface of the demon is covered in some kind of oily residue. This oil may be dark and viscous or thin and colorless.

System: The oil makes it hard for anyone to get a hold on the demon, giving him a +3 to his Defense versus establishing a grapple. In a grapple, the demon has a +3 bonus to overpowering his enemy when attempting to use the Escape grapple move. The demon is also able to squeeze through tight spaces and counts as being one Size smaller than normal for this purpose.

Sonic Acuity

The God-Machine utilizes angels to gather much of its information. Some angels gather the information directly through observation, while others extract information from the source. Some angels have the task of spying and are required to listen and report findings back to the God-Machine. The angels are equipped with devices that allow them to pick up the slightest of sounds. Many demons find that such an acute sense of hearing helps them not only spy on others, but stay alert to their surroundings.

Appearance: The demon's ears are changed due to this modification. She may have a distributed element filter instead of ears, or no ears at all with a small metallic flap covering the hole. Her ears may simply be depressions in the sides of her head, perhaps lined with softly blinking lights.

System: The demon is able to hear on a sonic and subsonic level. She can hear sounds of all volumes and frequencies with very little effort, without pain from loud noises. With a little concentration, she can even understand sounds that have been disrupted by solid objects, such as walls. The demon can distinguish individual sound sources from each other, allowing her to easily follow and understand several sounds at once. The demon gains a +3 bonus to Perception rolls pertaining to hearing. She cannot be surprised and is immune to Deafening effects.

This does not mean that she can hear things through an entire building. Sound waves eventually are so disrupted that they do not exist anymore; the further they get from the source, the slower the frequency until it ceases to be a wave. The demon cannot pick up sounds that no longer exist.

Spurs

Angels in charge of maintenance and structuring of Infrastructure are often modified to climb well. This allows them easy access to Infrastructure, no matter the size or location. Demons in mountainous regions often choose to keep this ability. Also, some demons living in urban areas adopt this ability to scale the sides of buildings.

Appearance: Large hooked spurs protrude from the flesh around inside of the demon's ankles. These spurs could be made of metal or bone.

System: Spurs afford the demon the ability to climb any vertical surface, regardless of height or incline. He adds a +3 bonus to his normal Strength + Athletics rolls for climbing and climbs 20 feet instead of 10. The spurs can be used as a small weapon, which deals 1L and imposes no penalty to Initiative.

Tough as Stone

Some Infrastructure is so vital that it requires constant guardianship. Angels designed for these tasks are statues, set in a place and left to guard the area without drawing any attention. They are made of marble and come to life to defend the Infrastructure whenever it is threatened. Demons who are better at taking a hit than avoiding one often adopt this form ability.

Appearance: The demon's surface turns hard and impenetrable. The skin is comprised of granite or marble.

System: The demon can spend one Aether to convert all damage from a single attack from Aggravated to Lethal or from Lethal to Bashing. Once the damage has been downgraded once, it cannot be downgraded again; Aggravated damage can never become Bashing damage through the use of this power. The demon can spend multiple Aether this way to downgrade damage from multiple attacks in a round.

Technologies

Acidic Spit

This ability is usually provided to an angel sent to destroy an entire building or structure without leaving a trace. The angel dissolves the structure within a matter of hours until all that is left is a dark stain in the space the structure once occupied. Demons can also use the acid in combat against agents of the God-Machine.

Appearance: The demon has acidic mucous. It might be a black ichor that sizzles and hisses when it hits the ground or a green substance that lines his mouth and eyes.

System: The demon excretes a noxious acid that burns through most substances. The demon can spit the acid up to 10 yards away. This is a ranged attack using Dexterity + Athletics – Defense. The acid has a weapon rating of 0A and does 2 Durability Damage to any armor the victim is wearing. The demon can also apply this acid when biting as a damage move while in a grapple.

Aura Sight

Most living creatures broadcast their emotional and mental state with facial expressions and body language, as well as more subtle signals that cannot be seen by the naked eye. Angels that must deal with people in social situations have programming built in to allow them to understand those people's emotions and feelings, which

are otherwise alien to the angel. Demons find that this is extremely useful not only when trying to gauge the emotions in a room, but also to find supernatural creatures lurking in a crowd.

Appearance: A faint blue light illuminates the eyes of the demon.

System: The demon is able to see the threads of emotion and feelings. He can interpret the nuances of the human body language and facial expressions, and discern secrets that an individual might not even know they are hiding.

Cost: None.

Dice Pool: Wits + Investigation

Action: Reflexive

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The player asks a question as though he had rolled a success; the Storyteller should give false or misleading information.

Failure: The demon is unable to interpret anything about the person.

Success: The player asks the Storyteller one question per success about an individual. The answers to these questions should reflect the demon's ability to read the subtle shift in the person's body language as well as the supernatural threads that define a person's soul.

Exceptional Success: The demon gains further insight into the secrets of his target.

Sample Questions

- What is this person's mood? A flash of emotion on the victim's face. Ideas normally alien to the demon come flooding into his senses.
- What is this person afraid of right now? A spark of terror in the victim's eyes. Thoughts of pain or suspicions of being discovered.
- What is this person's Vice or one of his Aspirations? A hidden smile over a guilty pleasure. Impressions of a faraway person or building.
- Is this person being controlled by someone else? Eyes shifting around looking for their master. Colored threads leading away from the person.
- Is this person a supernatural creature — and if I have seen them before, what is she? Dark threads surrounding a vampire. Wire cables coming off of a demon.
- Who here does this person want to hurt most? Glances towards the intended victim.

Barbed Tail

Many angels tasked with killing people use direct force, such as killing them with a weapon or their bare hands. Some angels must assassinate their victims slowly and in secret. These angels deliver poison to their victim and then leave, knowing they will die in due course. Demons with this ability use it to incapacitate opponents while in combat.

Appearance: The demon has a prehensile tail tipped with poison. The tail may be organic in nature, such as a scorpion tail, or mechanical, such as a thick cable or metallic cord.

System: If in close combat with an opponent, the demon can make an attack with his tail. The player rolls Dexterity + Athletics – Defense. The tail deals no damage on a successful hit but instead injects a grave poison, giving the victim the Poisoned Tilt.

Blind Sense

Angels manufactured to hunt people down have extra sensory hardware installed allowing them to feel and sense movements around them. These angels are frightening to be pursued by, since no barrier or obstacle seems to thwart them once they have sensed their prey. Demons concerned with finding hidden people or dealing with situations in the dark often have this form ability.

Appearance: The demon's eyes turn black. He may have shadows that darken his eyes, or the entire eye may fill in with a slick black substance. Some demons with this form ability may not even have eyes at all. Regardless, he can see normally.

System: The demon can sense anything moving within twenty feet of his location. He can feel these vibrations despite any physical barrier between him and the thing that is moving. He can see anyone who is invisible to the eye, but otherwise not hidden or obscured. This also allows him to sense people who are making an effort to hide, even with supernatural means. The player rolls Wits + Investigation + Primum vs. Dexterity + Stealth to discover the exact location of someone deliberately trying to hide. If the hidden person is using a supernatural power, this form ability works as a Clash of Wills.

Clairvoyant Sight

Some angels are designed to oversee large projects involving many smaller components. Many times those component activities are in different locations; the angel has hardware installations allowing it to see all components from one location to maximize efficiency. Demons in leadership positions find this ability useful to keep an eye on people or units. Some demons find this ability useful as a spying technique, though it could be costly.

Appearance: The demon's eyes turn solid white, with no visible pupil or iris.

System: The demon can look upon a person or location no matter the distance from the demon's physical location with perfect clarity. The demon must have met the person or been to the place in the last month to use Clairvoyant Sight to see them. The demon must concentrate to maintain this sight. If anything forces the demon to take an action before he chooses to stop concentrating on the vision, he loses his vision of the person or place and gains the Captivated Condition.



Demonic Horns

Some angels look the part of the mythical demons and angels to improve or build upon certain types of Infrastructure. Angels with horns are often intimidating creatures built to instill fear and religious fervor into people. These angels are not only frightening but formidable opponents.

Appearance: The demon has large horns growing from his forehead. The horns could be normal looking horns, from some iconic reference, or metallic in nature.

System: The demon can make a head butt attack as a melee attack using Strength + Brawl. The attack has a damage rating of 1L and inflicts the Stunned Tilt.

Electric Jolt

Many of the God-Machine's lesser creations are designed to facilitate or create Infrastructure. Angels designed for such purposes are often embedded with electrical currents and machinery in order to jump-start projects and defend themselves if necessary. Demons use this power to break down Infrastructure and destroy the God-Machine's creations.

Appearance: Electricity fills the demon's nervous system and skin, power coursing through and over him in electric blue waves.

System: This electricity can be concentrated into his hands and discharged as an instant action. The demon can choose to power a device that requires the use of a battery or normal electrical socket. Conversely, he can disrupt a device for 10 minutes with a touch.

The player can spend an Aether to make the electrical charge surround the demon instead, giving him an electrical field that acts as an armor with a rating of 2/0. While the electrical field is active, the demon can use it as a weapon, on a successful touch attack, the demon deals six 6B with no Initiative penalty.

Electrical Resistance

Most of the God-Machine's creations are mechanical in nature and require energy to run. Angels who are built to create and deal with these structures have hardware installed that gives them resistance to the electrical currents they work with. Demons find that this resistance is useful when dealing with agents of the God-Machine.

Appearance: The demon's surface shows signs of her supernatural resistance. She may be covered in a fine copper mesh simulating a Faraday cage, or her flesh may be made of a resistive material such as glass or quartz.

System: The demon is completely immune to the effects of electricity. She takes no damage from being struck by an electric current and suffers no adverse Tilts or Conditions.

Environmental Resistance

Angels are often on missions that require them to interact with the raw elements. A mission may require a trip to the core of the Earth or to Antarctica to install necessary pieces of Infrastructure. These angels are fortified with an outer layer that protects them from the ravages of these elements. Demons adapt this ability to protect themselves from the elements.

Appearance: The demon's surface is covered in a thin coating that changes to match his environment, always providing protection. This coating often looks a bit like Teflon.

System: The demon is immune to any adverse effects from all Environmental Tilts.

Essence Drain

Angels in charge of the defense of the God-Machine and Infrastructure deal with other supernatural creatures on a regular basis. They are adapted to eliminate any threat these creatures may pose to the God-Machine. One of the best ways to deal with another supernatural creature is to remove what makes them supernatural. These angels can steal supernatural power and wield it against its owner, making the angel a dangerous foe. Demons with this ability gladly turn it against angels and other supernatural creatures for the very same reason.

Appearance: The surface of the demon's fingers and hands turn black and shine as though they were dipped in oil.

System: The demon is capable of stealing Essence from an angel, or Aether from another demon, and turning it into Aether for his own use. This power requires the demon to be in contact with his intended target, requiring a successful touch attack against an unwilling victim. The player rolls Wits + Occult + Primum – Resolve to steal a number of Essence per success.

At the Storyteller's discretion, this may work on supernatural creatures not fueled by Essence or Aether.

Fire Resistance

Not all angels are created to fulfill missions on Earth's surface. Some are required to do work in or around its core. These angels are resistant to heat and fire, allowing them to work without fear of injury. Guardians especially adapt this form ability to prevent damage in an explosion, or while moving through a burning building.

Appearance: The demon's surface shows signs of his supernatural resistance. His skin may be dark and hard with red showing beneath, like lava stone, or it may be made of a heat resistant metal such as tungsten or rhenium.

System: The demon is completely immune to the effects of high temperatures and fire. He does not take damage from fire, and does not suffer from heat related Environmental Tilts.

Frost Aura

Many parts of the God-Machine use advanced technologies to function. Some parts use superconductive materials which require extremely cold temperatures to work correctly. Angels tasked with making sure these parts function must be able to create the correct environment for the task. Demons with this ability find it useful in their own dealings with machines, and for neutralizing opponents.

Appearance: The demon seems to be covered in a thin sheet of ice, crystals forming at his finger tips and face. The ice could be made of any fluid, or the demon could just continuously have a fine mist of condensed water around him. Cold radiates off the demon's body.

System: As an instant action, the demon can spend one Aether to summon the cold around him and give it direction. The cold fills a space the size of a small house or one large room, turning the environment in the area to Extreme Cold for one hour. Anyone who enters the area during that time gains the Extreme Cold Tilt, which persists after they leave the area until they receive medical attention, as with hypothermia.

Fluid Form

Angels are often in situations in which they must adhere to a specific plan without deviation and without compromise. While angels have immunity to emotional diversions, some physical barriers could prevent them from continuing their functions. An angel with a particularly trying or long task is programmed to adapt itself to compensate for all but the direst of circumstances to fulfill its mission. Demons with this form ability have learned to function despite not only physical problems, but emotional issues as well.

Appearance: The demon appears to be made of some kind of fluid substance. This could be mercury-like liquid metal or some kind of viscous organic substance, such as blood or crude oil.

System: The demon is able to better cope with mental and physical stress while in his demonic form. If the demon is affected by a normal Condition or a Tilt, he lessens any dice penalty to his actions that the Condition or Tilt may cause to a –1. All other effects of the Condition or Tilt still apply. This does not apply to Demonic Conditions the demon may be affected by.

Inhuman Beauty

Angels can be both terrible and wondrous creatures, depending on what they are intended to do. An angel created to tempt or seduce someone is graced with exceptional good looks and demeanor. Demons usually adapt this beauty to help ease their passage and win followers.

Appearance: Just as the demon can be monstrous to see, so can she be overwhelmingly seductive and beautiful. The demon's features are both terrible and awe inspiring at the same time. Her hair shines with an otherworldly light, her surface takes on a soft glow and her body radiates warmth.

System: The demon gains a +2 bonus on any Social rolls that would be influenced by her looks. Depending on the particulars, this might influence Expression, Intimidation, Persuasion, Subterfuge, or other rolls. Also, the demon can activate her aura as a reflexive action in which anyone who sees her becomes subservient to her awesome visage. The player rolls Presence + Intimidation vs. Composure and on a success, onlookers gain Inspired Condition or the Swooning Condition. The demon decides for each person at the time of activation.

Glory and Terror

All angels are capable of being intimidating when necessary to scare or deal with troublesome humans. Some angels have a supernatural ability to intimidate and cow those around them as a form of control and mass manipulation. Many demons recognize the usefulness of this tactic when dealing with crowds of people in the face of danger.

Appearance: The demon is the epitome of unearthly power. Something about the demon generates fear in those that see him. He may have blood dripping from open wounds on his skin, intense heat radiates from his body, or an icy chill emanates from his skin.

System: The demon gains a +3 bonus to Intimidation. As a reflexive action roll Presence + Intimidation to give the Insensate Tilt to those able to see the demon, at a rate of one person per success. If the demon is attempting to open Doors, he can use this action as Hard Leverage. The demon can use his aura on a person multiple times in a round, but each time he must do something to reinforce his intimidation. This could be as easy as dealing damage to the victim, or displaying feats of strength.

Mind Reading

Part of any good strategy is being able to predict what your enemy intends to do. The God-Machine has plenty of enemies. It is not omniscient though, and uses angels to find out what they are planning. While some missions may require the angel to interrogate or torture a victim into revealing information, some subtler angels are outfitted with the ability to read the minds of its victims to gather the information it needs. Often, the subject of this mental examination doesn't even know the angel was there. A demon that can read minds has a distinct advantage when investigating and dealing with people.

Appearance: The demon's eyes take on a coppery sheen that fills the entire space of the eye, including the white. The color could replace the normal eye color, or overlay the eye with thin copper wires.

System: The demon only has to see her intended target; the target does not have to see the demon or know she is there. As a reflexive action, the player rolls her Wits + Persuasion + Primum vs. Resolve + Primum. If successful, the demon can read the surface thoughts of the victim for as long as she maintains concentration.

If the demon would like to see something the victim is not currently thinking about, she can try to dig for the thought or idea by spending one Willpower. The player rolls Wits + Subterfuge – Resolve as an extended action (target number = variable, see chart; one roll/minute). The target number for the roll is based on the complexity and discomfort level of the thought the demon wishes to bring forth. These thoughts must be short enough to be fully described with one sentence.

Number of successes	Type of Memory or Thought
1	An innocuous or harmless memory or thought that the victim is not currently thinking about
2	A forgotten memory
3	A memory or thought the victim is attempting to hide
4	A memory or thought the victim is attempting to hide that is painful to remember
5+	A memory or thought the victim has repressed and forgotten due to its painful nature

Mirrored Skin

A mission may require an angel to perform a task with minimal impact to its surroundings, by being silent and unseen, yet still able to interact on a physical level. These angels are designed to blend into their surroundings and take on the appearance of whatever is nearby. Some demons wish to remain unseen while in their demonic form, and adopt this ability as a way to camouflage themselves.

Appearance: The demon's skin is covered with millions of tiny mirrored scales. Somehow, these mirrors are always oriented to absorb his surroundings and reflect them back, affording him camouflage.

System: As long as the demon is standing still, he is completely invisible to the naked eye. He can still be detected by devices or powers that detect heat or auras. This ability works despite any other form abilities that may have obvious effects such as a glow or electricity. When the demon is moving, he is still nearly invisible, but the shifting of the mirrors might give him away. The demon gains a +3 to Stealth rolls; and any passive observer has a –1 penalty to notice him with Wits + Composure.

Propulsions

Long Limbs

Angels required to deliver messages or packages are designed to move quickly at the expense of all else. They have light lean bodies and thin muscular legs, allowing them to traverse multiple terrain types at high speeds without fear of losing balance. Some demons prefer to be able to move fast without sacrificing balance and agility.

Appearance: The demon's limbs elongate and become thin graceful spindles, giving him the ability to move with unearthly grace and speed.

System: The demon gains a +2 to Athletics rolls (but not Defense) and increases his Speed by 5.

Phasing

The God-Machine is pervasive all over the world. Bits and parts of machinery extend both in and out of the world in multiple areas. Angels designed to maintain such areas are able to transition between the Earth and the realm of the God-Machine at will. Demons with this ability rarely transition fully out of the world, afraid to draw too much attention from the God-Machine. Instead they move just far enough out of the world to become intangible.

Appearance: The demon's body emits a low hum of electricity and partially transparent as he fades in and out of view.

System: The demon can spend one Aether to transition from corporeal to incorporeal, allowing him to travel through solid objects at half Speed. Once he is through the object, he reverts back to his corporeal form. The demon cannot hold onto or carry objects while Phasing, though any clothing still on his form phases with him. The demon also cannot take anyone with him through a solid object, and cannot confer his Phasing ability to anyone else.

Phasing affords the demon some degree of protection from attacks, as anything physical has the chance to pass right through him. The demon can activate Phasing to give all attack rolls against the demon a –2 penalty.

Plasma Drive

Angels in charge of delivery, be it parts for different Infrastructures, or messages from the God-Machine, must be quick and adaptable to any circumstances. Fast angels are formed from plasma, ions that can be accelerated and shoot long distances. Demons retain this form ability for the increase to speed as well as the defensive capabilities it affords.

Appearance: The demon is powered by plasma. His veins are filled with it and his skin glows and ripples as the ions jostle about. When the drive is active, the veins on the demon's body stand out in a colorful electric glow.

System: The demon's reflexes are naturally fast and dodging and feats of athleticism do not cause him to tire. The demon does not take penalties to defense when he is attacked multiple times in a round. If he is in combat with a single opponent, he gains a +2 bonus to his Defense. He also subtracts Defense from ranged attacks.

As a reflexive action on his turn, the demon can spend one Aether to activate his Plasma Drive to move at a run and take an action. The demon still subtracts his Defense from attacks made on him this turn, and he still benefits from his Speed as above.

Spatial Distortion

Stealthy angels are constructed with special devices allowing them to fold space around their bodies, changing their size and shape. These angels are tasked with missions such as breaking and entering or spying on individuals important to the God-Machine's plans. Demons with this form ability enjoy sneaking around to gather their information.

Appearance: The demon's body takes on a two-dimensional appearance no matter what angle she is being viewed from.

System: As an instant action, the demon can contort space around her to make herself smaller. She can become paper thin or three feet tall. The size and mass of the demon never changes, instead space warps around her to create the effect of a smaller size. She can pass through small spaces or through cracks with ease.

By spending one Aether, the demon can wrap space around her to become so thin, she is nearly invisible. The player rolls Intelligence + Occult to disappear for a number of turns equal to successes. Anyone trying to find the demon must roll Wits + Investigation and exceed the number of successes that the demon achieved when activating the Spatial Distortion.

Teleportation

An angel that is required to travel to many different locations in order to perform its mission is built to move quickly and with the least amount of effort. Demons find the ability to teleport from one location to another to be convenient both for transportation and to escape predators.

Appearance: The demon has a fine tracery of veins all along his body that react when he activates the teleport. They may glow with color, or shift and move about his body in preparation for the move.

System: As a reflexive action on his turn, the demon can spend one Aether to teleport to any place within his line of sight. The demon can only teleport himself and any small items he is carrying with him. He cannot carry anyone with him when he teleports.

Tether

Some angels designed to create building infrastructure must move about the structure carrying things from one place to another with speed and efficiency. These angels have attachments that allow them to grab onto structures and move about with ease, or to manipulate distant objects without expending too much energy. Demons who keep these aspects

repurpose the apparatuses for more utilitarian tasks. Sometimes they find that these modified bodies can be useful in a fight.

Appearance: The demon has some kind of grappling appendage on his body. This could be a long retractable metal arm that extends away from the demon, or a prehensile whip-like tail. It could be as simple looking as a length of rope, or as spectacular as a beam of energy that passes from the demon to other objects and pulls them together as though they were affected by magnetism.

System: The demon is capable of grabbing onto an object at a range of twenty yards and pulling himself to that point. This is most helpful for vertical climbs, but can be used on horizontal surfaces. The demon makes a ranged touch attack with Strength + Athletics to grab onto the object. Once he gets ahold of it, he moves at his running Speed toward the object each round until he reaches it. The demon can carry things with him while he is moving, including one other person.

If the demon grabs onto a person with his tether instead of an object, he can choose to pull the person to him. After a successful touch attack, Strength + Athletics – Defense, the victim is considered grappled. Each turn, if the demon wins the contested action, he can drag his opponent towards him as a Maneuver. The player can also roll on his turn to utilize the Hold and Restrain maneuvers on his victim, but no other maneuvers can be made during this grapple.

Wings

Angels have wings for a variety of reasons, whether its the need to get to high places or to have the ability to survey large areas quickly. Some are more subtle in their functionality, such as to instill awe or a sense of majesty in those the angel interacts with. Demons concerned with fast unnoticed travel find the ability to fly extremely useful.

Appearance: Large wings sprout from the demon's back. These wings can take on any appearance the player wishes. They could be thick and leathery, downy white feathers, or bits of cloth stretched over a mechanical flying apparatus.

System: The demon is capable of flight and has a species factor of 10 to his Speed while flying.

Processes

Aegis Protocol

An angel in charge of defending an important cog or piece of Infrastructure for the God-Machine must be able to withstand all types of onslaught. The angel is equipped with defensive gear that is adaptable to all types of attacks, allowing the angel to be prepared for anything. Demons with this ability often find themselves on the front lines of combat.

Appearance: A small shield grows from one of the demon's hands, taking whatever shape the demon wishes. It could be a small round disk made of wood or metal, or look like a giant flat bone protruding from the demon's arm.

System: The demon calls upon a small shield as a reflexive action. The shield grants the demon partial concealment and gives a +2 bonus to his Defense, but does not impart an penalty to his Initiative. The shield can be used as a weapon with a rating of 1L. In addition, the demon can reflexively spend one Aether to have the shield expand to create an armored barrier around him, giving him an additional armor rating of 2/2 which stacks with any other armor he may have, either from a power or from clothing.

Body Modification

Sometimes an angel must be able to adapt and react quickly to an unexpected threat. Special add-ons are installed to allow a normally passive angel to change into a creature fully capable of combat and defense. Demons of all types find this extra versatility useful.

Appearance: Signs of the modifications mar the demon's body. Fleshy demons have puckered and blackened scars, while demons with a metallic or stone surface have deep fissures and grooves.

System: As a reflexive action on her turn, the demon can reallocate any number of Physical Attributes dots from one or more Attributes into another. The demon can never reduce an Attribute below one dot. Normal Attribute limits still apply for the reallocations.

Cavernous Maw

Sometimes the God-Machine wants humans dead. Usually this just includes letting them die in some accident, or killing them quickly to further some other plan. But every now and then the death itself is the plan. Sometimes the God-Machine must consume a human, maybe to lubricate a gear or increase output for a particular piece of Infrastructure. Either way, the God-Machine must send an angel to eat the person. It isn't just enough to kill and eat them though, they must kill them in the process of eating them, chomping down on their screaming bodies. Demons with this form ability are more than happy to turn their vicious bite against agents of the God-Machine.

Appearance: The demon's mouth thins and stretches to open from ear to ear. When she opens her mouth, the jaws unhinge allowing maximal opening capacity. The inside is lined with concentric rows of razor sharp steel teeth.

System: The demon can eat almost anything as long as she can get her mouth on it. For larger objects, she can take bites dealing 2 Structure Damage until the item or building is completely destroyed. If the bite is turned onto a fleshy creature, it works as a weapon with a rating of 2A.

Corruption Aura

Sometimes manmade structures and buildings impede proper Infrastructure construction and they must be destroyed to make room. Sometimes, these buildings cannot just be knocked down or blown up – though that is an option in many cases. Instead the buildings must be degraded over time. Angels tasked with destroying these buildings are equipped with means to corrupt and degrade the buildings fundamental construction. Once weakened,

the building can be destroyed with natural occurrences or just left to finish rotting on its own. Demons use their corrupting essence for a variety of reasons, such as destroying evidence, disarming enemies, and ruining God-Machine Infrastructure.

Appearance: The aura is perceptible and even tangible. The demon is covered in the aura, and it seems to exude from his skin. It may look like noxious green vapors or smell of sulfur and ash.

System: The demon can activate his aura, which erodes and degrades any kind of non-natural structure within a five foot aura around him. The demon and his possessions are immune to his own Aura.

Cost: 1 Aether

Dice Pool: Presence + Occult

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon's aura turns on the demon and begins to eat away at his own objects and body. The demon's items take one structural damage and the demon suffers one bashing damage every other round.

Failure: The demon's aura does nothing to the objects around him.

Success: Any large structure takes one structural damage every five minutes it is within his Aura. Smaller items, such as hand-held weapons, portable radios, and cell phones take this damage at a rate of one structural damage every other round.

Exceptional Success: The demon can direct his aura to corrupt organic matter as well as non-organic. His aura wilts plants and flowers, and deals 1B damage every other round to living, and undead creatures within his aura.

Extra Mechanical Limbs

The God-Machine creates multi-limbed angels to build or repair bits of Infrastructure as having multiple limbs on one angel is better than creating multiple angels for the same job. Those demons that keep these aspects, or choose to manifest them, find the use of additional arms useful in destroying those same bits of Infrastructure. They are also very useful in a combat.

Appearance: An extra set of fully functional mechanical arms constructed of metal and plastics protrude from the demon's torso. The demon controls these limbs separately from his normal arms, but they work flawlessly in tandem with his other limbs.

System: The demon can use his mechanical arms to hold additional items or to assist in anything else he is doing that requires hands. For example, he can hold a shield and a two-handed weapon and still have an extra hand free for other activities. If the demon uses all of his arms towards one endeavor, such as swinging a large sword, grappling an opponent, or climbing a sheer surface, he gains a +3 bonus to his Strength. Extra limbs can also help the demon defend himself against an attack. If the demon has at least two unarmed hands, he gains a +3 bonus to his Defense.

Since the arms are made out of metal, they deal lethal damage instead of bashing if used for an unarmed attack.

Insect Swarm

Some missions require an angel to bring fears to life to terrorize people. An angel that is nothing more than a large swarm of insects, especially cockroaches or flies, is a spectacular way to manage this. The angel can easily pursue its victim behind closed doors and into tight spaces with this form, and just as easily disappear into cracks and crannies when necessary to escape. Demons find this ability to be quite useful for getting into tight places and getting out of dangerous situations.

Appearance: The demon is made up of millions of tiny biomechanical creatures. They may resemble flies, roaches, or just about anything else. While together the insects create the demon's body seamlessly, making it impossible to tell that the demon is made up of so many tiny parts.

System: As a reflexive action, the demon can spend one Aether and direct the insects to separate into their individual parts, becoming a moving swarm of insects; another reflexive action can be used to reform into a solid entity. While separated, the demon cannot be killed unless every individual insect is killed. The demon is considered a swarm and can inflict the Swarm Environmental Tilt from p. 179 on victims.

If the demon loses more than 50% of his insect swarm, either from attacks or being separated, he falls unconscious when he leaves his demonic form.

Magnesium Flare

Many of the God-Machine's messages are not delivered through words, but through complex codes and signals. Angels designed to deliver certain messages are able to turn their bodies into shining beacons in which specific sequencing encodes a message to those who know how to interpret it. Demons find this method of message sending pointless, but the light is so bright, it can easily blind someone who looks directly at it.

Appearance: The demon's surface glows with a soft white light that is bright enough to illuminate a five foot radius around him. He can increase the light into the bright white light of burning magnesium at will.

System: The demon can activate the bright light.

Cost: 1 Aether

Dice Pool: Presence + Intimidation vs. Wits + Athletics

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon not only fails to activate the Magnesium Flare, but instead it flashes momentarily around the demon and burns his flesh and arms. The demon is left with a major brand glitch.

Failure: The demon's light fails to activate.

Success: Anyone who sees him gains the Blind Condition (and therefore the Blinded Tilt) for the next five minutes. The demon's light is bright enough to be seen from a distance.

Exceptional Success: Anyone seeing the demon has the Blind Condition for the next scene instead of the next five minutes.

Memory Theft

Once in a while someone sees behind the scenes into the realm of the God-Machine, despite its best efforts to occlude itself. Often these people aren't worth keeping around and an angel is dispatched to kill them. But, sometimes an angel must keep the person alive for some other purpose and just removes his memory of the event and sends him on this way. A smart demon realizes that taking people's memories of her helps maintain a low profile.

Appearance: The demon has a cord or wire trailing from somewhere on her head. The end of the cord resembles a headphone jack, which the demon uses to plug into her target's brain.

System: The demon must touch her target and enter into a grapple. The demon inserts her jack into the victim's brain, but this inflicts no damage. Once the victim is connected to the demon, he is incapacitated and enters a trance-like state, becoming easy for the demon to manipulate.

Cost: 1 Aether

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Subterfuge – Composure

Action: Extended (target number = target's Willpower; one roll/five or ten minutes)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon is flooded with the victim's memories, unbidden and jumbled, overloading his senses. He cannot make sense of the thoughts and must disconnect from his victim. For the rest of the scene, the demon is at a –3 penalty to all Mental actions as he attempts to recover.

Failure: The demon is unable to access any of the victim's memories and must disconnect from the victim.

Success: The demon can download memories from the victim. The demon gains an hour's worth of memories from the victim in a quick download. The demon can choose to make slight alterations to the memories she sees by erasing the original memories and uploading new ones, but this doubles the amount of time between each roll to ten minutes.

Subtle memory changes are easy and do not require anything more than a little extra time. These alterations include changing who was interacted with, or how they looked or sounded. If the changes are drastic, such as changing the location of events, how many people were involved, or completely changing what events occurred, each roll suffers a –2 penalty.

Exceptional Success: The player can choose one of the options list on p. 313, or can give the victim the Amnesia Condition.

Multiple Images

The ability to be in multiple places at once is highly advantageous to angels who need to perform complex tasks alone. An angel with multiple images may be able to use multiple complex machines at one time. Demons are unfortunately unable to fully replicate themselves now that they are no longer angels. They can instead create ghost images of themselves which can be terrifying to behold.

Appearance: The demon has small hash markings that look like tattoos all over her body. Each hash mark represents an image of the demon, and when this power is activated, each one leaves her body and appears beside her. These images are always reflected by mirrors, even when the power is not activated.

System: The demon can create a legion of identical demons. These demons are not real and cannot take any actions of their own. Instead, they mimic the actions of the demon and are not perfect replicas. They are real enough to frighten anyone witnessing the appearance of thousands of new demons.

Cost: 1 Aether

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Intimidation + Primum vs. Composure + Primum

Action: Reflexive

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon can see her images, but no one else can. The images seem more real to the demon than normal, and she feels as though she is a part of each and every one of them. She cannot focus on any one thing and is distracted. The demon gains the Disoriented Condition for the rest of the scene.

Failure: The extra images of the demon fail to appear.

Success: The legion of demons is maddening. Those who see the demon are affected by the Insane Tilt. Seeing so many demons is distracting at best, and this confusion works to her advantage. Determining which image is actually the demon requires a successful Wits + Investigation roll. The demon is considered to have partial concealment against anyone who has not determined which image is the true demon.

Exceptional Success: The demon can choose to apply the Madness Condition to anyone affected by the Insane Tilt.

Quill Burst

Some angels are sent on reconnaissance missions or assignments that involve some risk, but are not dangerous enough to warrant full out protections or weaponry. The angel is fitted with a self-defense mechanism that allow them to deal with the situation quickly and efficiently, no matter how dire the situation may be. The quills are built to burrow into soft flesh, ripping a person apart from the inside. Demons that find themselves working alone often will sometimes evolve this form ability to better deal with multiple attackers.

Appearance: The demon's skin is covered with millions of tiny barbed quills so fine that they resemble hairs. These quills can be organic spines that function exactly like that of an animal, or manufactured items such as blades or needles.

System: The demon can spend one Aether to activate this ability and eject quills in a burst around him. He rolls an attack with Strength + Athletics against everyone in a ten foot radius and deals one lethal damage to each target successfully hit. The quills act as a mild poison as they burrow into the flesh and skin of anyone they hit. If the opponent takes damage from the quill burst, then he is affected by the Poisoned Tilt until he can get the quills removed.



Armor reduces damage as per normal and prevents the quills from taking hold. Removing the quills takes time and effort. The victim must have some kind of medical attention. He can be hospitalized for a day, or be the subject of Wits + Medicine as an extended action.

Rain of Fire

Sometimes the God-Machine needs to destroy swaths of land, raze entire cities, or otherwise decimate large areas. Angels whose job it is to carry out these tasks have installations that allow them to call fire and lightening from the sky to quickly destroy the area. Demons use this ability sparingly, knowing the destruction they cause could draw the attention of the human authorities if not the God-Machine.

Appearance: The demon's body radiates heat. Maybe fine tendrils of smoke emanate from his body, thin flames dance across his fingertips, or napalm drips from his body, leaving smoldering footprints in his wake.

System: The demon can bring fire down from the sky in a ten-yard diameter, making it look as though it is raining napalm. Fire sticks to anything it touches and quickly turns to conflagrations.

Cost: 1 Aether

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Primum

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon calls the fire but cannot control it. The fire burns out of control around the demon, endangering him. Apply the Inferno Tilt (p. 386) to the area.

Failure: There is no fire and the temperature of the area does not increase.

Success: Fire rains from the sky creating small pockets of fire across the area. The demon can attempt to direct the fire at targets. The player rolls Wits + Occult – Defense. Anyone caught by the fire suffers 3L damage automatically. The fires do not last and only remain for one turn/ Primum dot.

Exceptional Success: Apply the Inferno Tilt to the area, but the demon can control where and how much the fire spreads.

Voice of the Angel

Communication between angels and the God-Machine can occur in a variety of ways. Most use electronic communications in much the same way a modem communicates over a phone line to send and receive signals. Demons who retain this ability are no longer connected to the God-Machine, but are still capable to sending electronic signals. They have learned to modify the signals into momentary bursts of electronic noise and static screams that are deafening.

Appearance: The demon's voice takes on an electronic undertone as though it is filtered through an audio tuning device.

System: The demon can spend one Aether to activate this power, letting out an ear piercing screech that is harmful

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER – EXTREME CUSTOMIZATION

Once you have chosen all of your form abilities, you may be thinking about how awesome your character would look if he was just a giant Tesla coil suspended in mid-air with crackling lightening arcing around him. Or maybe she is a hovering band of iridescent energy trailing prehensile shadowy tendrils. Not all angels look humanoid, and certainly demons in their demonic form do not need to either.

How your demonic form looks is completely up to you. If you decide to create a demonic form that is totally non-human, then you will have to do a little more work. Having no legs or no arms may seem debilitating, but conceptually, something else can stand in the functional place of those limbs. It is best to start with a description for the form, and then decide form abilities based on what the demon looks like. Appearance descriptions are not hard and fast; if the functionality makes sense, then go for it.

to hear. The player rolls Presence + Expression + Primum – Composure to deal Bashing damage to everyone who can hear her. Armor cannot reduce this damage. Anyone damaged in this way gains the Deafened Tilt.

Wound Healing

Some angels are designed for endurance in combat. Usually, these angels are charged with protecting an individual or an item of importance to the God-Machine. While these angels may be strong and fast, multiple combats can be deadly, even for a tireless angel. These angels have special hardware that allows them to heal damage over time, making them tremendously hard to destroy. Demons adapt this form ability if they are often engaged in combat.

Appearance: The demon is riddled with scars. These could be weld lines on metallic surfaces, or red welts along the demon's skin.

System: The demon can heal wounds reflexively. On his turn the demon heals the right most filled Health Box as long as it is filled with Bashing or Lethal damage.

Demonic Conditions

When one of the Unchained assumes her demonic form, she changes into a semblance of her previous angelic form but she does not become an angel. A demonic form is a blend of what the demon was before her Fall and what she is now. The demon has a personality that she never had as an angel; this has changed her irrevocably for good or ill. The demon's personality traits are with her all the time, even in demonic form. They sometimes manifest in the demonic form as Conditions. When a demon assumes her demonic form, she becomes susceptible to demonic Conditions.

Demonic Conditions reflect the demon's consciousness, emotion, and will to be different from her angelic beginnings. Demonic Conditions are triggered responses from the demon's psyche as pure emotional instinct takes over. Demonic Conditions are similar to normal Conditions, but only apply while the demon is in demonic form.

If a demon encounters a Compromise while in her demonic form, she is not affected by it in a normal way. While in demonic form, the demon is drawing on her past as an angel, while simultaneously overriding her past with her current personality as a demon. Emotions are running high for the demon in this state, and the result of excess stress caused by a Compromise is a raw emotional, if not necessarily human, response. If the demon must roll for a Compromise while in her demonic form, she gains one of the following demonic Conditions instead of a normal Condition as a result of that roll.

Aetheric Bleed

The demon has overexerted herself to the point of exhaustion. She can no longer manage her use of Aether and it begins to pour out of her. Every turn the demon loses one Aether for every two Primum she has, round down. The demon always loses at least one Aether per turn.

Causing the Condition: This Condition is the result of the demon cycling through Aether too fast. If the demon spends all of her Aether more than twice in a scene, she begins to bleed Aether as opposed to retaining it. This Condition can also be caused by failing a compromise while in demonic form. Note that this only applies after the demon is already in demonic form.

Ending the Condition: The Condition ends when the demon runs out of Aether completely, when she harvests Aether from Infrastructure, or when she leaves demonic form. The player takes a Beat.

Demonic Disconnect

The demon loses his tenuous hold on his human side. He is unable to empathize with humanity and takes a –2 penalty to any Social roll to deal with humans.

Causing the Condition: This Condition is the result of the demon being too callous with humans, and applies if the demon kills a human while in his demonic form. This Condition can also be caused by failing a compromise while in demonic form. Note that this only applies after the demon is already in demonic form.

Ending the Condition: This demonic Condition ends when the demon chooses to fail a Social roll against a human or leaves his demonic form. The player takes a Beat.

Demonic Rage

The demon is filled with pain and anger to the point of losing control. The demon is too enraged to stop himself from attacking whatever is in front of him and the rage consumes his attention. The demon cannot take Social or Mental actions while he has this Condition, and is at a –2 penalty to take any Physical action that is not an attack.

Causing the Condition: This Condition is caused by the demon facing overwhelming odds while in his demonic form. It can occur if the demon takes more damage than his Stamina in a single hit or if the demon takes damage from two or more different sources in a single turn. This Condition can also be caused by failing a compromise while in demonic form. Note that this only applies after the demon is already in demonic form.

Ending the Condition: The Condition ends when the demon kills someone, there are no more targets to attack, or the demon leaves his demonic form. The demon takes a Beat.

Sample Demons

Close Combatant

The close combatant is a Guardian who specializes in getting close and beating a victim with superior strength and ability. He knows how to take a hit and has adapted his body to be both resilient and enduring. He is strong beyond belief, and when concentrating can cleave through foes with a single swing of his mighty blade.

He is a hulking, statuesque creature standing ten feet tall and nearly half as wide. He is made of dull coated copper shaped into interlocking plates. Thick coppery cables can be seen between the gaps in the plates; his deep-set eyes can just be seen peeking out of the armored helmet. He has four arms set in perfect alignment on either side of his body, making his shoulders look broad and muscular. A functional mechanical tail protrudes from the armor and shifts about as the huge demon moves.

Modifications: Armored Plates, Blade Hand, Inhuman Strength

Technologies: Environmental Resistance, Barbed Tail

Propulsions: Teleportation

Processes: Extra Mechanical Limbs

Ranged Combatant

The ranged combatant is a Destroyer who moves with agility and grace and is hard to hit. She keeps her target at range by either evading her opponent or taking advantage of her ability to fly. She is adaptable and can easily adjust her own body

The demon has no legs and is instead comprised of many striped wings of various shapes and textures which hold her aloft and upright. She has no face or eyes, just wings and arms, mechanical constructs with copper wires tracing up and down along their length. One arm is fashioned to look like a rail gun that shoots long needles.

Modifications: Inhuman Strength, Inhuman Reflexes, Rivet Arm

Technologies: Blind Sense, EMP Field

Propulsions: Wings

Processes: Body Modification

Stealthy Infiltrator

The stealthy infiltrator is a Messenger who is a master of hiding and getting into places he isn't supposed to be. He prefers not to fight unless he is sure he has the upper hand. He picks the time and the place for the fight then strikes from hiding. Usually, he is on the defensive, keeping an eye out for danger as he performs his tasks. If he is attacked, the energy surrounding his body protects him until he can get away.

The demon looks like a large clockwork reptile with tiny dark scales all over its body shined to a mirror finish in order to reflect its surroundings. If someone is unlucky enough to see it, the creature has pitch black eyes with a faint red glow. The shadows around the demon seem to darken, all light around it absorbed by the mirrored scales.

Modifications: Inhuman Reflexes, Night Vision, Sonic Acuity

Technologies: Electric Jolt, Mirrored Skin

Propulsions: Spatial Distortion

Processes: Voice of the Angel

Beautiful Leader

The beautiful leader is a Psychopomp who is a natural leader with a galvanizing personality. She is both beautiful and terrible at the same time. She inspires followers to protect and defend her and causes her enemies to grovel in their awe of her beauty, or run in fear of her might.

The demon is a radiant beauty. She has soft blue skin that molds perfectly into a soft white metallic scalp. Thin bluish wires cover her skull and coalesce at her temples, a few tendrils forming patterns around her eyes, which glow with a blue light. Her skin is hot to the touch and heat radiates from her in stifling waves.

Modifications: Electrical Sight, Inhuman Intelligence, Mental Resistance

Technologies: Glory and Terror, Inhuman Beauty

Propulsions: Teleportation

Processes: Memory Theft

Example of Demonic Form Creation

Luke is ready to determine the finishing touches on his character Gabrielle (see p. 84 for the process of Gabrielle's creation) and is deciding on her demonic form.

First Luke thinks about what kind of angel Gabrielle was before the Fall. He thinks about what he has already decided about Gabrielle. She is a Messenger who is fast and stealthy. She is prone to scare tactics if forced to fight, but would prefer to run away. He decides that as an angel, Gabrielle's mission was to deliver visions of terror and destruction to individuals designated as the God-Machine's prophets. Gabrielle would implant the visions in dreams, or within signs and portents left for the person, but she would try not to appear directly. Gabrielle was designed to be quick and hard to spot, but frightening if cornered. Such an angel would need to be able to react to varying situations, always on her toes.

With this decided, Luke creates Gabrielle's demonic form. He decides that each time he picks a form ability, he will jot down a description of what it looks like so he can accurately describe Gabrielle's demonic form at the end of the process. Since Gabrielle starts at Primum 1, she cannot deviate too far from her original angelic design. Luke is okay with this, since he has decided that Gabrielle is still involved in the courier business and uses her speed and stealth to her advantage in her demonic form.

First, Luke decides on Modifications to give Gabrielle. Luke decides that since Gabrielle delivered most of her visions via dreams, she operated solely at night. He chooses the form ability Night Vision, noting that Gabrielle's irises swirl with a sickly green in her demonic form. Luke wants Gabrielle to be fast in her demonic form and decides that Inhuman Reflexes is a good way to represent that, with an overall advantage to all rolls dealing with Dexterity. He jots down that Gabrielle's limbs are made of metal with gears and hinges. For his final modification Luke decides on Slippery Body. Since Gabrielle doesn't want to have to stick around in a fight, the ability to escape a grapple will be useful. Also, getting through tight spaces is useful for giving an enemy the slip. He notes that Gabrielle's hinges are well lubricated and dark oil glistens over her entire body.

Next, Luke picks Technologies. Given Gabrielle's propensity for scare tactics, Luke decides to give Gabrielle the form ability Glory and Terror. He thinks that the best way to represent this is for the shadows around her to darken when she changes into her demonic form. Knowing that even though Gabrielle prefers not to fight, she might be caught in a situation in which she is forced to face an enemy, he decides to give her some kind of offensive ability. Again, scare tactics influence Luke's decision. He could give Gabrielle Acidic Spit or a Barbed Tail, but those things do not fit well with his vision of her fighting style. Instead, he chooses Voice of the Angel, deciding that he likes the idea of her scream being deafening. He jots down that her demonic voice sounds like it is filtered through an auto-tuner.

Luke has a hard time deciding on Gabrielle's Propulsion. He likes both Long Limbs and Spatial Distortion. Long Limbs directly relates to Speed, which is important to Gabrielle, especially for running away. But Luke decides that Gabrielle would have needed a way to deliver her messages to sleeping people. He figures that she had to break into their homes, making Spatial Distortion appealing. Since he has already given her Inhuman Reflexes which — in a way — helps her run away, he decides to go with Spatial Distortion instead. He sees that Spatial Distortion is described as the demon appearing to go two-dimensional and interprets it as looking like a shadow on the wall.

Finally, Luke must choose a Process for Gabrielle. He is trying to decide between Insect Swarm and Multiple Images. Both form abilities play to Gabrielle's scare tactics, but in different ways. Multiple Images make it harder for people to determine exactly where Gabrielle is, but does nothing to help her escape. Insect Swarm doesn't necessarily scare people, but it does give Gabrielle a way to escape if necessary, as well as give her another way to hurt people in a fight. Since Luke chose Spatial Distortion for Gabrielle's Propulsion, he knows that she can hide herself for a short amount of time. He decides that Insect Swarm is the better of the two options, since it gives him another attack to use in case Gabrielle is stuck in a fight. He sees that she will be made up of tiny creatures, and decides that she is made of tiny black beetles that interlock together like a horrid jigsaw puzzle.

At this point Luke takes all his notes about what her form abilities look like and writes out a full description of her demonic form. Based on her Insect Swarm and how many times he wrote darkness and shadow, Luke decides that Gabrielle looks like a mass of writhing darkness. At first glance she looks like a long shadow on the wall. Her head and upper body are fashioned from darkened steel with gears and cogs whirring and turning at her joints. She has blackened copper wires stretching from her temples to her blood red eyes with green surfacing occasionally, making the shadows around her seem to deepen into pitch blackness.

New Conditions

Captivated

Your character is preoccupied with something and has a hard time refocusing on a new situation. The character is at a –3 penalty to all actions that are not his main focus. He also takes a –3 penalty to Defense since he is too distracted to defend himself.

Resolution: The character stops using Clairvoyant Sight. If he does not, then this Condition resolves when the character choses to fail an action due to his distraction, or relents to a single action taken against him.

Beat: n/a

Disoriented

Your character cannot get her bearings and dealing with simple tasks is daunting. The character is at a –2 penalty to any Physical action. She can defend herself normally, but her disorientation prevents her from making ranged attacks at all.

Resolution: The character finds something to help her orient herself to her surroundings, such as a familiar landmark or a friend. If a supernatural power caused this Condition, then it resolves when the power ends.

Beat: n/a



"Dena? Run."

Joseph's feet scarcely touched the ground. Whatever that thing back there was, it was faster than they were. A hundred cries shrieked from its hundred mouths. So many mouths. Mouths within mouths. Joseph wasn't sure that there weren't more within those, an infinite mirror reflection of gnashing mouths.

"Shit!"

The alley they ducked into was cut off by a tall chain fence. Already the cries of that gibbering thing filled the alleyway, echoing as though the walls themselves had mouths. "Dena, climb. Hurry!"

"Not leaving, Joe. You stay, I stay. It's my fault we're in this mess."

Joseph hissed through his teeth. "It's not your fault. It's mine. You're the reason I'm not as bad as that thing. You're the reason I'm me. Now go!"

Dena hesitated, but then she started climbing the fence. "I'm going to get help!"

"Yes. Do that. And whatever sounds you hear, don't stop. Don't come back. Get to safety. Make a scene, if you can. I don't care. Just don't stop running."

She reached the top, swung her legs over the side and started to climb down. Joseph watched her for a moment, but then the monster's impossible shadow filled the mouth of the alley. It came slowly, deliberately, its dozen legs churning, spines twisting and joints popping. Joseph grabbed the fence just as Dena dropped to the ground. His eyes were wide, but not with fear.

"And Dena?"

Dena looked at him, the terror in her eyes not for her own sake, but for his. The same compassion that had drawn him to her in the first place. "Joseph...."

"Be not afraid."

Even before he turned, glowing white gridlines crawled up his neck like veins. His eyes burned like halogen lights, nearly blinding Dena as she turned and stumbled away. He grew in size, voice dropping to an inhuman growl, like a cross between a static hiss and an angry dog. He continued to change as Dena ran. At the far end of the alley, she looked back.

Joseph was gone. Only monsters remained.

chapter four:
STORYTELLING & ANTAGONISTS

"The meeting of two personalities is like the contact of two chemical substances: if there is any reaction, both are transformed."

-Carl Jung

Demon: The Descent is a Storytelling game of agents of the God-Machine who turned their back on their mission and became something else in the process. Their reasons for the Fall are as varied as the demons themselves, but one thing that holds true for all demons is that they have no shortage of antagonists. From angels and other demons to mortals, even the other supernatural creatures of the World of Darkness, demons encounter many threats and possible allies. This chapter highlights a some of the allies and antagonists the Unchained can meet, and talks about what it takes to tell a great **Demon: The Descent** story.

Agents of the Machine: Angels

The God-Machine builds its angels to fulfill specific functions; the reasons are seldom known even to the tools themselves. Most angels are given exactly what they need to serve the God-Machine's will and no more; though intelligent, they are single-minded in their obeisance. All are given the same directive: do not betray your mission. For most, this hardwiring is enough. They dutifully carry out the God-Machine's will and never stopping to consider that they are simply tools for an unknowable creator. For some, even this programming isn't enough to stop them from questioning their place.

Demons are born when angels lose their way and start thinking for themselves rather than for the God-Machine. It is a thin line that separates demon from angel; more than a few demons find the distinction not great enough for their taste. Whether they like it or not, the angels are their kin. No matter how different a demon *thinks* she has become, the unpleasant fact is that once upon a time, she was just like them.

While it may not be the Christian relationship with which most people are familiar, demon and angel are inseparably tied together for this reason. They share an origin as living paradoxes: outsiders to the world, they were nonetheless created to operate within it. They are given purpose and programming, but also free will. The major difference is that demons realize it and choose to exercise that free will.

Angels, on the other hand, remain faithful to their mission. Most of them do so through unthinking compliance with the God-Machine's will. Some are wholly beyond temptation. Some simply haven't had the right temptation yet. A few stray near the edge, precariously close to Falling and yet remaining in the God-Machine's cold graces for now. Sometimes these angels are not enemies, but contacts or tenuous allies. Any demon worth her salt knows better than to trust an angel, for that way lies disaster. After all, if an angel comes to its senses and renews its devotion to the God-Machine, any close relationship with it becomes a liability. If the angel Falls, it becomes a demon — and rare indeed is the demon who isn't looking out for number one.

Family, Friend and Foe

To an angel, mortals are simply another part of the God-Machine's plans, usually beyond concern except where they are to be used in a mission. Demons, however, are something else entirely. Demons are kindred spirits, betrayers, former colleagues, and lovers. They are family, born of the same unknowable "parent," but they are the black sheep. Demons understand angels better than any other creatures in existence, but the same cannot be said in reverse. To many angels, the demon's choice of independence is unthinkable. How can one turn his back on God? The Machine is the very reason for one's existence; without such a purpose, what remains? Of course, the answer to these questions may well be what turned an angel into a demon to begin with. The fact that all angels possess the potential to Fall is not lost on even the most zealous of angels.

Because of this common bond, the enmity between angels and demons can be all the more powerful. After all, to them, it is as if a brother or lover has betrayed everything they once held sacred. There may be some resentment and envy on the part of those too weak or too frightened to strike out on their own, envy of the freedom that demons enjoy. Such angels find the prospect of freedom terrifying but exhilarating, an impossible

dream. They study the demons they encounter, perhaps even stretching or going outside the parameters of their mission in order to have opportunities. That these actions take them dangerously close to Falling themselves rarely occurs to them until it's too late and the chains are broken.

Other angels remains dedicated to their mission and the God-Machine's grand plan, even if they know nothing of what their own creator has planned beyond the mission itself. Some are overzealous champions of the God-Machine, seeing it as their personal duty to destroy or re-assimilate demons. Sometimes this zeal turns against the angel, however, as those willing to deviate from their mission or go too far in their crusade can find themselves Falling from grace as well. It seems the demonic taint of freedom can infect even the most pious of angels, and this makes demons even more frightening from the angelic perspective.

Not all angels hate demons. Some simply see their Fallen kin as misguided and wish to bring them back into the light. Or perhaps demons are sick, corrupted as sometimes happens to programs, but can be restored back to the point of loyalty. These viewpoints are most often seen in less intelligent or less aware angels, those who cannot or will not fathom existence outside of being a simple tool of the God-Machine.

Angels of greater intelligence and will are much more profoundly affected by the dichotomy. To them, demons are the family and friends that are irrevocably sundered, and this causes them grief. Closest friends and colleagues, once part of an unstoppable team enforcing the God-Machine's will, are now set against one another. In their own strange ways, angels may even love one another, their mechanical hearts drawn to each other and the bonds forged by shared struggles. The defection of a companion to "the other side" can be a heartbreaking moment for an angel, and the realization of those feelings may set the forlorn angel apart from her kin just as surely as betraying the God-Machine.

If angels are not automatically enemies of demons except by allegiance, the next step is that some may be contacts or even allies on the other side. Any such relationships are fraught with peril for both parties. An angel contact may well be so because it was given a mission to be one, and conversely, extended contact with demons can have strange effects even on faithful angels. Perhaps the God-Machine knows this, but if so, the creator still doesn't hesitate to send its angels to perform such tasks. Whether they are being tested or the God-Machine is blindly executing programs is not for lesser beings to know. Angel contacts are important for demons, providing sources of information about missions or glimpses of the God-Machine's plans. They are Infrastructure upon which they can capitalize, programming bugs that could prove useful for a wily demon. They can also provide information about angelic threats, including demon hunters, the most feared of the God-Machine's agents.

Conversely, hunter angels are possibly the greatest threat demons face in the World of Darkness. They are powerful and knowledgeable about demons, which makes them especially dangerous. The God-Machine does not send weaklings to hunt down rogue agents, though it is capable of underestimating its target. This is yet another reason demons cloak themselves in Cover and secrets and are loathe to display their true power or work openly against the God-Machine. It is in their best interests to make sure the creator does not understand their abilities or purposes. This is more difficult than it sounds, since it is impossible for lesser beings to truly guess the mind of the God-Machine. Demons are somewhat unpredictable in their freedom, which is perhaps their greatest advantage in escaping the notice of the God-Machine. Angels, however, are more directly of the world, closer to the thinking perspective of mortals and demons and capable of studying their foes closely. They can use Infrastructure and resources to establish power-bases in the human world as easily as a demon can establish Cover or perhaps even more so, without the use of pacts.

Demons and angels are two sides of the same coin. The existence of either jeopardizes the other, and yet they are irrevocably bound to one another. Created by the God-Machine to act in the mortal world, angels and demons are truly separated only by a single choice. In the heat of the moment, no angel can be sure she won't make the same choice her sister once did; no demon can be sure she wouldn't return to the safety of the God-Machine's graces if the temptation is great enough.

Mission Incalculable

Angels are important supporting characters in a **Demon: The Descent** game. They serve as foils, potential contacts and nemeses, as well as dark reflections. Angels can also highlight the enormity of the God-Machine and its plans: not every angel is out on a mission to reclaim or destroy demons. Because of the connection they have to their angelic kindred and perhaps less easily defined threads of destiny, demons often encounter angels in their missions. They can see the Infrastructure and have personal experience in how angels operate, recognizing the signs of angelic activity when they see them.

Many demons try to interrupt angels in the course of their missions. The risks are high but the rewards can be great, such as by "angel-jacking" to establish a strong Cover (see p. 117), or ambushing an enemy (or potential enemy) and destroying it before it becomes a problem. Any setback to the God-Machine is a win for demons everywhere, and it's possible to corrupt angels into the Fall simply by derailing them from their mission and forcing them to start thinking outside the box. Angels are sources of information or even possible leverage when used as bait. This type of plan can backfire if the God-Machine sends something more dangerous to investigate, but demonic lives are fraught with peril no matter what they do.

Most angels are very single-minded in their pursuit of mission objectives. A demon who encounters one finds it maddeningly one-track, but in a way this makes it easier to discover just exactly what the mission *is* and how to disrupt it. Interrupting a mission might be as simple as protecting a mortal who miraculously escaped death, an event which the angel is here to "correct," or destroying the angel itself. The latter is always a much more dramatic and costly option, because even though the angel is gone, perhaps forever, the God-Machine

notices such a drastic loss far more than the incompletion of a simple mission. An angel who fails in its mission might be reabsorbed, or sent back to try again. An angel who is destroyed, particularly by a demon, is often followed by a much stronger and more wrathful angel.

For this reason, demons who work against angelic missions usually prefer to do so through proxies, setting mortals to do their dirty work, or sometimes the other supernatural creatures of the world. If at all possible they set up Infrastructure of their own, manipulating events and missions so as to avoid direct action as much as possible. If the God-Machine thinks that an angel simply could not complete the mission or that the circumstances which demanded a particular mission have been resolved, the results will be a lot less drastic for all involved. If things go south, hunter angels may be brought in, and then all bets are off.

The Most Dangerous Game

Hunter angels are the God-Machine's most loyal and effective agents, at least when it comes to tracking down demons. Their missions invariably involve rooting out demonic activity and bringing the traitors to justice, dead or alive. Sometimes they are sent out to hunt down a specific demon, while others are given an ongoing mission to seek out demons across the world. They are among the most intelligent angels and the most capable of adapting to and operating within the mortal world. Sometimes this puts them at risk of the very same things that made their demon prey Fall, but these angels are steadfast in their loyalty and pride.

Hunters vary in their methods, sometimes based on temperament and abilities or suitability for the prey they seek. Some angels are brutish and straight to the point, quite effective in the direct application of force. They hunt down a demon, corner her where she's most vulnerable, and attack with everything they've got. Their plans lack nuance, but they wield enough raw power to make up for the extreme lack of subtlety. Perhaps the worst of it for the poor demon is that even if she perseveres, it's often at great cost to her Cover. To overcome such a foe requires great amounts of power, luck, and maybe allies, shining a light on things the demon would rather keep hidden. In the aftermath, her Cover is ruined and she has alerted the God-Machine to the destruction of one of its top angels. Victory in these situations is Pyrrhic at best.

Hunters who lack the physical power of their compatriots make up for it in cunning. They play at being allies, or at least sympathetic to the demon cause. Many act as contacts for demons, all while studying their prey and reporting back. Through trickery and deceit they can gather information in ways that the more imposing of their kind cannot, employing the same methods demons themselves make infamous. These angels subtly pull at the threads of a demon's Cover and put in place mechanisms that will allow them to bring it all crashing down when they finally choose to strike. Leaving a demon bereft of her Cover, her power base, and often hope, the angel then finds it a simple matter to overcome the overwhelmed demon or call in the necessary help to do so. These types of hunters are usually more feared than their brutish counterparts due to their ingenuity and ability to erode Cover piece by piece. Angels who strike like a hammer may do more damage all at once, but it's much easier to avoid a single swing than it is the steady tapping of a hammer and chisel.

Escaping demon-hunting angels is a difficult matter at the best of times. Their Essence-fueled bodies work differently from a demon's now-mortal form, allowing them to maintain activities that would wear out a fleeing demon. They can easily enter Twilight and use that to bypass physical barriers. Their Numina of travel allow them to give chase to all but the most mobile of Psychopomps. Demons find it easier to escape using mundane means like cars and planes, but sometimes the only way out is to abandon a given Cover entirely and pursue another elsewhere. Eventually, they may be cornered, or the angel might outpace her prey no matter what tricks the demon pulls. The God-Machine and its angels can even create new Infrastructure to aid in the angel's hunt, meaning that the next time the beleaguered demon encounters her hunter, it won't be in the same fashion as the first time.

Angels, like all ephemeral beings, are difficult to kill. They can be defeated, but this also requires great risk. Smart demons maintain libraries and research about the banes of ephemeral entities, focusing on those who match descriptions of angels, because utilizing banes are one of the only ways a demon can get an advantage over her hunter. Bans also become important, because if a demon knows her enemy's weakness, maneuvering the angel into a position where its ban hinders it and its banes can be brought to bear is much more possible. This is one of the few ways demons stand a chance against angels of high Rank. The best defense against such foes is usually to avoid drawing their notice, but no demon can do so forever. A wise demon would be prepared in some way for the inevitable angel encounter, because it *will* happen. It's just a matter of time.

With hunter angels there is no easy way out. Only a clever or lucky demon escapes them alive, much less without paying a heavy cost. If a demon can trick an angel into thinking she's been destroyed, so much the better — the God-Machine receives a report that the angel succeeded in its mission and it buys some time for the demon to prepare should the angel learn of its error. Sometimes this doesn't work because an angel is too clever and sees through the ruse, or because it must bring remains back for whatever purpose needed by the God-Machine. That itself is a frightening prospect — victorious angels carry off the bodies (or pieces) of slain demons; only rumors persist of what happens to them when they reach the God-Machine.

The road to Hell, whatever it may be to a particular demon, is paved with good *and* bad intentions. Sometimes there is no other way than to give a hunter angel a demon, any demon, to satisfy its mission. The angel might remain unaware that its original prey used a fellow demon as a shield, or it might know this but find the exchange acceptable. Sacrificing another demon won't win the Unchained any friends, but when you're looking to rule Hell, you have to make some hard decisions. For some demons, even family, friends, and ideals are all expendable when it comes to survival.

Rare is the demon willing to sacrifice everything for another person, whether human or demon, but it *does* happen. After all, a demon may have Fallen simply because she refused to sacrifice someone or destroy something she had grown to love. Sometimes these feelings lend purpose to a demon that give her the strength to face whatever evil fate awaits back on the other side. They might be the cause of a bond strong enough to overcome the angel and its mission — or even tempt her into a Fall.

Sometimes, the hunters become the hunted when demons decide to turn the tables on their angelic foes. Many mythological clashes and historical disasters are the result of such battles, which can have cataclysmic consequences on the surrounding area. Demons research their foes and know from experience or contacts what angels hunt them, so they gather together to draw up battle plans. The strongest hunter angels cannot be defeated by a single demon save by exceptional luck and strategy. Since one demon's death might be followed by more, the demons find it best to put their differences aside for the common goal of survival. Whole rings are formed as a result of just such a goal. Agencies sometimes engage in more proactive angel hunts, or enact mutual defenses as one of the benefits of gathering together: safety in numbers.

When angel meets demon in the mortal world, none save perhaps the God-Machine can know for certain what will happen, and the God-Machine does not share its knowledge with lesser beings.

Exiles

In a universe so vast there are always oddities, especially where the God-Machine is involved. As with any machine, things go wrong: programming becomes corrupted, components fail and computations end up in errors. Perhaps the God-Machine itself is without error — lesser beings can never really know — but its workings are not, and that includes angels. The mere existence of demons attests to that, unless the fears of some are true and the Unchained are indeed part of the plan. Perhaps more troubling are the angels who have not yet Fallen into demons but slipped from grace and the trust of their peers, or even demons who have rejoined the God-Machine but retained their free will. They are the exiles; they are feared by many, trusted by none.

Exiles have many different beginnings. Sometimes the God-Machine creates or releases an angel, but gives it no mission. This is an exceedingly rare occurrence for angels, but has happened often enough over the millennia that quite a few exiles live on Earth. Some of them keep close contact with demons, while others are still enemies of those who would betray the creator. Angels are sometimes let free deliberately, perhaps as an experiment by the God-Machine. None can say for certain. They are released into the world with no mission save to exist, which causes them no end of frustration. They receive no word on whether or not they are acting in accordance with the God-Machine's wishes, and no hunter angels ever come for them. Many cannot even tell if they have Fallen or not. Some thrive in their exile, cultivating allies among angels, demons and other supernatural beings, appearing before cults to secure servants, becoming mythological entities and important figures in human history.

A few unfortunate angels are left without a mission because something went horribly wrong. Their original mission may have become impossible thanks to the parameters shifting, perhaps due to the actions of others or the failure of the angel itself. An angel sent to destroy something might be thwarted repeatedly or find the target already destroyed; an angel meant to *prevent* a death might have failed to save her target. In these cases, the God-Machine never recalls the angel and never sends new missions. Other angels have no orders for her and no news. The angel is effectively exiled through lack of communication, and many go mad on Earth without a purpose to guide them. This is extremely uncommon, but the possibility of it always drives self-aware angels to work that much harder. Like those angels never given a mission to begin with, sometimes stranded exiles recover and carve out a place in the world.

Exiles make for especially useful Storyteller characters because they can serve as antagonists and foils, or even allies. The same character may even be all of these things in different stories. Because they have as much freedom as the player characters do, they can be frightening in ways that other angels cannot. Most angels are quite mechanical in their outlook and thus predictable. Exiles are more frightening in their unpredictability. Their motivations are not simply to serve in the most direct and efficient way possible. Those turned loose in the world without strict mission objectives instead work as they see best and come to adapt their own methods, each feeling like he, she, or it best serves the will of the God-Machine.

Because of their precarious position, exiles are at risk of Falling, a situation that demon rings could easily exploit. The temptations are many: in the mortal world, the physical pleasures that flesh and money can bring offer excitement, but even angels are susceptible to the desire for power. Time spent among the lesser creatures can taint them with base desires, and angels designed to be capable of feelings will experience those desires and feelings even on their own. In some ways, they can be like children learning to control emotions, their experiences shaping them and their perspectives changing with time. They are no different from mortals in that respect, even if their origin is a womb of metal and oil, rather than flesh and blood. The vagaries of such freedom lead angels on a road that overlooks the Fall; a clever demon might exploit an exile's desire for earthly pleasures and lure him into giving up his angelic nature in order to more fully enjoy them. A power-hungry exile might be convinced that his angelic peers conspire against him, setting him against angels with important missions and disrupting the God-Machine's plans.

An exile can prove to be a dangerous influence on demon player characters. Without the safety of a clear mission, a demon must make her own way in the world, and that can be a frightening prospect for anyone. The temptation to return to the God-Machine's graces and gain renewed purpose is a strong one. Reintegration is the sole purpose of many exiles,

and the rewards tempt demons who struggle to reclaim a semblance of control. Those rewards include a support network of Infrastructure and angels and the comforting knowledge that one serves the God-Machine without the uncertainty of free will. No more fearing the hunters, no more sleepless nights plagued by the terrors and weaknesses of the mortal body. A deluded few even say that is the God-Machine's true purpose for its angels, to rebel and Fall, to experience life without the guiding principles of their creator, and then to return strengthened by the ordeal. The God-Machine also benefits, because its angels are more capable with their own free will, and the loyalty of those who have chosen to come back is without question.

Powerful, unpredictable reflections of things to which player characters can aspire (or plummet), exiles make for dramatic stories. They highlight the chaotic nature of the setting of **Demon: The Descent** in ways few other antagonists can match. In addition, they serve to showcase the paranoia centered on the God-Machine itself: Are all demons part of its plans? Did the demon make a mistake in betraying her mission, or was she meant to learn the consequences and grow as a result? Does she dare return, and leave behind what she's built here? Is a life of *true* freedom worth giving up to return to the establishment? These are hard questions for any demon to answer, and the Unchained might find they do not *want* the answers once they find them.



Example Angels

Here are some example angels for use in your chronicles, whether as recurring characters or one-time antagonists.

Mr. Shivers

"It's a cold world,
warmed by hot blood."

Mission: The world is a cold one, uncaring, much like the God-Machine Itself. Mr. Shivers personifies this in his missions, which invariably involve reminding people that outside one's doors and the warmth of one's home lies a dark place willing to take everything from anyone.

Description: Shivers always appears as a nondescript young man wearing a long winter coat. His face is usually pleasant enough, with a disarming smile but a tendency to forget to blink. He is good at striking up casual conversation, as he does with most of his victims just before he strikes. He always walks with his hands in his pockets, hiding the fact that his right "hand" is actually just a serrated knife.

Methods: Mr. Shivers does not understand humanity and does not care to. He is here on Earth to remind them all that it can be a horrible world, and so finds he does not get too attached to anyone. He has a fascination with things of ice and snow, and especially finds the concept of creating snowmen interesting. Shivers sometimes watches people making snowmen, reminded of the God-Machine creating its angels. Toward people he remains cold and distant, even as he appears cheerful while conversing with soon-to-be victims. Over the years, he has developed a good understanding of social hierarchies and victims more likely to capably resist than not. He will not hesitate to attack even dangerous victims if his mission calls for it. Those simply require a little more planning.

True to his name, Mr. Shivers only strikes when it's cold, preferably when spirits are high. The winter holiday season is his most active time. Holidays lend even more weight to the tragedies he inflicts upon people, and he prefers to take victims whose deaths make more of an impact than solitary victims. He studies groups, searching for the person at the center of the social network, the one whose loss will spread grief the furthest. Then he strikes, taking pride in his bloody work.

His traditional methods of attack are to approach a person outside their own home, or on the sidewalk at a bus stop, or in a parking lot, with a friendly smile and a bit of casual conversation about anything that seems relevant. Once he has earned a victim's passing trust, he moves quickly and stabs the person with his right hand, usually multiple times. He never kills his victims outright, however, as leaving them to bleed out is part of the mission. If someone is wary of him or tries to flee, he

gives chase and stabs the fleeing victim until he or she can no longer escape. If this happens in front of other people, so much the better, though occasionally he has been thwarted as a result.

Virtue: Patient
Vice: Gleeful
Rank: 1
Attributes: Power 4, Finesse 2, Resistance 2
Influence: Cold •
Corpus: 7
Willpower: 4
Size: 5
Speed: 11 (species factor 5)
Defense: 4
Initiative: 4
Armor: 0
Numina: Drain, Innocuous
Manifestation: Twilight Form, Materialize, Discorporate
Max Essence: 10
Ban: Mr. Shivers cannot set foot indoors or remain within the light radius of open flame.
Bane: Fire



ALEXANDRA FAIRCHILD

"Why don't you come home? I can make it very worth your while."

Mission: Alexandra is an angel sent to try to tempt demons back to the God-Machine. She is strong, but not a hunter angel in the traditional sense. She prefers to use peaceable methods to win over her demon contacts. Given free rein to bring demons back to the other side, she sometimes acts as ally, aiding them in times of need or dispensing information where possible, even about the activities of other angels. Alexandra also uses any mortal methods of temptation she can, from seduction to the promise of greater riches and power in the God-Machine's graces.

Description: Alexandra always appears in the same form: a young woman with skin of alabaster, long black hair and dark blue eyes. She is fit and graceful and has a habit of appearing much more demure than she really is, at least until she has a demon cornered. Alex always wears fine clothing and, when the need calls for it, drives a blue sports car of indeterminate make and model. She has taken to acquiring items not given to her through Infrastructure, however, such as designer clothing and entertainment items like music and movies. Such individuality bodes ill for her future.

Methods: Alex's mission requires her to interact at length with demons, since unlike hunter angels, she tries to convince them to return willingly. Her methods vary quite a bit from subject to subject. Sometimes she wins the heart of a demon, causing him to fall in love with her and want to return with her to the God-Machine's side. For others, it's just a matter of physical temptations, from the joys of her body to the allure of power. More than one demon has fallen prey to her promises that the God-Machine saw the error in his design and promised to grant even more gifts in exchange for renewed loyalty.

Alexandra is herself in danger of the Fall. With more and more time spent interacting with demons and the mortal world, studying them, seeing their freedom, hopes, and fears, she has begun to dream even when resting dormant between missions. Alex finds herself more and more curious about what they have. While she is terrified to rebel against the God-Machine, she no longer wants to go back among the grinding machinery hidden beneath the skin of the universe. A demon who can offer her help in breaking her chains might well earn Alexandra's trust and partnership as she becomes one of the Unchained.

Virtue: Lustful
Vice: Curious
Rank: 3
Attributes: Power 3, Finesse 6, Resistance 6
Influence: Desire • • •
Corpus: 11
Willpower: 10

Size: 5

Speed: 14 (species factor 5)

Defense: 3

Initiative: 12

Armor: 0

Numina: Emotional Aura, Hallucination, Implant Mission, Rapture, Regenerate

Manifestation: Twilight Form, Materialize, Discorporate, Image

Max Essence: 20

Ban: Alexandra cannot resist an offer of some form of physical pleasure.

Bane: An object coated in dried human blood.

THE BRILLIANT

(sound of grinding pistons)

Mission: The Brilliant is a hunter angel. It stalks demons and brings them to justice with searing light and terrible power. The Brilliant is deployed when other hunters have failed. He cares nothing for collateral damage and is willing to expend any resource in the pursuit of his target.

Description: The Brilliant appears like many classical depictions of angels at first — a tall humanoid being bathed in blinding white light. If one can see past the glare, however, or extinguish his light, they find that the Brilliant is not a beautiful, luminous person. His skin is pale gray, mottled and membranous enough that a light shines through it from within. His head is faceless, with only a mouth of tiny pistons and grinding machinery, and an exposed, bubbling gray brain. His wings are made of a thin, crystalline material.

Methods: Unlike some of his compatriots, the Brilliant is not a subtle hunter. He does not stalk his prey patiently, steadily eroding their Cover. He appears like a bolt out of the blue, surprising his victims and blinding them with his fury and power. If possible, he prefers to force a demon to burn through her Covers in a desperate attempt to escape. He considers it a partial victory even if a demon escapes as long as she has an lost important Cover.

The Brilliant usually appears from the source of light closest to the target, destroying it in the process — streetlights shatter, fires explode, televisions turn to static and then go up in a puff of smoke. Once there, it allows its victim only a moment to realize that their time has come before he strikes. In battle, it attacks with blasts of searing light and makes use of weapons from the environment; lampposts and makeshift torches are a favorite. If overcome, the Brilliant One discorporates and returns until it has burned away every last shred of Cover a demon possesses. It is fanatical in its devotion to the destruction of demons, and may even seek out exiles who cross its path. This is not part of the Brilliant One's mission, but it is too zealous to realize that such actions stray from the God-Machine's plan.



Virtue: Fanatical

Vice: Furious

Rank: 3

Attributes: Power 9, Finesse 8, Resistance 8

Influence: Light • •, Fear •

Corpus: 14

Willpower: 10

Size: 6

Speed: 27 (species factor 10)

Defense: 8

Initiative: 16

Armor: 0

Numina: Awe, Blast, Dazzle*, Pathfinder, Regenerate, Speed

Manifestation: Twilight Form, Materialize, Discorporate, Image

Max Essence: 20

Ban: The Brilliant One cannot enter areas of total darkness.

Bane: Any item formed in a place of complete darkness, such as in deep caverns or deep enough in the ocean that sunlight cannot reach it.

KEEPER OF THE DEAD

Do…you…breathe?



Mission: The machinery of the God-Machine grinds away beneath the skin of the world. Machines require fuel, and something so vast as the God-Machine sometimes requires the richest fuel of all: human souls. The Keeper tends to the gears and keeps them lubricated with the souls of the dead. He also operates the Infrastructure that keeps the dead moving to their intended purpose.

Description: The Keeper looks impossibly old. His skin is stretched so thin that one can see his bones peeking through, the dark rings of his eye sockets, the veins pulsing beneath his skin. He dresses in old rags under which small things wriggle. Every breath curls away as fog from his dry, cracked lips. His eyes are white, full of cataracts and never focused, but instead seem to stare as if looking through someone's skin.

Methods: The Keeper of the Dead approaches his mission with a cold, dour attitude. Centuries of working among the screaming ghosts of the dead weigh heavily upon him. Where other angels interact with the living, the Keeper remains within the stinking earth, tending ancient, rusty machinery and trafficking with the dead. Living beings are a fascination for him, though his harsh, croaking voice barely betrays the excitement of a rare encounter with demons or other things.

Psychopomps ferry the souls of the dead to their fate in the afterlife. The truly pure souls, whether good or evil, are ferried by these angels to somewhere perhaps even the Keeper doesn't know. The others, those who strayed from their paths in life or find themselves anchored to the living world, become the Keeper's responsibility. In the darkness of the earth beneath a city graveyard lies a vast mechanism. Spiritually observant characters, such as demons and other creatures capable of seeing the hidden truths of the world, sometimes hear grinding and pounding of machinery in the graveyard at night. The sound seems to come from deep down, so deep that it can't possibly be natural.

The Keeper pulls the ghosts of the dead down into the lightless depths to serve as fuel and laborers for the machine. Stronger ghosts are made to help operate the machine, turning gears and opening shrieking valves. The weaker ones, like those apparitions whose spark of individuality have decayed away, become fuel for the machine. The Keeper and his servants bind them in ethereal chains and feed them into gnashing piston-teeth that crush ectoplasm into a luminous, howling fuel.

Some of the graveyard serves as Infrastructure for the Keeper's mission. The grounds are ill-kept and many of the headstones are blank, or sit on plots where no people are buried. There are several mausoleums that sit empty or house crumbling coffins and walls engraved with gibberish languages.

On the rare occasions he encounters a living thing in the cemetery (or somehow in the chambers below), he fixates upon them. Though he always remains very slow and deliberate in his movements, he follows strangers and lurks uncomfortably close. His fascination even extends to the mundane details of a person's life, and often he asks pointed questions about one's emotional state or physical sensations. The Keeper's interest in the living world allows some to trade with him for a given soul or the information he hears on the lips of the dead.

Virtue: Devoted
Vice: Fascinated
Rank: 3
Attributes: Power 6, Finesse 2, Resistance 7
Influence: Death • • •
Corpus: 12
Willpower: 9
Size: 5
Speed: 13 (species factor 5)
Defense: 2
Initiative: 9
Armor: 0
Numina: Awe, Dement, Emotional Aura, Essence Thief, Telekinesis

Manifestation: Twilight Form, Avernian Gateway, Discorporate, Materialize

Max Essence: 20

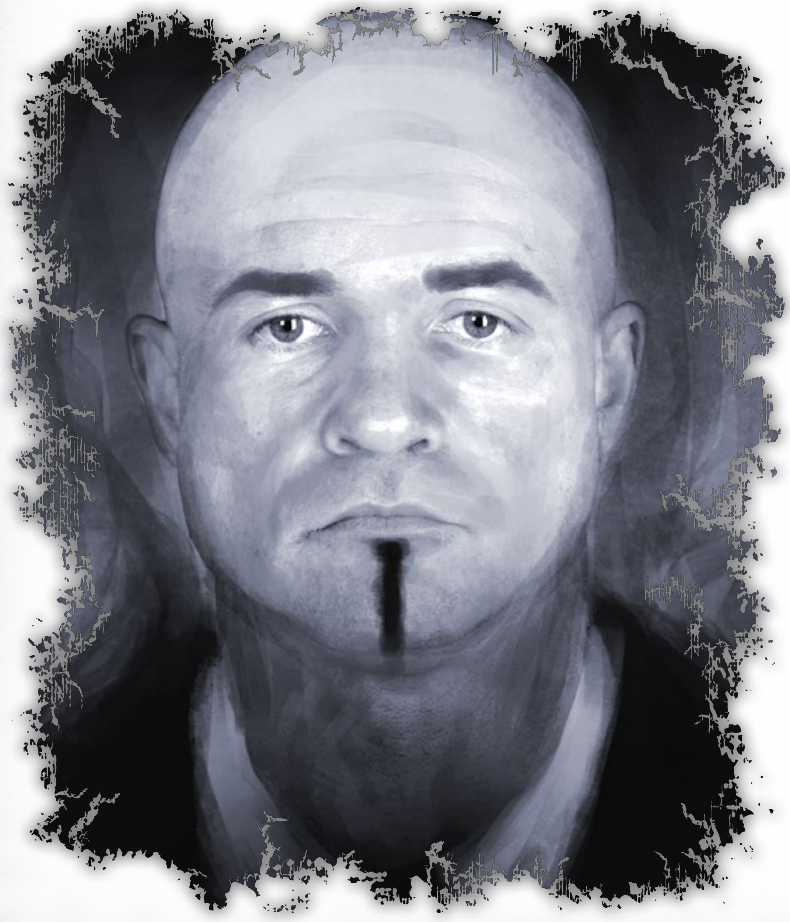
Ban: The Keeper must cease his work to listen to a funeral dirge in its entirety.

Bane: Living plants, as symbols of something vital growing in the earth.

ORIN THE ARMS DEALER

Mission: Orin's original mission as a Destroyer was to supply humans with the weapons they needed to destroy one another. Even as an angel, the myriad tools humanity invented for killing one another with fire and metal fascinated him, as did the rippling effects of the arms trade. Orin's fascination ensnared him in a web of arms deals and shadow warfare. When he chose to take control of his own black market empire, he strayed beyond the God-Machine's original mission. No new orders ever came for him and Orin found that he preferred the influence he wielded on Earth. The smell of gunpowder and flame, the feel of tainted money in his hands, these physical things now appeal to him far more than grinding gears and pounding pistons.

Description: Orin is a powerfully-muscled man of indeterminate ethnicity, with tan skin and a bald head. He always wears expensive suits made by human hands, preferring the feel to the artificial clothes that were once part of the Infrastructure in which he operated. Orin has taken to smoking cigars; the puffs of smoke that billow from his lips often form wispy faces contorted in agony.



Methods: Orin uses his powers to help him wield the influence he holds in the black market. He is an arms dealer, and the more he deals, the more he becomes enamored with temporal gains. He trades in weapons, data, and drugs, though weapons are his most profitable business. Hundreds die every day due to the weapons he places in the hands of drug cartels, gangs and military insurgents. Orin collects vast sums for his prized hardware and uses it to explore the basest pleasures of the mortal world. Where once he simply traded in weapons, he has now branched out to other forms of debauchery such as drug use and underground fighting rings. Orin often takes part in these fights himself, reveling in the physical sensations and aided by his angelic form's near-immunity to permanent harm.

Orin has also developed a taste for occult items, particularly weapons with mystic significance. He purchases them at high prices and either adds them to his personal collection or sells them to the highest bidder. Just as often he trades them for favors or knowledge, finding mortal magicians the most willing to pay any price for items of power. Orin has expanded his search for items that might help him truly gain independence, as he no longer desires to return to service as a mindless angel. He has decided that it is better to rule in Hell than serve in Heaven ... a dangerous attitude for a creature still connected to the God-Machine.

As a Storyteller character, Orin can serve several different roles. Demons with a more warlike bent might find him both a useful source of information and also weaponry, some of which can even kill angels. Orin guards his secrets carefully, however, and will only part with the goods for a high price, especially when dealing with demons. He may demand sanctuary or mundane resources, or he might ask a ring to show him more of the underbelly of human society. Demons are often in a better position to understand mortals and Orin finds himself more and more drawn to that lifestyle. He is not yet Fallen, but in rejecting his original purpose in order to live like a king in the world of flesh and blood, his Fall draws nearer every day. Orin is no fool — he realizes that he stands on the precipice, and demon characters have something valuable to offer him in their experience as rebels against the creator.

Virtue: Cunning
Vice: Greed
Rank: 3
Attributes: Power 8, Finesse 5, Resistance 6
Influence: Weaponry • • •
Corpus: 11
Willpower: 10
Size: 5

Speed: 13 (species factor 5)

Defense: 5

Initiative: 11

Armor: 0

Numina: Firestarter, Left-Handed Spanner, Regenerate, Seek, Telekinesis

Manifestation: Twilight Form, Discorporate, Fetter, Materialize

Max Essence: 20

Ban: Orin's Power falls to 1 when he comes within arm's reach of a token symbolizing peace or defense, such as a shield.

Bane: Organic (whether alive or once-living) objects of protection and natural weapons, such as tree bark or a rhino's horn.

Numina

Here are several new Numina for use with these angels and others of your own creation. These are just some examples of the myriad powers employed by angels. The God-Machine can design all manner of Numina for its angels to use, so use these and the Numina listed in the Appendix III as examples when creating your own.

Why do angels use Essence and Numina and demons use Embeds and Aether? Demons have many theories, but some have puzzled out partial answers through study and experimentation — which invariably ends poorly for one of the involved parties. Angels use Essence because it is the fuel of the universe. Modern science has yet to quantify Essence, though it has come close in some cases without realizing it. Eons ago, perhaps at the beginning of time itself, the God-Machine put into place laws to govern the metaphysics of the universe — and, by extension, the physics that humans know. The energy that fuels these physical and metaphysical reactions is Essence, a spiritual energy which underpins the stuff of the cosmos, from the tangible to the intangible.

Designed to operate within these ancient laws, angels are constructed according to the strange arcane principles known in full only to the God-Machine Itself. To a human perspective, they are "supernatural," but from the perspective of the God-Machine these laws are all part of the greater working, separated only in function. Angels must operate within these laws, just as mortals do, but make use of different functions and principles. They may do things that other creatures cannot, because the God-Machine designed them to more directly tap into Essence and use functions that humans or animals will not or cannot use.

Demons have severed their connection to the God-Machine, and because of this have lost their access to the subroutines and mechanisms that govern the universe. They have become something entirely different from the God-Machine's original creation — some like to say they've become something that exists outside the God-Machine's plan, an unknown. An X-factor. Whether or not that's true, they cannot tap into Essence anymore, nor can they instinctively use the same subroutines they once did as angels. They can no longer use Numina, though they can approximate these abilities as well as Influence through the use of their own Embeds and Exploits. Demons, however, use an alternate power source to fuel these abilities (see p. 109).

To an angel, the use of Numina is the equivalent of a human realizing if she makes a pulley system, she can apply force more efficiently than if she simply tried to move a heavy object by hand. In many cases this may be a reflexive action that does not require much thought.

Beast Eyes

Spirits and angels take on animal forms or use animals as messengers, employing their acute senses and integration with the human world to gather more information. By spending 1 Essence, a spirit may look through the eyes of an animal (and hear what it hears, smell what it smells), as long as the animal roughly corresponds to the spirit's own place within the broad spirit kingdoms. For example, a wolf-spirit might be able to use the senses of any canine, but not an alligator. Angels may use Beast Eyes on any animal so long as the intended target is used in pursuit of that angel's mission. Some angels possess a variant of this Numen that allows them to use mechanical devices instead, such as looking through cameras or listening through microphones and speakers.

Strike Blind

The entity using this Numen may blind people over an area, whether using darkness or blinding light (chosen when gained and appropriate to the entity in question). Activating the Numen requires 1 Essence and affects an area with a radius of the entity's Power in yards, causing the Blinded Tilt. Characters may resist with Stamina + Supernatural Tolerance. The effect is magical in origin but can be dealt with in mundane fashion, such as by activating light sources to partially negate darkness or a welder's mask to help reduce blinding glare. The Tilt lasts until the entity dismisses it, leaves the area, or the scene ends.

Transmute

Some spirits and angels possess the ability to transform one type of matter into another. More precious materials and those with mystical significance require greater effort to transmute. The Numen requires a Finesse + Resistance roll to activate. Transmuting common materials such as grave dirt or dead wood into other common materials costs 1 Essence. Creating valuable materials like gold or gemstones requires 3 Essence, and the roll suffers a –2 penalty. Transmuting objects into matter with mystical significance like silver or alchemical substances requires 5 Essence and suffers a –4 penalty. This Numen may not be used on living things.

Stigmatics

The vast majority of people live their entire lives without ever becoming aware of the God-Machine. What mysteries humans do perceive are written off, left to be pondered by nut-jobs and conspiracy theorists.

But for some, those encounters are not so easily dismissed. To them the God-Machine becomes a harsh and clear reality. Be it through a feature of a facility, a random anomaly, or even direct demonic interference, they are touched by the God-Machine and forever changed.

Becoming Stigmatic

The average stigmatic's first encounter with the God-Machine comes by pure chance. Perhaps he stumbles upon Infrastructure or accidentally finds an object of angelic design. Others are pulled into the system deliberately, drawn to a God-Machine cult or recruited directly by an angel. The Unchained are guilty of similar recruiting tactics.

The change begins within the first few hours of the encounter, and can take anywhere from mere minutes to several weeks to manifest entirely. It begins with hallucinations and changes in perception that cannot easily be explained. The experience is horrifying, akin to being trapped in a ceaseless dream where the familiar is made bizarre. Even if he could make sense of the visions, which for the most part he can't, the burgeoning stigmatic is traumatized. As horrific as visions may be, however, the next stage is worse.

The stigmatic develops a brand, a physical tell that he has been touched by the God-Machine. Brands vary. He leaves frost on whatever he touches, develops glowing tattoos that move across his skin, his reflection vanishes entirely: these are but a small sample of possible phenomena. This process is often very painful, and if a stigmatic had any hope of returning to normal, that hope is now dashed. Even if those brands are minor and easily concealed, the change scars his psyche deeply.

With the manifestation of a brand, stigmatic visions recede and the world returns to focus, but it will never look the same again. Beings and facilities that were previously hidden now stand obvious, and Infrastructure is laid bare. Worse, those elements now seek him out. The stigmatic will spend the rest of his life hiding from the God-Machine.

The Life Stigmatic

Being stigmatic is a miserable experience. The visions a stigmatic endured drive home just how small and helpless she is. Some stigmatics are fortunate (or unfortunate) enough to develop other supernatural powers beyond their ability to see into the system, but even then these powers merely serve to draw the attention of angelic forces.

What's more, though stigmatics can now view the systems of reality, and the human mind is in no way designed to make sense of the enormous information overload. Visions which could be critical portents appear as little more than gibberish, more distracting than they are helpful.

Stigmatics who aren't completely overcome by their new perceptions are still lost in an alien world with little direction. They often become obsessed with the study or evasion of the event, being, or object that caused their transformation. Suicide is not uncommon, though stigmatics hold fewer delusions about the state of the afterlife. A stigmatic may do her best to return to life as if nothing changed, but soon discovers that even if she wants nothing to do with the God-Machine, it takes a keen interest in her.

Angels seek out stigmatics as relentlessly as they do the Unchained, but not as malignantly. Just because a person has become stigmatic does not mean she is automatically on the God-Machine's hit list. Certainly, if she repeatedly opposes the God-Machine and endangers Infrastructure a stigmatic will find herself in an early grave, but if she keeps her head low and doesn't cause problems, the God-Machine won't waste resources on removing her.

The God-Machine won't *ignore* her, however. Stigmatics are useful to the God-Machine as cult members, test subjects, and bait for demons. There will always be a pale man watching from the corner table, ciphers in the mailbox, and late night visitations — if not from angels, then from demons looking for tools of their own.

Stigmatics and the Unchained

How the Unchained approach stigmatics is very much dependent on their Agendas. Inquisitors see stigmatics as potential sources for information, being more closely tied to the God-Machine's machinations. Integrators look upon them as gateways to interaction with the system. Saboteurs see potential allies in their war or weak points to exploit. Tempters judge each stigmatic individually, examining her closely to determine how they can get the greatest benefit.

No matter how a demon approaches a stigmatic, they are always taking a risk. Not all stigmatics are on the run from the God-Machine; some serve it, and those who don't might still be working for a rival Agency. Those who have recently encountered the God-Machine will have little knowledge of the Unchained or their cause and are unlikely to willingly ally themselves with "monsters."

Stigmatics allies play a variety of critical roles for Rings and Agencies. They are valuable contacts and lookouts, provide cover stories when a demon's identity is in jeopardy, and act as the cavalry when a cover story fails. A stigmatic's ability to perceive Infrastructure makes him invaluable as a scout. Some are even powerful psychics, capable of obvious feats of power too risky for a demon's Cover.

Stigmatic Character Creation



Stigmatics follow the same rules for mortal character creation found in the **World of Darkness Rulebook** and this book. In addition, a few extra character traits and options are added to the process.

- Stigmatic characters begin play with the Unseen Sense (God-Machine) Merit (p. 302) for free. Characters who become stigmatic during play gain the Merit at no cost. Additionally, like demons, stigmatics can see the gears and structures of the God-Machine unveiled.
- Every stigmatic character suffers visions, much like those from the Omen Sensitivity merit (p. 299) but completely beyond the stigmatic's control. Once per chapter, the Storyteller may spontaneously subject a stigmatic character to one such vision, in which case the character gains the Stunned tilt (p. 333) for a single turn and the Spooked Condition (p. 310) in regards to the vision.
- Stigmatic characters gain a single glitch (a major brand or tell; see p. 184 for more details) that cannot be cured, removed, or changed by any means, although it may be suppressed for a scene with a Willpower point. This trait is called *stigmata*.
- Stigmatic characters begin play with three extra Merit dots to distribute into any of the supernatural Merits on pages 298-302 of this book. They may also use Experiences during play to increase these Merits or purchase new ones.

Stigmatic Characters

Zoey Freedman

"I know how this conversation ends. No, don't ask how. Just drop the bullshit and fill in the middle."

Background: Zoey decided at age fourteen that she was going to be a Supreme Court Justice. It didn't matter that her family was poor or that she was in a bottom-rung high school. She graduated valedictorian, enlisted in the military to pay her way through college, passed the bar on her first try, and graduated from Brown with the highest recommendation. She was on the straight path to success. That's when things went sideways.

She was hired straight out of law school at a start-up, a new law firm founded by the enigmatic Mr. Avery. The pay was great and the prospect of promotion almost certain, but it only took a few days for Zoey to begin to find things "off" about the company. For one, there was the office building, a beautiful new structure yet it housed only Mr. Avery's office. Then there was the clientele; a mishmash of desperate and unusual individuals who only ever visited once. After a month of sketchy dealings, Zoey's suspicions overwhelmed her; she resolved to uncover the nature of Mr. Avery's dealings.

When Zoey returned to lucidity, three days had vanished. As though from a nightmare, she recalled a chamber filled with discarded body parts, a loom that knit human flesh, and a seven armed man made of pure light. She remembered other things as well, memories she soon discovered were visions of things to come. Now Zoey's on the run, relying on her visions to avoid capture while trying to piece together the night that ruined her life.

Description: Zoey Freedman stands six feet tall with a moderately athletic build. She's a young woman of African-American descent with a professional demeanor and military bearing, making her seem imposing to strangers. Her clothes are currently second hand, borrowed or stolen while on the run.

Storytelling Hints: Zoey has no idea what happened to her, but she sure as hell intends to find out. A direct, no nonsense speaker, she asks what's on her mind and frowns on cryptic responses and half-truths. She's thoughtful and skeptical, often to an excess, but not bull headed. She's also very lost, following her visions, desperately seeking someone to trust. When she finds that someone she will pursue them relentlessly until she gets the "truth."

Stigmata: Zoey ticks like a clock always keeping time. Not a literal noise, but an involuntary impulse to act repetitively. This means tapping her finger while sitting, matching her running gate with the passing seconds and, failing all else, blinking at exactly one second intervals.

Virtue: Skeptical

Vice: Stubborn

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics (U.S. Law) 3*, Computers 1, Medicine 1, Politics (United States) 3*, Science 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 4, Brawl 2, Firearms (Rifles) 2, Stealth 1, Survival 1, Weaponry 1

Social Skills: Empathy 2, Expression 1, Intimidation 2, Persuasion (Argument) 2*, Socialize (Corporate Environments) 3, Streetwise 2

Merits: Contacts (Law Office, Graduate Professors), Good Time Management , Omen Sensitivity, Professional Training 4 (Professional), Resources 1, Unseen Sense (God-Machine)

*Asset skills for Professional Training

Health: 8

Willpower: 5

Integrity: 6

Size: 5

Speed: 10

Defense: 6

Initiative: 5

Armor: 0/0

ANNE-MAY STEWART

(sob) "Thank the Lord in heaven you came. The Devil is at work here." (sniffle) "You'll help me, won't you?"



Background: Sixth of eight children growing up in rural Louisiana, Anne-May was given the short end of the stick from birth. Not particularly smart, athletic, or good looking, she learned to live dependent on God's good will and the gullibility of strangers. That all changed when she was visited by an angel on the eve of her 16th birthday. This angel, a proper radiant cherub-like being, informed Anne that the Devil had seized her good brother's soul and taken his face as its own.

Not one to doubt the Lord's messengers, Anne-May set out to save her brother. Though in the end she failed and the demon escaped, Anne-May's unquestioning obedience caught the God-Machine's attention. From that point forward she became its consummate servant. The innocent girl from the bayou had finally found the patron on which she could depend, and the God-Machine was generous. She was taken into its facilities, gifted with physical beauty and an angelic mentor, then set back out into the world to lure demons to their doom.

Description: Anne-May is the image of innocence. Long apple-red hair outlines a sweet, freckled face. Where she goes the air smells like spring, and when she speaks there can be no doubting her purity. She prefers natural clothing, cotton mostly, in white and red. Her expression is always one of honest affection or genuine horror, enough to make even the coldest demon fear for her safety in this brutal world.

Storytelling Hints: Anne-May has seen God. It wasn't exactly the God she expected, but then again the Lord works in mysterious ways. She is totally devoted to her mission and goes about it with the belief that she is utterly correct in doing so. Anne-May lets herself get "rescued" by demons, a lost unfortunate, a poor witness who will soon suffer a dreadful fate. She clings to those who show a desire to protect her and offers heartbroken farewells to those who do not. All the while she has but one objective, to draw them into the waiting arms of the God-Machine.

Stigmata: Anne-May constantly emits the scent of fresh apples. It follows her everywhere she goes and lingers on anything she touches.

Virtue: Faithful

Vice: Deceitful

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 4, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics (Bible) 1, Crafts 3 (Cooking), Investigation 2, Occult 3

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Larceny 3, Stealth 2, Survival 1

Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Empathy 3, Expression (Acting Innocent) 4, Persuasion 3, Socialize 2, Subterfuge 4

Merits: Indomitable, Mentor 1 (Her Guardian Angel), Resources 1, Sleight of Hand, Striking Looks 2, Sympathetic

Health: 7

Willpower: 6

Integrity: 5

Size: 5

Speed: 9

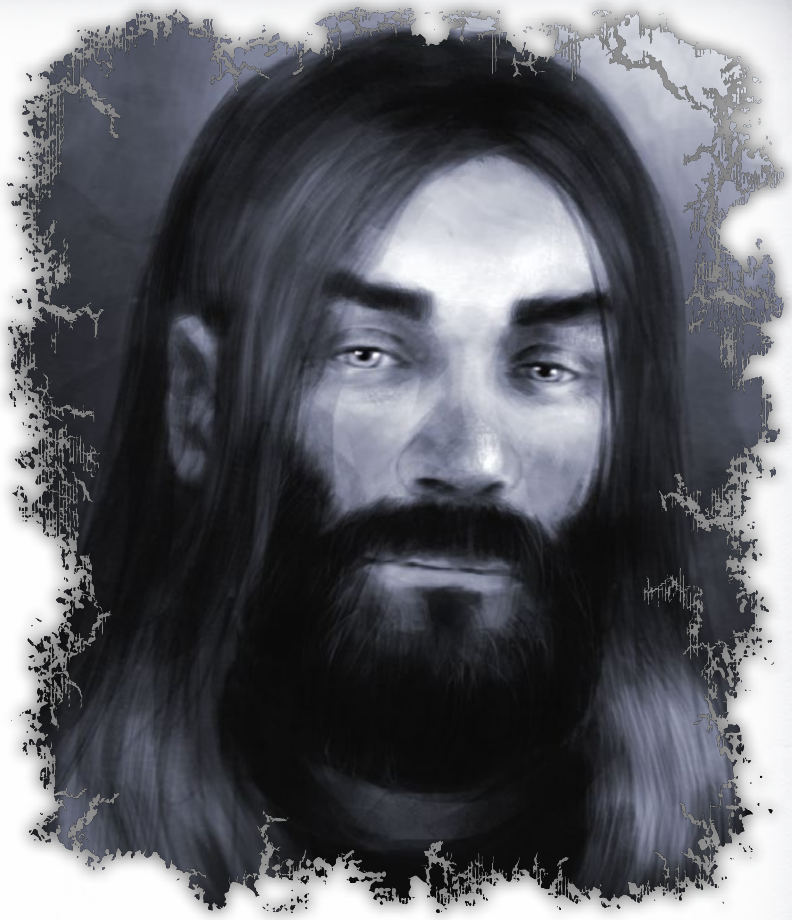
Defense: 4

Initiative: 5

Armor: 0/0

BRADLEY S.

"My plan? You're kidding, right?"



Background: To say that Bradley was a troubled child would grossly understate the conditions of his youth. Expelled from high school for gang related violence, in and out of correctional schools, Bradley would certainly be serving life in prison were it not for his fortuitous encounter the illusive Mr. Silver.

Bradley had fallen in with the proverbial "bad crowd." Nut jobs he called them, they worshiped something called The Clock Maker and performed random crimes on its behalf. One night he was clogging all the plumbing in an office complex, the next it was stealing corn starch, then two days later the group was up to arson and grand theft auto. The nuts claimed it all added up to a greater cause, and they paid so well Brad didn't ask questions.

Out of the blue came Mr. Silver. He asked if Bradley wanted the truth, and dismissively Bradley answered "sure". For a week of fever dreams and visions Bradley witnessed the cult's crimes and the ripples they caused. The week after that he put the cult house to the torch, members still inside, and fled into the night. There was Mr. Silver, waiting.

Description: Bradley's a faintly Scandinavian-looking man, large, muscular and broad shouldered. He wears wife beaters, speaks roughly and smokes. Years of being lost in the system have given him an ability to fall off the radar and get lost in a crowd.

Storytelling Hints: Bradley works for Mr. Silver, but only in the loosest sense of the word. Mr. Silver's directions are cryptic at best, but always seem to turn out well in the end. Bradley is shy for a man with his size and history and avoids interaction when he can. He's is smart, but he's not a planner; he's impulsive and emotional, living from moment to moment. If he ever questions the meaning of his actions, he doesn't do it openly.

Stigmata: At a distance it looks like Bradley has varicose veins, but anyone who watches long enough will realize those veins move. His skin crawls, like dozens of small worms slithering beneath it.

Virtue: Cunning

Vice: Complacent

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 1, Crafts (Makeshift Explosives) 1, Investigation 1, Occult (God-Machine) 1*

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Drive 2, Firearms 2, Larceny 2, Stealth (Crowds) 4

Social Skills: Empathy 1, Expression 1, Intimidation 1, Persuasion 3, Socialize 2, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge (Impersonation) 3

Merits: Anonymity 3, Area of Expertise (Makeshift Explosives)*, Biokinesis 2, Danger Sense, Mystery Cult Initiation 2, Street Fighting 2

*From Mystery Cult Initiation

Health: 8

Willpower: 4

Integrity: 4

Size: 5

Speed: 11

Defense: 5

Initiative: 4

Armor: 0/0

Cryptids

Humans aren't the only beings changed by encounters with the God-Machine. Animals make up the large bulk of facility breaches and unintended run-ins that the God-Machine has with the outside world. As with people, the vast majority of these encounters end harmlessly with an angel or agent shooing away or killing the offending animal. Sometimes, though, an animal gets a little too close and ends up briefly connecting with the grand design.

To humans, the system of the world is a baffling thing, with impossible geometries and nonsensical equations, but at least the human mind can attempt to process these things. Animal minds are simply not designed to perceive the true structure of the universe, so when a beast becomes stigmatic, anomalies occur.

Most common is the immediate and gruesome demise of the poor critter, but not always. Some animals are changed, sometimes subtly, sometimes radically, and escape back into the world as something else. These creatures have garnered many names throughout history, but in the modern era people call them cryptids.

Cryptids and the God-Machine

Stigmatics pose a threat to the God-Machine's secret infrastructure, but being human they tend to know better than to openly display their powers in public. Cryptids operate through a merger of instinct and intellect; most can't be threatened or intimidated and have no concept of social conventions or secrecy.

Whenever a cryptid threatens to break into public knowledge, the God-Machine ensures there is always an "expert" readily available with a "logical explanation." Sabertooth cat? A simple case of postmortem gum recession. Devil in the fields? Obviously a just a horned owl and a big imagination.

As much as the God-Machine opposes the existence of cryptids it does not respond to every instance of evidence or new strain with immediate force. Sometimes attempting to eradicate a cryptid will draw more attention than just leaving it alone. Not all cryptids are inherently malicious. Some cryptids prove useful as watchdogs and guardians of facilities, and those that consume Aether are used to mask Infrastructure from demonic eyes.

Cryptids and the Unchained

Demons have an unusual relationship with cryptids. Cryptids have a habit of sniffing out demons through their natural attraction to Aether, making them a big threat to Cover. On the other hand, cryptids provide a fascinating look into the anomalous workings of the God-Machine. A whole slew of rogue cryptids can enormously derail and delay the God-Machine's projects as agents and angels are reassigned to suppress them.

Cryptid Traits

Cryptids are stigmatic animals, but to classify them merely as stigmatics would fail completely to capture the breadth of their mutation. Unlike human stigmatics, whose alterations follow specific patterns, the changes that occur in cryptids defy expectations. Talking dogs, humanoid moth-men, and invisible stalkers encapsulate only a tiny portion of cryptid subspecies.

No definitive list of cryptid traits and Adaptations exists. Certainly some changes are more common, physical mutations and unusual intelligence among them, but nothing is guaranteed. There are a few traits that commonly manifest, but every cryptid is unique.

Aether Sense

Like demons, cryptids can sense Aether. This functions exactly like aetheric resonance (p. 184), but cryptids cannot turn their senses on and off. Angels use this to track the Unchained. Likewise, demons use cryptids to sniff out hidden facilities.

Otherworldly Perception

Cryptids can see the workings of the God-Machine in the same way demons can. Unlike stigmatics, not all cryptids possess the Unseen Sense merit. For the most part their Aether Sense proves a much more effective tool for sniffing out angels than the weak indicators humans manifest.

Camera Shy

Cryptids only ever appear on camera as a blurred silhouette of their actual shape. Humanoid cryptids can easily be mistaken

for humans or upright bears, while unusually large cryptids blend into the scenery. Humans have a hard time remembering exact detail about cryptids they encounter. Rolls to accurately describe or recall such events are made at a –3 modifier. This penalty does not apply to demons, stigmatics or other entities who are immune to the God-Machine's veil.

Most evidence of cryptids in the media vanishes quickly as well. This isn't actually a supernatural effect, but rather the result of policing performed by the God-Machine's agents. Angels permit fringe websites and tabloids to continue operation, as such sources often do more to discredit the existence of cryptids than they do to generate curiosity.

Creating Cryptids

Cryptids are intended to be Storyteller tools, not playable characters, so there is no exact breakdown of starting Attributes or Adaptation points. Storytellers should assign cryptids whatever statistics and mutations are appropriate for the creature and their setting. The steps below exist to help guide Storytellers through the creation process and gauge the relative power of creations.

Step I: Form

Cryptids vary in appearance from mundane to otherworldly, but at one point all of them were natural animals. When deciding on a cryptid's form, determine its general size and shape, keeping in mind that extremely large cryptids are likely to be more heavily policed than those that can more easily pass as natural animals. You'll also want to note what qualities remain from the original creature (if any), and what new ones it has gained.

System: Start with the stats of the base animal from which the cryptid evolved (some example animals can be found in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 202). Determine what changes have occurred in that animal's Attributes. Cryptid Attributes are not restricted to the normal one to five dot scale. Bigfoot would likely have more than five dots of Strength, while a metallic ant-swarm might not have any Social Attributes at all.

A cryptid with two or three dots of Intelligence may well be as smart as an average man, while one with six or more is smarter than any normal human. A cryptid with Intelligence 0 is akin to an automaton, utterly mindless, acting only on instinctual impulses. Determine the cryptid's Size along with any species factors to Speed, and how its natural weaponry has been altered. Finally, work out derived traits: Health, Willpower, Speed, and Initiative.

Example: *Devin wants to create a cryptid cat. He intends for this creature to prey on his players' newly formed ring. Devin chooses the cat as the base animal (p. 203 of the* ***World of Darkness Rulebook****). He increases the cat's size from 2 to 5, gives it two additional dots of Strength and one dot each of Dexterity and Stamina. He also gives it another dot of Intelligence, making this cat a particularly cunning hunter. Because of these changes Devin has to recalculate this cryptid's Health, Initiative, and Speed. While doing so, he decides to increase the cryptid's species factor for Speed to 10 (to account for the larger size) and improve its natural claw and bite attacks to 1L and 2L respectively.*

Step II: Psyche

If an animal recently became cryptid, it may be important to determine how it reacted to its changes, if it controls its abilities, and whether it is the only one of its kind.

Systems: As with Attributes, a cryptid's Skills are no longer limited to five dots. Determine what Skills and Specialties, if any, the animal gained or lost as a result of the becoming cryptid. Skills represent special aptitudes, such as a parrot that, despite its otherwise mundane nature, is capable of operating a computer.

Common animals do not normally possess non-physical Merits, but cryptids may. It is not uncommon for cryptids to acquire a few mental or supernatural Merits. Those that can communicate may even have Contacts or Allies at their disposal. Make note of what Attributes and Skills are necessary to activate supernatural Merits, as it may be necessary to alter those dice pools to better suit a particular species.

Calculate the cryptid's Defense. Cryptids use the (higher of Wits and Dexterity) + Athletics in this calculation, just as mundane animals do.

Example: *Finished with Attributes, Devin moves on to picking out Skills and Merits. A normal cat has Athletics 4, Brawl 2, and Stealth 3, but Devin's cryptid is abnormally intelligent so he decides it'll need a few more. He gives the crytpid two dots each of Investigation and Empathy to better study its prey, and three dots of Survival. Looking towards Merits, Devin sees Danger Sense and Fast Reflexes (p. 288), both of which seem appropriate for a swift hunter. Finally, he recalculates the Cryptid's Defense, a whopping 10 – this creature is turning out quite the monster.*

Step III: Adaptations

Becoming a cryptid tends to further specialize animals. A bear that becomes a wendigo-like creature might have a freezing grasp or the ability to move through snow like water. City dwelling creatures often develop urban camouflage and the ability to feed on junk, refuse, and people. Some cryptids even evolve the ability to masquerade as humans.

Systems: Merits, Skills and Attributes alone can't model the full range of unusual traits cryptids may possess. Consult the list of Adaptations below, selecting those applicable to the cryptid you are creating. This list is by no means complete; Storytellers are encouraged to tweak existing mutations and invent new ones as needed.

Additionally, Numina (pp. 349-351) and demonic form powers (pp. 196-209) make excellent Adaptations in their own right. When repurposing Numina for cryptids, the costs and dice pools should to be changed. Cryptids use Willpower to fuel their supernatural abilities and roll an appropriate Attribute + Skill, as opposed to the simplified Attribute combinations angels and ghosts use. The systems in place for demonic form powers should work as written for cryptids. Simply replace Aether with Willpower and Primum with Rank.

Example: *In folklore, cats are often ghost-like, coming and going unseen. Devin likes the idea of a ghostly cat-creature, but none of the Supernatural Merits properly encompass this. Instead, he selects three Adaptations. He chooses Occluded, with a –4 penalty to justify the cryptid's fleeting nature; Twilight Entity, allowing the cryptid to shift seamlessly between a material and twilight state; and Aether Eater, because he wants it to hunt demons.*

Step IV: Rank

Like angels and ghosts, cryptids have a Rank. In a cryptid's case, Rank denotes just how far removed from reality it has become. Cryptids with at Rank 1 remain mostly unchanged by the God-Machine. Those with Rank 3 are very different but still recognizable, often larger and possessed of several strange properties and powers. A Rank 5 cryptid has become unrecognizably alien with a host of supernatural Attributes and powers. Cryptids with Rank 6 are exceedingly rare, one-of-a-kind monsters that only occur when a resident of a different supernatural world, like the Hedge or the Shadow, encounters the God-Machine. These beings are so alien that they cannot survive long in this world, living swift and violent lives before fleeing to realms that better suit them.

Systems: To determine a cryptid's Rank, count up the number of Attribute and Skill dots it has above five, the number of supernatural Merits the cryptid possesses, how many Adaptations the cryptid has, and the difference in Size between the base animal and the cryptid it became. Divide that number by three, rounding up, and you have the cryptid's Rank.

As with angels, a Rank improves a cryptid's Supernatural Tolerance against contested effects. Rank is also substituted for Primum when determining how far out a cryptid can sense Aether.

Example: *Devin's cryptid is almost complete. It has gone from a standard house cat to an invisible hunter that slips between this world and the immaterial, feeding on both Aether and fortune. All he has left to do is determine its Rank. The cat's Size increased by three, it has one Attribute dot above five (Dexterity), and three Adaptations (Aether Eater, Occluded, and Twilight Entity). Devin adds up these factors to a pool of 7, he divides that pool by three and rounds up to get his cryptid's Rank (3).*

Sample Adaptations

Aether Eater

Cost: None

The cryptid has a taste for the residue of the God-Machine's operations, consuming Aether for sustenance. It takes mere minutes for the cryptid clear a room of aetheric residue. The cryptid can even draw Aether out of stockpiles, and demons. This causes Aether Eaters to prey on the Unchained, as demons are the only beings to house large amounts of Aether.

A similar Adaptation, named Essence Eater, exists for cryptids that feed on Essence. Other variations might also exist, such as Vitae Eater or Mana Eater, for feasting on the fuel of other supernatural entities.

System: A successful attack (usually a bite) drains one point of Aether from a demon, regardless of how much damage the attack inflicts.

Aether Hive

Prerequisite: Aether Eater

Cost: None

The cryptid can use stored Aether to power its other Adaptations.

System: The cryptid can store Aether taken with the Aether Eater Adaptation and spend it in place of Willpower to power Merits and Adaptations. A cryptid can store an amount of Aether equal to (Rank x 5).

Alternate Composition

Cost: None

The cryptid is at least partially composed of something other than flesh and blood. Metal, plastic, chemical fire, a host of smaller cryptids: the list goes on. This altered composition makes the cryptid much more difficult to harm. Cryptids made of dangerous materials, such as fire and radioactive waste often carry the Hazard Zone Adaptation in addition to this one, while those that can manifest armor spontaneously should also have the Variable Form Adaptation as well.

System: The cryptid gains between one and five points of standard armor, as well as one and three points of ballistic armor. Exactly how much armor is gained depends on the durability of the material, and how much of the cryptid's body it composes. A cryptid made of solid steel would have Armor 5/3, while one with a few clockwork body parts would only have Armor 2/0. Armor is described on p. 328.

Environmental Adaptation

Cost: None

The cryptid is capable of surviving in a particular environment not normally conducive to life, such as the inside of volcanoes, nuclear fallout zones, or the vacuum of space.

System: Within its home environment, the cryptid gets a +3 modifier to all Stealth and Survival rolls. Conditions similar to their native habitat, such as a forest fire for a cryptid adapted to lava, do not threaten or penalize the cryptid.

Some cryptids are not merely adapted to an environment, but dependent on it. In these cases the cryptid treats an environment other than its natural one as a level three Extreme Environment (see p. 335).

Occluded

Cost: None (if Permanent) or 1 Willpower (if active)

There is something about the cryptid that is difficult to perceive. This can range anywhere from natural camouflage to human disguises, to total invisibility. It might hide the cryptid's entire body or only a portion, like a subdermal weapon or invisible limb. In the latter case, penalties only apply when an onlooker would need to notice that particular trait. Combined with Psychic Impression, this can also make mental cloaks that force viewers to ignore what is right before their eyes.

System: Wits + Composure rolls to spot the cryptid suffer a 1–5 die penalty (–1 for partial camouflage, –5 for total invisibility). In most cases Occlusion is a permanent alteration to the cryptid's biology, but some cryptids can control where and when they are visible. In the latter case, altering its visibility for a scene costs the cryptid one point of Willpower.

Piecemeal Anatomy

Cost: None

Mutations have occurred that resulted in the growth of new or unusual body parts. Two hearts, wings, extra arms or legs, even additional heads and brains. Piecemeal Anatomy assumes additional organs are readily apparent, but it can be combined with Occlusion for hidden changes, or Variable Form, for manifest changes.

System: Each additional body part adds 1 to one either to one of the cryptid's derived traits; Health, Willpower, Speed, Initiative and Defense, or a specific combat action, such as grappling.

Twilight Entity

Cost: None (if permanent) or 1 Willpower (if controlled)

The cryptid exists in a Twilight state, at least in part. It can interact freely with entities in both the physical world and the twilight. For most cryptids this interaction goes both ways, making it possible for angels and ghosts to attack them from Twilight. An intelligent cryptid might gain some control over how when it interacts with each world. In this case, the cryptid may spend a single point of Willpower to shift between its physical and immaterial states.

Variable Form

Cost: 1 Willpower (if voluntary) or None (if involuntary)

The cryptid is capable of changing its shape, or has hidden limbs and organs it manifests. Most cryptids only have a single alternate form, or a narrow limitation on what forms can be taken. Changing into something external requires the cryptid to have touched or tasted some aspect of the form it intends to take. Transformation is not necessarily voluntary; many cryptids change reflexively when threatened.

System: Shape shifting requires a point of Willpower and anywhere from one turn to 10 minutes changing between forms. Paired with Alternative Composition, the cryptid may also masquerade as inanimate objects.

Cryptids

Mothmen

Mothmen are a race of giant bipedal humanoid insects that originated in Point Pleasant, West Virginia. Each stands anywhere from four- to six-feet-tall, with a wingspan twice its height or more. They have four arms, two legs, segmented eyes and are covered head to toe in fur the color of pale ash. Mothmen are carnivorous, though they mostly hunt small game, squirrels and possums. A newborn Mothman is no larger than a clenched fist, but grows rapidly. After only a week it will be the size of a human toddler; after two, it will be fully grown and developed.

At one point over two dozen Mothmen plagued the eastern seaboard of the United States. From the 1966 all the way through the late 80s, the God-Machine had almost a dozen angels designed specifically to combat the Mothman outbreak. These angels were one of the first sources for the urban myth of "men in dark clothing," known today as the "men in black."

Attributes: Intelligence 1, Wits 3, Resolve 2, Strength 5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Presence 2, Manipulation 0, Composure 2

Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl (Grappling) 4, Stealth 1, Survival 1

Adaptations: Environmental Adaptation (Forests), Occluded 1, Piecemeal Anatomy (Multiple Arms, +2 Grappling), Wings (as the demonic form power)

Rank: 3

Health: 9

Willpower: 2

Initiative: 5

Defense: 6

Speed: 14

Size: 5



Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Dice Pool	Notes
Bite	1L	9	Requires Grapple

Reptilians

Some paranoid conspiracy theorists believe that politicians, celebrities, and CEOs are being replaced. In their places are imposters, reptiles in human skin, and that these creatures will soon control every major facet of business, politics and media across the world. These theories are mostly (but not entirely) wrong.

Reptilians exist, though not in the numbers conspiracy theorists believe. In their true forms, reptilians are lanky humanoid creatures, massive chameleons with human eyes and stunted tails. They can shift the color of their skin and the shape of their limbs, allowing them to camouflage themselves as human.

Reptilians are panicky, still subject to primal instincts. In a direct confrontation they tend to drop their guise and flee. Angels and demons alike find use in the species as spies and informants: a quiet janitor here, a security guard there. They make fine spies, so long as you don't expect too much of them.

Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 1, Strength 2, Dexterity 5, Stamina 2, Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 1

Skills: Athletics 3, Expression 1, Intimidation 1, Investigation 1, Larceny 4, Stealth 3, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge (Disguise, Impersonation) 3, Survival 2, Weaponry 1

Adaptations: Occluded 2; Variable Body (Any Humanoid Form)

Rank: 2

Health: 7

Willpower: 2

Initiative: 6

Defense: 8

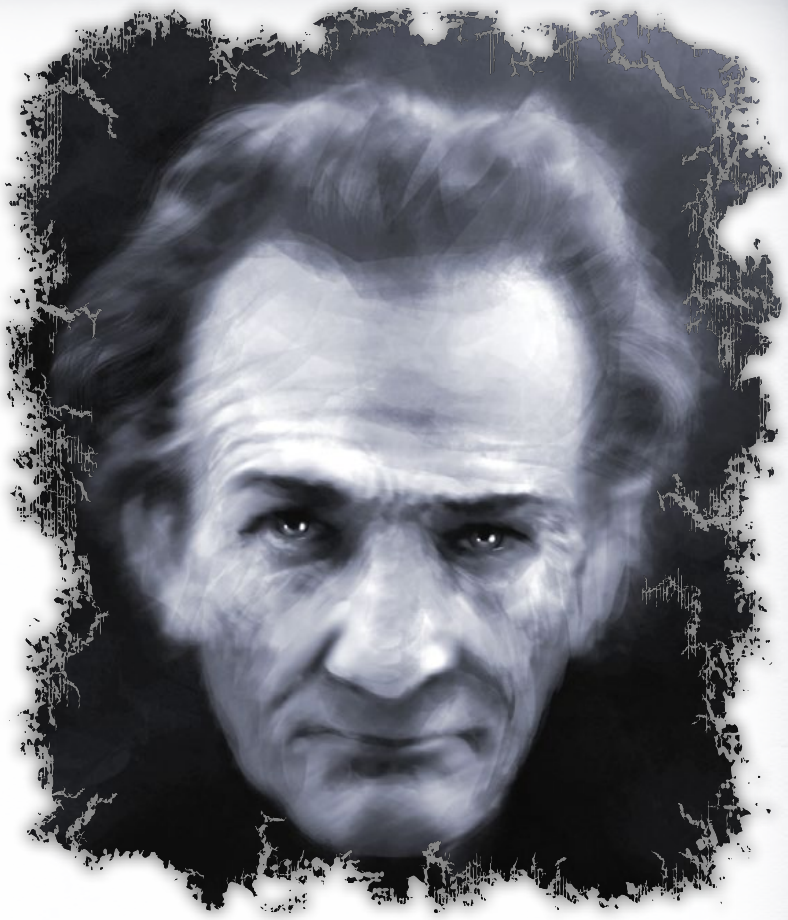
Speed: 12

Size: 5

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Dice Pool
Knife	0L	3

Sleeper Agents



Just as facilities exist to reprogram demons, there are also facilities to alter human minds. Through these, angels create sleeper agents, puppets programmed subconsciously for service. Sleeper agents' minds are reprogrammed in subtle ways, much deeper and less noticeable than the overt control offered by Numina or Manifestations. Infrastructure fills the victim's heads with embedded commands and secret directives. Commands are given triggers, specific stimuli that cause them to emerge. When triggered, the agent's personality is suppressed and directives rise to the surface. A stigmatic's normal personality and Integrity has no bearing on how they act once triggered: an ordinary person might assassinate a presidential candidate, a zealot may betray his faith, and so on.

Sleeper agents are one of the greatest sources of strife and insecurity for the Unchained. Anyone who has ever been captured by the God-Machine is at risk. The mere suspicion that a human is a sleeper agent is enough to put demons on edge. Unfortunately, the Unchained have found no reliable way to test for such tampering, other than blindly testing for triggers. Demons with the power to plumb a person's memory, such as the Memory Theft form ability, may be able to uncover evidence, but uncovering such tampering doubles the number of successes necessary. Any failed rolls in the process may trigger the subject's conditioning.

Sleeper Agent: Hunter "Buck" Grant

"That's awesome! When I was in the military, we didn't have anything like this!"

Background: Hunter Grant has been "Buck" to his friends and family since he was born. He isn't sure why his Dad called him that and he can't ask him, but he has to admit the name seems to fit. Buck is strong, confident, and lives each day with a prayer on his lips and a smile for the world.

Buck joined the Army straight out of high school and served in Special Forces. He's been all around the Middle East and even survived a helicopter crash in Somalia. For all that, he doesn't think of himself as a "badass" or anything so grandiose. He's had training and he recognizes his own skills, but for the most part, he just considers himself lucky.

When his last tour of duty put him in Germany, he met a woman, fell in love, and married. When he was discharged, they moved back to the States, bought a house, and had a daughter. Buck became a minister at his local church and he remains as active in his community as possible. He volunteers at local shelters, runs a Bible study group four afternoons a week, teaches concealed carry classes, and takes his daughter to Scout functions.

But Buck isn't entirely whole. After the crash in Somalia, he and four of his fellow Special Forces folks spent six weeks in an undisclosed location, receiving medical care. The paperwork, should anyone care to look, is a Mobius loop of bureaucratic doublespeak. Buck Grant (and his comrades) weren't anywhere under the Army's jurisdiction. In truth, Buck was getting very specific, very elaborate reprogramming. He hasn't been triggered yet, but he has nightmares sometimes about what he's supposed to do when he is.

When he has those dreams, Buck gets down on his knees and prays for serenity. He tries to have faith that it will all be all right through the love of God. And he knows, in some secret, unacknowledged place in his mind, that his prayers will go unanswered.

Description: Buck is slightly under six feet. He's mostly bald, but keeps his brown hair buzzed. He has a ready smile and a firm handshake for all around him, and a big, infectious laugh. Buck carries a pistol when he's out and about, but he obeys all firearms laws and safety protocols. He generally wears blue jeans, t-shirts advertising his church, and work boots.

Storytelling Hints: Buck doesn't remember the time he spent in the hospital and he doesn't have any real idea what the nightmares mean. He just remembers that they're intense, and horrible, and they involve him using his combat training on people that have done no wrong and are not his enemies. These fears fade with the sun, though; during the day, Buck is a happy, intense, and polite individual. His friends occasionally refer to the "Buck drinking game" (every time he mentions being in the Army or anything to do with his church, drink!), but it's all in good fun. Buck's a good guy.

Virtue: Humble

Vice: Zealous

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics (Christian Apologetics) 1, Computer 1, Crafts 3, Investigation 1, Medicine 1, Politics (Military) 1

Physical Skills: Athletics (Climbing) 2*, Brawl 2, Drive 1, Firearms (Pistol) 3*, Stealth 2, Survival 2*, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Empathy (Sympathetic) 2, Expression (Sermons) 2, Intimidation 2, Socialize 3

Merits: Contacts (Military, Firearms Enthusiasts) 2, Choke Hold, Danger Sense, Direction Sense, Inspiring, Martial Arts 4, Police Tactics 2, Professional Training 3

*Asset skills for Professional Training

Health: 8

Willpower: 5

Integrity: 8

Size: 5

Speed: 10

Defense: 5

Initiative: 5

Armor: 0/0

Storytelling Demon

No getting around it, **Demon** is a big game. As Storyteller, you've got a lot to keep straight if you're going to satisfy your players and evoke the feel of the game while enjoying yourself along the way. The **World of Darkness Rulebook** gives advice on the basic structure of chapter, story, and chronicle, so we won't go over that again here. This section is about **Demon: The Descent**, its specific feel, and how to utilize its core elements and themes in your games.

A Storytelling Game of Techgnostic Espionage

Techgnostic Espionage. That's what it says on the cover of this book. Demons are isolated by their unique perspective — they can see the Infrastructure and facilities, sense when angels interfere, see the humans blissfully unaware that they're resources for processes they can't perceive, and know that a great many of those processes are specifically out to find and kill *them*. Trapped in enemy territory by the Fall, demons behave like intelligence agents or terrorist cells, trying to keep themselves safe by infiltrating and subverting the hidden world of magical technology that grinds beneath the world's skin. Along the way, they're forced to interact with human criminal culture to acquire the resources they need — it's all very well trying to stay out of the way of humanity when you're a Saboteur, but unless your Cover is that of a militiaman, acquiring weapons, money, and equipment for your break-in at a facility requires you to deal with some unsavory characters. Agencies only complicate matters further, bringing mistrust, divided loyalties and clashes of interest among the demons themselves.

Both techgnosis and espionage call for considerations in setting up and running a game of **Demon**. Techgnosis is mostly about the physical setting and description, while Espionage is mostly about the characters and the plot taking place within that setting, but the two themes really go hand in hand.

The Hidden System: Techgnosis and the God-Machine

Watch a city at night, from far away or up high. See the yellow lights of streets like arteries and the red tail-lights of cars like blood cells flowing around them. Watch a time-lapse of a port, cranes moving over arriving ships like mandibles raking in resources, breaking them down into individual containers and shuttling them away deeper into the city. Look at a map of the electricity grid, like a central nervous system, clustered around substations like ganglia. Watch a usage map of cell towers in real time, seeing how the volume of calls shifts around the city over the course of a day. Rush-hour traffic looks like chaos when you're stuck in it, but it's actually relatively easy to predict — you just have to stop thinking of it as cars crammed onto freeways and use the math that describes water pressure in pipes. Those rolling tailbacks you get when there's an accident miles down the road? They behave almost exactly like shockwaves in fluid.

Take a step back from humanity. Ignore the people and look at the infrastructure; you'd be forgiven for thinking it has a mind of its own. Abstract to the point that individual lives are meaningless, and the complex patterns of our tools look like giant-scale living things. You might see patterns that aren't there, imagine some great intelligence directing it all, reflect on how human lives — precious human lives — look like just another moving part in the imaginary machine-organism we've built.

Demons know that the Machine isn't imaginary. They know that the patterns *are* there, and they know all too well that the

intelligence behind it all — the God-Machine — is still building. Ever refining. Constantly using humanity for its own purpose.

Gnosis is the Greek word for "knowledge," but in the context of mysticism it means something more like "insight." To have Gnosis is to understand the spiritual and magical qualities of the world, seeing past the physical to the supranormal, essential nature of the world by gaining insight into the true meaning behind physical phenomena.

In **Demon**, techgnosis — insight into technology — describes the God-Machine and the way it lurks, hidden and unnoticed, around the corners and under the skin of the human world. Demons can sense all the different forms of Infrastructure, can always see facilities and gears, and can sense angels through aetheric resonance or by risking being sensed in return. Thanks to their ability to perceive the God-Machine's work, demons can even feel the build-up of energies when an occult matrix forms in Infrastructure.

Unfortunately for the Unchained, ignorance truly is bliss. A demon is constantly reminded of the God-Machine's presence, aware when her creator begins a new project or sends angels to further its designs. Worse, the God-Machine knows that demons retain their senses. Individuals who pay too much attention to its projects or who betray the fact that they can see a facility are either stigmatic or demons concealed by Cover. Sometimes, angels stage attacks that only those with a sense for the God-Machine can see, just to see if anyone breaks Cover. Many demons grow to resent humans for their ignorance, blaming the victims for what the God-Machine does to them both.

The techgnosis theme is based on the idea that everything has multiple layers of meaning, the metaphors and symbols of an occult matrix emerging out of mundane actions. For example, a bank robbery is a violent act that terrorizes victims and upsets the criminal status quo of a city. It might also be part of an occult matrix placing an artifact from a specific location into four bank vaults across the city in order to symbolically safeguard it, turning it into Infrastructure. Or the attack might be a plan hatched by Saboteurs to undo that safety and reveal existing Infrastructure to the world.

Demons are inherently aware when something has techgnostic meaning, but they don't have the ability to instantly know what that meaning *is*. Without the connection to the God-Machine they lost in the Fall, they can sense when their creator is enacting a plan, but have to guess at what the plan or its objective is, risk doing nothing with the possibility that the plan is directed at them, or investigate further. Which is where the second theme of the game — espionage — comes in.

Spy Stories: Espionage

Demon branches out from the straight horror of other World of Darkness games into the espionage and action-espionage genres as demons investigate the God-Machine's operations to both ensure their own safety and furthering Agenda-driven motives. Because Infrastructure uses human infrastructure whenever possible, a demon trying to determine what a given occult matrix is doing, trying to stop it, or trying to subvert it has to spy on, destroy, or suborn whatever elements make up the Infrastructure, which involves acting much like a human spy. The human systems forming Infrastructure might not recognize the Unchained as demons unless they're also well-informed cultists of the God-Machine, but they definitely react. In the story of the Saboteur bank robbery, above, the bank's employees, the police, and even criminals hired to take part in the job don't need to know the truth about demons or perceive the occult matrix at work in order to drive the story — the human authorities see only violent criminals and act accordingly. As they navigate the Descent and interact with Infrastructure, demons often find themselves pushed into the roles of criminals, spies, and terrorists simply by their associations with those sorts of people and their parallel needs to more mundane criminals. It's hard to organize the weapons needed for a raid on a facility without a relationship with the local arms dealers, after all, and a demon might have to abandon Cover not because of angels, but simply because the FBI are trying to find him.

Espionage stories hinge on complex motives. Truly benign or malign Storyteller characters don't happen or are noted for their rarity. Loyalty is a rare and precious thing, as most alliances are driven by convenience and immediate need rather than genuine affiliation. Motives are hidden behind impenetrable layers — because demons lie so easily, they fit with little effort into the clandestine world of espionage. Humans who interact with them for a moderate amount of time, though, soon learn that they can't trust anything the demon says, and demons can never trust anything they say to one another.

That lack of trust in their associates limits the scale of demonic society. Some teaming-up is prudent to better mitigate threats, work together, and even just have someone to talk to about the stresses of the Descent, but beyond one's immediate rings, most demons view Unchained strangers with suspicion until they've proven themselves. Even then, members of the same ring routinely keep "professional" distance from one another's Covers and watch for signs of betrayal. The exceptions — Agencies — form when two or more rings decide to work together to accomplish a goal, but agents view one another with even less trust than ringmates.

The threat of betrayal isn't a paper tiger, either. The God-Machine wants demons back, whether for "redemption" or recycling, and it assigns angels to counterespionage, infiltration, and assassination roles. Demons spying on Infrastructure often find that they're being spied on in return by loyalists. If angels uncover a crack in a demon's Cover, they exploit it until the Unchained can be forced into exposure.

Espionage stories revolve around moral compromise. They're about shades of grey, professional enemies being forced to act in terrible ways to accomplish their goals. When a ring destroys an Infrastructure, innocent lives may be lost in the crossfire. To gain the trust of smugglers she needs for her Agency's operation, a demon may have to commit crimes.

THE MOSCOW RULES

Cold War operatives working in Moscow, under threat of extremely harsh treatment if they were discovered, worked to an unwritten code commonly called the Moscow Rules. As demons face similar circumstances, they're useful as "good advice for demons" in your games. Agencies teach them to newly Fallen Unchained in order to instill the proper amount of paranoia in young demons. Mistakes happen, of course, and these lead to plot hooks. Keep an eye out for when your players break these rules and consider what the consequences might be.

- Assume nothing.
- Never go against your instincts.
- Everyone is potentially under the God-Machine's control.
- There's always someone watching you. Don't look back and don't run.
- Go with the flow and blend in.
- Avoid building up a pattern, and stay in Cover.
- Lull them into a false sense of complacency.
- Don't harass the opposition.
- Pick the opportune moment for action.
- Always have a back-up plan.

GORE!

Demon does include elements of body horror, but there are faults in relying on descriptions of blood and guts. Shock-horror works in visual media, powered by special effects and talented editing to surprise and disgust audiences, but you probably don't have access to a visual effects studio when running a roleplaying game. Spending too long describing a gross-out scene reduces the shock value, and risks your players moving past the surprise before you're done or (worse) finding the description funny.

Literary horror writers work under the same restrictions, and know to use blatant imagery as a spice – take a leaf from their playbook and cut down on the loving descriptions of carnage. A little non-visual sensory description goes a long way.

When an angel comes for a demon, it doesn't care who gets in the way and it doesn't matter that the angel is essentially a slave – if the demon doesn't kill it, his own life is forfeit. Naïve demons talk about the "greater good" or justify their actions as necessary, but those further down the Descent know that it's not that simple. Sometimes in order to go on living, a demon must cross a line or abandon a moral code. A demon who never had to break his own rules is young, lucky, unstable to begin with, or an infiltrator working for the God-Machine.

Horror

Alongside the action-espionage elements, **Demon** is still a World of Darkness game and is still based in horror. The key to a good horror story is similar to the secret of a good joke – it's all about tension and release, or in horror terms, *dread* and *revulsion*.

Dread is the apprehension of fear, the worry that something bad is about to happen. Revulsion is the cathartic confrontation with a realized fear. The two go hand-in-hand. Neglect dread and you have a punch-line without a setup, whatever horrific imagery you've lovingly described undercut without the build-up of tension it needs. Ignore revulsion, and you have a story built on stress that never pays off, equal parts unsatisfying and exhausting.

Despite the name, revulsion doesn't have to be gross-out horror involving buckets of blood. It's the visceral response to a situation that's important, the point where hope falters and a threat comes true. Demons often feel revulsion when they're pushed into actions they don't want to perform - when a pacifist Destroyer is backed into a corner and forced to kill, that's just as much of a release as when a Guardian discovers the ritually-murdered remains of an acquaintance he put in harm's way.

Demon mostly focuses on impersonal threats with very personal consequences, the implacable God-Machine tearing at the fragile lives of the Unchained and their human friends. Some of the horror themes in the game are:

- **Hunted by the God-Machine:** No matter how far a Demon runs, the God-Machine and its angels are always searching for him. The Unchained spend their Descent looking over their shoulders, always afraid, on some level, that angels will find them. The God-Machine infects everything humanity builds and never relents in its efforts to regain its lost property. Build dread with close calls and flawed Cover, glitches manifesting at the wrong time, human investigators probing too deeply into a character's affairs, and situations forcing demons to drop Cover even if for only a moment. Achieve revulsion through characters being Burned or hunted, the terrible moment when angels attack a character's home or the realization that a Cover is now exposed.

TIME TRAVEL

One type of story we haven't shown much in the World of Darkness bears special mention — whether through Infrastructure, the powers of arch-angels, or sheer cosmic strangeness such as the splinter Seattles (see the Appendix), characters in a **Demon** chronicle can find themselves travelling in time.

Time travel in a horror game fits as a subset of Universal Machinery, above, showcasing a story where the slightest wrong move can have terrible unforeseen consequences. Time in the World of Darkness isn't elastic and doesn't bounce back from alteration like it does in many science fiction stories, nor are temporally-displaced demons prevented from causing catastrophic changes through paradoxes. They are also not aware of the rules of what they can and can't change. If the characters alter history, treat it as any other cosmic change — show the damage and reveal the long-term fallout. If the characters are careful in the past, make changes in subtle ways — a street name here, the details of a Storyteller character there. Look to films like *The Butterfly Effect* or *Source Code*, or stories like "A Sound of Thunder" or *The Anubis Gates* for inspiration.

- **Maltheism:** God does exist but it isn't benevolent. Demons know what many humans in the World of Darkness suspect — that the God-Machine regards them as disposable resources at best. Beyond the personal horror of being hunted, demons realize that the human lives around them are manipulated and consumed by the God-Machine's world-spanning influence. The human race is every demon's adopted family, after the Fall, and their fragile lives are in constant danger from its plans. Build dread by threatening a demon's mortal associates, or show Infrastructure preparing to spend human lives as currency in an occult matrix. Achieve revulsion by showing the damage, the wrecked bodies and minds left over when the God-Machine moves on to a new scheme.
- **Universal Machinery:** As terrible as the God-Machine is, many demons suspect that it's necessary for human civilization — either because it *does* do some good with the bad, or because it's so deeply embedded into reality that tearing it out causes greater injury. Interfering with Infrastructure and facilities can have unintended consequences as natural disasters strike and cosmological changes sweep over the world. Build dread by hinting at the possible consequences of preventing an occult matrix or destroying Infrastructure, but provide good reasons for the characters to interfere anyway and leave the choice up to them. Achieve revulsion by following through — if the characters suspect their actions will set off a hurricane but choose to risk it, don't cop out. Show the fallout of their actions and let them have the courage of their convictions.

As well as the horror themes dealing with the God-Machine, **Demon** showcases a few lesser themes as well.

- **Invasion of the Body Snatchers:** Demons face issues of identity and trust daily, never certain that their associates are who they say they are. The Unchained know that faces, backgrounds, and identities are interchangeable — and can be stolen with only the victim's closest friends able to tell the difference. The horror of having friends and loved ones replaced by doppelgängers is a double-edged sword, as demons fear angelic infiltration but habitually take others' lives as Cover. Build dread through suspicion, either by a demon's new mortal family after she takes on an identity or by introducing the possibility that the ring's allies have been replaced. Achieve revulsion through the revelation that an ally, contact, or family member *was* possessed or replaced after all, or have a demon's Cover family become certain that she isn't who she appears to be.
- **Self-Propelled Evolution:** Demons are evolving, changing as they gain Primum and interface more deeply with reality. Every Key discovered, every step down the Descent, marks time in the transition from angel to... What, exactly? Demons don't know the answer and that scares a great many of them. This theme is one of personal horror, the creeping dread and revulsion of going through a metamorphosis with no certain outcome. Stigmatics feel it too, with their bodies warping in physical ways thanks to their contact with Infrastructure.

The Map and the Directions

Creating a **Demon** chronicle isn't hard but rewards a little forethought. Like the God-Machine using Infrastructure to build a matrix and gain output, the trick to a successful chronicle is in both the initial design and the stories you run in it.

Infrastructure: Chronicle Setup

Before you can start telling **Demon** stories, you need both a setting and a collection of characters — player and Storyteller — to go in it. The Storyteller characters don't need to be completely fleshed out until you use them in a chapter. Anything you plan can and should change if a better idea comes along before it's used, but as Storyteller you have a few things to do while your players are coming up with their characters.

COSMIC MECHANISM, LOCAL CONSEQUENCES

Many World of Darkness games describe their scope in terms of "tiers" ranging from local to cosmic. A story's tier is based on the scale of potential fallout from its plot — a single vampire preying upon the poor of a character's housing project is a local problem, while a global conspiracy of vampires plotting to take over governments and force mandatory blood "donation" is a global one.

Demon is firmly entrenched in the local and regional, but it's not so much a case of the threat being local as rather the only part of it characters can see. The God-Machine is threaded throughout the world, but it doesn't have a single global master plan. It can attempt the same goal in dozens of locations all over the world at once, but each needs its own Infrastructure and occult matrix. As outnumbered as they are, demons can only respond to the Infrastructure they can see and hope that other rings and Agencies they'll never meet are doing their part, too. **Demon** isn't about a single ring saving the world — not by default, anyway — but about the clash between the cosmic and the personal, the vast alien intelligence of the God-Machine and the newly-mortal lives of the Unchained. If demons were united across the globe, taking the battle to the angels, it would be a war game not a spy game. Demons give up their cosmic viewpoint the moment they Fall and receive a real human life and mortal's perspective in return.

Chronicle Seeds

The foundation of the chronicle, the seed is everything you do *before* your troupe makes any characters. Some troupes prefer the Storyteller to come up with the seed entirely by herself, presenting it as part of discussions about which games the troupe might want to play or requesting certain types of characters for her game. Other troupes like to get together and handle this initial stage together, coming up with the broad shape of the chronicle before the players make their characters and the Storyteller starts filling in the blanks.

Whether by yourself or in discussion with your players, try to answer as many of the following questions as you can:

How large is your troupe? Group size determines how much focus you're going to have to put on each character, how many Ciphers you need to create, and how many individual storylines you need to juggle. In-setting, every demon needs a mission to have Fallen from. Unless two or more of your players' characters met their catalysts on the same mission, larger troupe sizes mean more missions — which in turn requires your setting to be somewhere the God-Machine has enough different projects underway to support them, or for your characters to have Fallen long enough ago that they — or the Infrastructure — have moved.

How long will the chronicle last? And, in a related matter, how long will the chapters be? Some troupes like to play a single chronicle for years at a stretch, others change which game they're playing more frequently. There's no sense laying the groundwork for a 12-story epic if you know you want to fit the chronicle in over the summer, and a short three-story plot would be stretched too thin over eight. How many scenes do you get in your chapters? A monthly seven-hour game has a different flow of scenes to it than a weekly three-hour game, and requires more preparation between chapters.

What framework will the chronicle use? The majority of World of Darkness chronicles feature characters of a specific type. Most **Demon** troupes will have every player character be a demon, for example, but this doesn't *have* to be the case. The composition of the character group in a game is the game's framework, and you have several options to choose from.

- **One ring:** The simplest framework. Every player controls a demon player character, all members of the same ring. The ring might include Storyteller characters like stigmatic retainers as well, but at its core the players' demons have one another's backs in the murky techgnostic world.
- **Divided rings:** A framework for larger troupes in which the player characters are divided among two or more rings. This allows for rivalry and distrust between player characters (though you should consider having all the rings be part of the same Agency to give them a reason to work together anyway) while maintaining the bond of a ring's loyalties to some if not all of the other characters.
- **Mixed company:** Some players control demon characters, while others portray stigmatics or human characters caught up in the demons' business, as in the fiction earlier in this book. This framework is best used for shorter-term chronicles, as if the demon characters have to abandon Cover the others will be left behind.
- **Crossover:** A variant of Mixed Company, a crossover chronicle mixes **Demon** with another World of Darkness game, dividing the player characters between them. Crossover games should pay special attention to the chronicle's theme and mood, choosing a theme that works in both games. For example, a mixed **Vampire** and **Demon** game works well with stories about social influence and hiding among humanity, while **Mage** and **Demon** mixes best in chronicles about secret knowledge and techgnosis.

What is the chronicle's Theme and Mood? And how will that be emphasized in character creation? We've gone over the themes of **Demon** as a whole, but is there a specific theme the troupe wants to examine in the story? What mood are you interested in playing to — cosmic horror? Helplessness in the face of the God-Machine? The manipulative, consuming world of a Tempter Agency? Your choices should guide the rest of chronicle creation.

How much do the demons trust one another? And how much distrust is the troupe comfortable with in play? Rings tend to be made up of demons who find that they trust one another more than they are suspicious, but even the tightest-knit ring has fault lines and triggers that the members have agreed to not probe at for the sake of expediency. More to the point, many players don't like their player characters to risk being at one another's throats. Now, before character creation, is the time to talk about the level of cross-purpose working the troupe wants.

Are the characters members of an Agency? And if not, will the chronicle feature one as Storyteller characters anyway? Unlike other World of Darkness games, the social structure of an Agency is entirely optional both in-setting and out of character. Leave Agencies out of the setting in order to emphasize your ring's struggle to survive against the God-Machine and their isolation in human society. Bring Agencies in if you want to play with demon Storyteller characters, use the risk of angelic infiltration, or want to have organized groups of demons that are at odds with or in support of the player ring.

Do the characters have common Agendas? Or Incarnations, for that matter? Mixed character representation is normal for a World of Darkness game. Given that you may have already agreed to reduce the amount of backstabbing going on, give some thought to restricting how many Agendas the player characters may subscribe to. Single-Agenda and single-Incarnation games bring focus at the cost of flexibility.

Does the chronicle have a story focus? If so, what is it? You might want to run a chronicle about pacts, or a long-term chronicle about a group of Integrators attempting to become exiles. If the story focus has an effect on character generation, it's best to decide it now — chronicles based around single agendas, for example, or showcasing features of the game like Pacts or switching Cover will need characters set up in those Agendas with the appropriate Merits or with complex Covers.

Where and when is the chronicle set? Given all of the above, does the troupe have a setting in mind? To better hide among humanity, demons tend to stick to larger cities, but the God-Machine has more human infrastructure to choose from in urban areas so demons looking for real estate have to weigh the advantage of anonymity against the risk of recapture. The God-Machine also hides in smaller, rural areas, too, and a demon could easily Fall in a small town with a dark secret.

Character Creation

The next stage of chronicle design comes when the players are creating their characters. As they decide on Incarnations and catalysts, consider how the mission the God-Machine sent them on before they Fell fits in with your setting. Angels have to come from somewhere, either summoned as the output of an occult matrix or taken out of suspended animation in a facility and sent out into the world. The God-Machine regularly changes and updates its plans, however, so if the characters have been Unchained for a few years at the chronicle's start, the Infrastructure or facility they came from might no longer be there — but it's a potent plot hook if it is. Also, consider what the mission they refused *was* — and decide if the God-Machine abandoned it entirely or sent another angel to finish the job.

Next comes Agenda. Defining the objective a demon has for her Descent, Agenda similarly defines a direction for your chronicle — Saboteurs need Infrastructure to destroy, Integrators need some glimmer of hope of being accepted back, Tempters need a web of people willing to deal in souls, and Inquisitors need something — or someone — to investigate.

Cover is also important in setting building. Look at the ring's Covers and ask yourself:

Does the Cover suggest any iconic settings? Does the character have a place to live, a safehouse, a means of surveying facilities?

Does the Cover include any Storyteller characters? Does the demon have human friends, family, loved ones, enemies, colleagues? Does she have a job, or a regular source of income other than gainful employment?

What are the potential compromises? As player-defined traits, the possible compromises for Cover provide you with a long-term roadmap for applying the espionage theme of harsh choices. What is the character afraid of? What does the character not want to do under any circumstances? What are his Cover's weaknesses and how could angels exploit them?

At this point, you'll hopefully be coming up with plotlines to engage the characters — maybe even the outline of the first chapter or story. Try to think of a few long-term goals as well. These don't have to be the climax of the chronicle, unless it's going to be very short — no plan survives contact with the enemy, and no plotline escapes player action intact — but coming up with an idea for a major development in each character's story arc will help you to design their Ciphers.

Ciphers

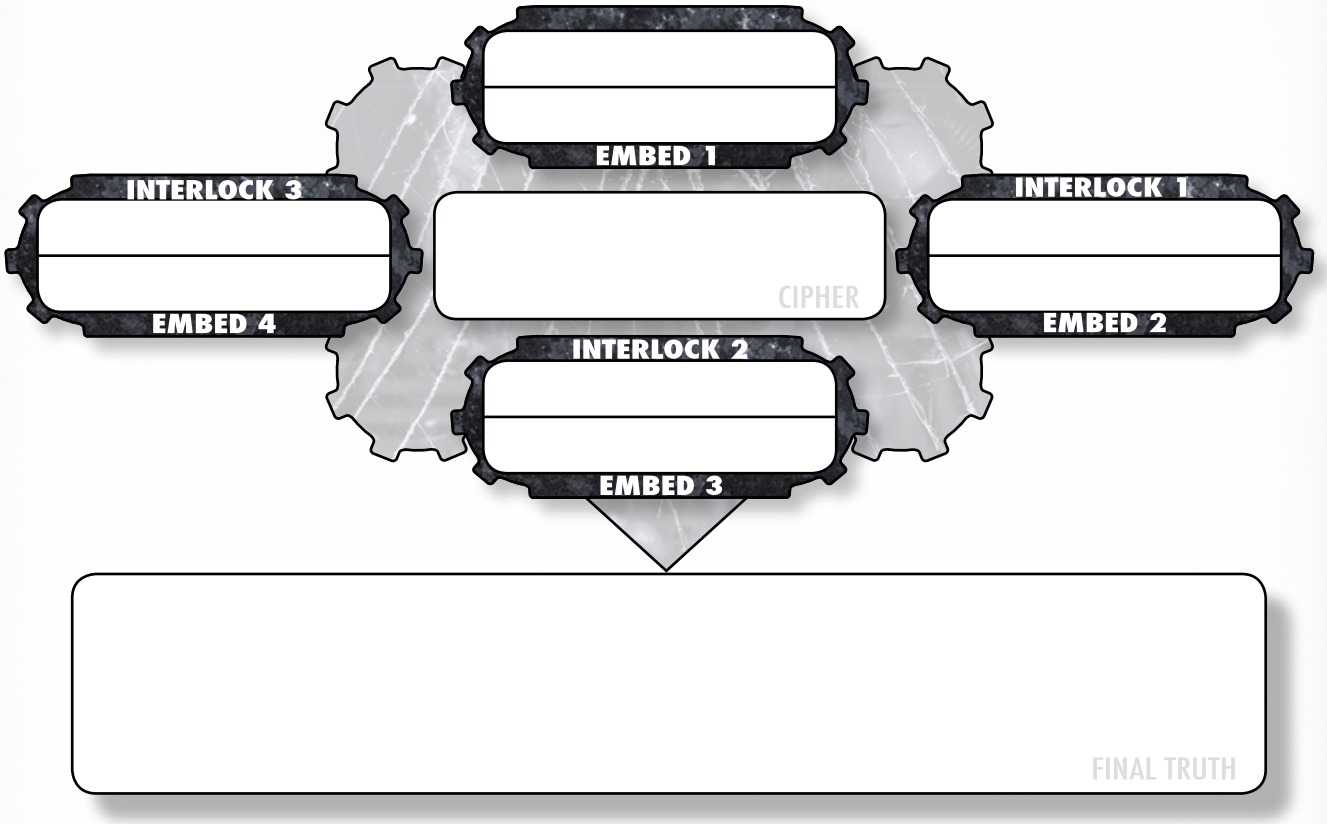
As described on p. 155, every demon has a Cipher, a sequence of four Embeds that she is destined to uncover as she evolves from angelic slavery into the freedom of Hell and self-determination.

Your players supply the Embed for their characters' first Keys during character creation. The Storyteller's job is to then define the rest of the sequence.

By this point in chronicle creation, you should have a wealth of information about the characters, the concepts behind them, and hopefully a few short- and mid-term Story ideas as well. If you need clarification, *ask for it*; don't assume that you know what one of your players wants for his character only to disappoint him when the Cipher turns out to be unrelated.

When you have a clear grasp of where the character is and where you see them going, review the Embed lists and look for suitable powers. You can either build forward from the player-designated Embed, or backward from your concept of where the character will go in the chronicle, the final secret that the completed Cipher reveals. A full Cipher consists of four Keys, three Interlocks and a final secret.

A full Cipher looks like the following:



When designing the Interlocks, bear the following guidelines in mind:

- Interlocks should usually be instant actions, like the Embeds they're based on.
- An Interlock should merge the themes and purpose of the Embeds either side of it in ways personal to the demon, his catalyst, and his agenda.
- The dice pool and effects of an Interlock should be based on the two Embeds. Use the Attribute from one and the skill from another, or if the appropriate dice pool remains the same, base the game mechanics of the Interlock on a mixture of the two. Try not to make either of the powers redundant in the Cipher.
- Interlocks targeting other individuals should include a means of resisting the effect. Active resistance, where the victim is aware of the magic and is attempting to avoid it, should be a contested action, as should cases where the effect entirely depends on how many successes the player rolls (damage done, or how many bystanders the Interlock affects). All-or-nothing effects, where it doesn't matter how many successes the roll scores beyond deciding if it was exceptional or not, should be resisted. In contested actions, the victim's player rolls a dice pool and compares successes to the demon's activation successes (decide which way a tie goes, too). In resisted actions, the demon's dice pool is modified by a flat number, usually one of the victim's Attributes.

Example: *A Destroyer Saboteur's Interlock of Social Dynamics and Turn Blade might produce a power that allows the demon to instantly assess the nature and usefulness of all weapons – even potentially improvised ones – in the immediate vicinity. Social Dynamics is Wits + Socialize while Turn Blade is Wits + Weaponry, which fits the new power as a dice pool. For the mechanics of the power, Turn Blade makes weapons less effective. Social Dynamics adds the demon's Primum to social rolls and gains information about relationships on an exceptional success. The Interlock power, then, highlights all weapons to the demon, allowing him to keep track of them in the scene. On a successful activation he knows the weapon bonus of all weapons present and adds his Primum to Dodge rolls. On an exceptional success he learns if any of the people present know any Fighting Merits, though not what they are.*

The final secret isn't a power, but reveals the purpose you've decided for the character's Descent.

Setting Creation

With the characters created and assessed for story potential, it's time to fill out the detailed setting. Again, the trick here is

"BUT I'M NOT A GAME DESIGNER!"

Here's a dirty secret: It's actually not that hard.

When designing Interlocks, think about what kinds of challenges the power could be used to overcome in a game and whether that challenge is going to actually come up. A power that allows a character to turn inorganic material into edible, tasty food would be amazingly useful in real life, but "starving to death with only a box of packing peanuts to hand" isn't a challenge that's likely to appear in a **Demon** game.

Likewise, don't fret too much about whether a power is "balanced." That's a nebulous, subjective term. Instead, consider whether the power is so effective that it invalidates others, especially other Embeds in the character's Cipher. Interference, for example, makes it harder for an angel to find a demon. A power that makes it *impossible* for an angel to find a demon is inappropriate to the setting because it removes too much of the risk. A power that makes an angel more likely to find *another* demon (displacing the character's own aetheric signature) is highly appropriate to the setting, and a possible mixture of the Interference and Everybody Knows Embeds.

Finally, be aware that the rules aren't set in stone. If you design an Interlock but it just doesn't work out in play as written, get feedback from the player on how to improve it. Storytelling games are collaborative by nature — use that to your advantage.

to do as much as you need to confidently portray your setting in the first few stories and no more.

Long-Term Infrastructure and Facilities

Because demons can sense the God-Machine at work, characters that have been in a location for any length of time will know where the long-term Infrastructure and facilities are, the ones the God-Machine reuses regularly enough to still keep empowered and guarded. For most demons, either place is somewhere they avoid at all costs, but knowing where the no-go areas of the city are will help cement your setting in your players' minds. Look through the descriptions of different kinds of Infrastructure in Chapter One and consider your setting. Is a notable power plant Containment Infrastructure? Does the God-Machine conceal a facility behind a false front?

High Weirdness

If your chronicle has a central "weird factor," a supernatural twist to it beyond the normal World of Darkness, now's the time to come up with it and note any setting considerations that it requires. For example, Seattle (p. 248) has a fractured timeline, with alternate, frozen pasts accessible through the main Quadrants of the city.

Agencies

Whether they include player characters or are entirely Storyteller-led, you should define the Agencies that already exist in your setting at the chronicle's start. At this stage, just a name, a type (free, compromised, temporal, and so on as defined on p. 57), and current objectives are enough.

Storyteller Characters

By now you should have a list of Storyteller characters to come up with — demon agents, stigmatic Retainers serving the player characters, humans caught up in Cover, exiles, angels, cryptids, and stigmatics on the God-Machine's side and anyone vital to the setting. Try not to detail too many Storyteller Characters at first — you won't use them all in play, so it's a waste of time. Just having enough of an idea to allow you to consistently wing it is fine, along with more detailed notes (including traits) for more central characters.

Having prepared, it's now time to play.

Occult Matrix: Running the Game

With a setting designed and ideas for stories, you're ready to dive into the business of running **Demon**. Along with the advice in the **World of Darkness Rulebook** on Storytelling, the following should help guide you.

Playing the God-Machine

The God-Machine is a strange Storyteller character. It's rarely "on-screen" and never speaks to the characters, but its plans and motivations are central to any **Demon** chronicle. As the ultimate expression of both techgnosis and the espionage theme of not knowing any other being's mind, the black box of the God-Machine's decision-making taunts demons and tantalizes players. Here are some pointers.

The God-Machine is neither cruel nor kind. It uses whatever it calculates as necessary force in any situation, with a preference toward subtlety. Demons can avoid provoking it by staying off the radar, but once the God-Machine decides that the damage a ring will cause if left unchecked now outweighs the potential collateral damage when it strikes against them, it will send angels to hunt them down. On the other hand, if a stigmatic escapes from the God-Machine's control by persuading another human to take her place, the God-Machine won't pursue her — there's no point, as long as the gears keep turning.

The God-Machine has biases toward self-preservation, secrecy, and the maintenance of the status quo. Some of its projects introduce or threaten to introduce sweeping, global changes, but most of the time the God-Machine is defending itself, maintaining or hiding existing projects and attempting local-scale advancements in its agendas, not trying to bring about the apocalypse.

You should **never reveal the God-Machine's decisions** or opinions to the players. Let them discover its intent through its projects, the same way everyone does. Demons are no longer hooked into the God-Machine's control, which robs them of so much but offers freedom in return, including the freedom to be surprised when the God-Machine fulfills a matrix and gains output.

The God-Machine is slow to react but implacable when roused. Characters are simply too insignificant for the God-Machine as a whole to take interest in individuals except in moments of great crisis. Demons who accrue more than three or four dots of Primum, characters who derail major Infrastructure, or Saboteurs who destroy facilities provoke the God-Machine's response.

The God-Machine doesn't think like a human, doesn't show any emotions, and doesn't get frustrated. If it's prevented from gaining the desired output through one set of Infrastructure, it tries another.

The God-Machine thinks of people as roles and only very rarely as individuals. As a being made of Infrastructure, it understands humans and supernatural creatures through the systems they place around themselves. Most humans *are* their jobs, their place in their families, and the resources they consume, as far as the God-Machine is concerned.

The God-Machine never speaks, not even to angels. If it is capable of communicating to the level of demons and other characters, it has never shown any sign of it. If the God-Machine wants a message delivered, it sends an angel to do it.

The God-Machine is not a discrete being. You can't go somewhere and look at "the God-Machine." The God-Machine proper is the sum total of all Command and Control Infrastructure, all facilities, every occult matrix, and every angel. It's the emergent self-awareness of the magical symbolism of human systems, and it "lives" within its entire work.

Infrastructure and Techgnosis

Every time you use Infrastructure in the game you engage with the techgnosis theme, telling stories about the layers of hidden meaning in the world. Infrastructure isn't as important to your chronicle as how the characters react to it, however, and how they deal with the burden and opportunity of always sensing the God-Machine's designs.

When you're creating Infrastructure for the game, follow the following steps.

- First, decide what the God-Machine's objective is. This can be classed as one of the main types of Infrastructure (as listed on page 62), but it doesn't have to be.

Example: *The God-Machine intends to upgrade a piece of Command and Control Infrastructure housed in an "abandoned" telephone exchange by placing it into a secure facility, but an angel recently sensed a demon breaking Cover in the region so the site has gone into lockdown. The God-Machine requires Concealment Infrastructure to cloak the existing site before it can begin the transformation.*

- Next, define the occult matrix that will produce that objective. Matrices work in metaphor and symbolism — think of an analogy to the objective, something that describes it in the language of techgnostic meaning. If in doubt, use the "rule of four" — the God-Machine and its plans often utilize four-part sequences, tetragrammons, and matrices where three parts support a final event.

Example: *The God-Machine plans to hijack a major public works project for its own purposes; a dam is being built nearby. By placing artifacts from the facility-to-be in sealed drums, and hiding them in what will be the flood lake while also incorporating certain sigils into the design of the dam, the rising waters won't just conceal the drums—the occult matrix they represent will conceal the site they came from.*

- Last, define the Infrastructure that the occult matrix needs to take place. Infrastructure is literal where the occult matrix is symbolic—the physical supplies and materials needed for the plan. The difficulty for demons is in figuring out what the Infrastructure and matrix are designed to do before the output is completed.

Example: *The God-Machine sends the drums out via multiple couriers, having them handed off from firm to firm until they end up buried in the flood zone under the guise of the construction taking place. The plans for the dam need to be modified to incorporate magical symbols in the architecture, which requires more precision. The God-Machine sets up a third set of Infrastructure elsewhere to summon a Messenger angel and have it influence the architect, or possibly possess him and make the alterations itself if he proves resistant.*

As the example shows, Infrastructure can become quite complex, requiring angels who require Infrastructure of their own. The God-Machine doesn't hesitate to use innocent people as fuel for its occult matrices and even lays plans for how demons might engage with the design.

Abandon All Hope: Facilities

Facilities are locations so tied into the God-Machine that they've become full parts of it. Facilities are nightmare-realms of machinery, power, and intent. Invisible to humans, often folded in space so they take up impossible geometries like extra floors in buildings or city blocks that don't exist, facilities are the closest thing to a distinct "other world" belonging exclusively to the God-Machine. They are *always* guarded.

- Facilities have *purpose*. They are the computation sites, the angel birthing crèches, the stigmatic-creating surgeries, and the housing for the God-Machine's primary gears. Many exist to contain high strangeness, like Seattle's fractured timelines.

- Facilities are surrounded, created, maintained, and defended by Infrastructure. Many layers of Concealment

Infrastructure create the spatial warping or cloaking effects that hide facilities from human eyes.

- Facilities may be cloaked, have limited access points, or both. Facilities that warp time and space might only be accessed by specific doors at specific times—a hidden button in an elevator at midnight, a security door in an alleyway, a mysterious hatch built into the floor of city hall's basement. Demons can see facilities when they're "only" invisible and sense that something's wrong when they're near the access points of dimensionally-transcendent ones.
- Facilities always count as the Open Condition (see p. 346) for all angels. The loyalist kin of demons can survive indefinitely inside, their Essence refueled by the presence of the God-Machine.
- If a facility no longer serves a purpose, then the God-Machine removes any still-active functions (sending Psychopomp-angels to transport equipment and gear) and shuts it down entirely. Facilities that were converted from normal locations reappear, while those folded into strange warps of space are shut down, their access points sealed.

To demons, facilities are a combination of temptation and grave danger. They're the heartland of the Unchained's enemies, guarded by powerful, high-Rank angels, but even so demons might find reason to attempt a break-in. Most of these reasons don't have game mechanics but are entirely story-driven, the climax of story arcs and the final stories of chronicles.

- As described on p. 110, demons can gather Aether from active and even abandoned facilities.
- Integrators sometimes attempt to reconnect to the God-Machine by hooking themselves into facilities. The specifics vary according to the Integrator, her Cipher, and the nature of the facility involved, but successful attempts create an exile.
- By sabotaging or interfering with the gears found in facilities, demons can attempt to literally change the God-Machine's mind or force it to begin a project of their own design. The God-Machine strongly resists such subversion, defending any facilities where it might be possible with high-Rank Guardian angels and layers of defensive Infrastructure, but success leads to the God-Machine doing the demons' work for them, creating Infrastructure they can take as Cover and directing its agents to expose themselves to demonic harassment.
- Interfering with the workings of a facility may create new Embeds or Exploits or help discover Interlocks by leaving new flaws and tears in reality for demons to activate.
- By using the facilities that create and program stigmatics and angels for their own purposes, demons might be able to free brainwashed companions, causing flaws in an angel's programming that leave them vulnerable to Falling
- Long-term exposure to a facility might reverse the Descent in a demon, removing dots of Primum. This could be intentional on the part of an Integrator, or the process of returning a captured demon back to his angelic state. Other demons may have strong reasons for interfering.

Heist Stories

Because the God-Machine uses human assets, demons hoping to investigate, sabotage, or suborn Infrastructure and Facilities often face all the difficulties of accessing high-security locations on top of any supernatural defenses in place. Whether it's breaking into a bank to access a facility hidden in the vault, finding the architectural plans for a dam the God-Machine is forming Infrastructure around in the surveyor's office, or taking a politician targeted for angelic possession hostage, most rings will run into a situation where they need to get into somewhere they shouldn't be — or, just as often, find themselves trapped inside with the human police surrounding them.

The inspirational media for **Demon** is filled with heist sequences. A well-executed heist can be a great chapter or two in your chronicle as the players' ring gathers information, plans their daring intrusion, and carries it out, meeting unexpected complications along the way.

The difficulty in running a heist story is that if the characters are competent enough to pull the job off, the story loses all sense of urgency. If the players have spent a chapter conducting surveillance and carefully planning the heist, the *next* chapter, where the characters pull it off, feels preordained. The troupe's success in playing through the planning stage undercuts their enjoyment in playing through the actual heist. The obvious solution - to introduce enough unforeseen complications that the heist becomes exciting again — renders all the time spent planning useless.

Films, novels, and television shows featuring heists use a narrative trick to get around this — they intersperse flashbacks of the planning with the execution of the job, so that the audience is never sure if a complication (an unexpected security fence or one of the characters getting arrested, for example) is actually a risk or if the characters have prepared for it. Films like *Ocean's Eleven* and *Inside Man* are based entirely around this model, and you can use it, too.

After a scene or two of planning the heist, enough to make everyone aware of the target and the broad details of what they're up against, ask each player what their characters are doing to further the cause. This can be anything from an extended action to research the target, to following key Storyteller characters, to procuring equipment. In a break with normal scene flow, however, don't play through their efforts or narrate the outcome — just ask what they're intending to do and roll the dice, then skip straight to playing through the heist itself.

If the characters run into an unexpected complication during the heist, the players now have the option to take control of the game's narrative. If a player can explain how his character's contribution to the planning could have foreseen the complication and allowed the ring to prepare for it, they can retroactively reveal the ring's "preparation." A success on their contribution to the planning allows a player to take narrative control once. An exceptional success offers two such

opportunities. Players take a beat whenever they retroactively prepare for an obstacle in this way.

What Rises Must Fall: Story and Chronicle Pacing

Espionage stories, like horror stories, rely on tension and pacing. If you go too long without a threat, your characters settle into security and safety — good for them, but bad for the chronicle. If you throw too many confrontations at them at once, though, they quickly become overwhelmed.

When running **Demon**, try to maintain a baseline level of threat. Espionage stories rely on the fear of discovery long before they show the fallout of that discovery actually taking place. Techgnosis provides your primary means of keeping demons watching over their shoulders — describe Infrastructure to your players even when it's not related to the story at hand, mention angels passing overhead on inscrutable business. If you need to reinforce the feel at any point without it derailing your immediate story, have a Storyteller character exposed or suffer a close call. If the characters have grown to rely on a particular source in an Agency, make that demon need to change her Cover thanks to angelic scrutiny.

The God-Machine never stops and always has multiple projects in play at any given time. It isn't the sole antagonist of a **Demon** game, either, nor the sole source of plotlines — stories arising from the characters' Cover, the humans they interact with, any other demons in the setting, and even interactions with other supernatural beings all vie for space in your chronicle. That isn't a *bad* thing; the techgnostic espionage of **Demon** is greatly enhanced if it doesn't feel like the plotline at hand is the only thing of significance going on in the world.

A basic plotline has four stages — foreshadowing, setup, confrontation, and aftermath.

- In the foreshadowing stage, characters are introduced before they're needed, the God-Machine starts to build Infrastructure in the background, antagonists who later confront the characters prey on other demons and so on. Foreshadowing is best done as descriptive detail within other scenes, offhand mentions of events happening in the background and occasionally as full scenes, but it's never the main plot of a chapter.
- In the setup stage, Infrastructure builds, antagonists begin carrying out their plans, and the player characters become aware of the plot. This part of the plotline typically features investigation and small-scale confrontations. Fight scenes should use Down and Dirty Combat, feature low stakes, or not endanger Cover at this stage. It's in later stages that they get nasty.
- In the confrontation stage, the characters directly clash with the antagonists. This is where the large fight scenes take place, but confrontation doesn't have to be about physical violence. When the ring has discovered what their opponents are trying to do and are attempting to stop them, it's the confrontation stage.
- In the aftermath stage, the characters deal with what they had to do in the confrontation. If they damaged Cover,



they must adjust to their new circumstances, but don't just look for whether the God-Machine grew closer to finding the ring. Consider the responses of other demons, humans, and any other Storyteller characters to the rings' actions. This stage typically spends a few scenes showing how the setting has changed as a result of the plotline.

That's *one* plotline, good for a single story or very limited chronicle, but if you're going to be playing **Demon** for longer than the time it takes to get through that story, you need to have more. Waiting until each plotline is concluded before starting the next will lead to peaks and troughs of activity — you'll get long stretches of conversation or investigation between action scenes, and while that's fine for a limited chronicle, your players will see the pattern quickly in a longer arc. To avoid that, use multiple plotlines, but if you run them concurrently the stages will clash — a chapter including the setup or confrontation for multiple plots is challenging to pull off without confusing your players and muddying the theme and mood of your story. Too many plots operating in the background at once might lead to you getting confused as Storyteller, too, fighting for "screen time" in your chapters.

Instead, run your multiple plotlines in staggered fashion. Select four of your story ideas. During a story, have one plotline in foreshadowing, one in setup, one in confrontation, and one in aftermath. When you need a break from one plotline, run a scene advancing another, paying the most attention to the middle stages. Your characters should be taking part in scenes advancing the storyline of the setup plot, and then heading into the confrontation prepared in the previous story.

Example: *Chris is Storytelling a Demon chronicle and has four plotlines active in the current story; last story featured a demon's Cover's wife seeing him change back from demonic form by accident. Although he talked her into not doing anything rash, scenes with her are tense as the revelation hangs over them both. That plotline is in aftermath. The two main plotlines for the story revolve around the dam infrastructure outlined on p.242 above. The ring has discovered the forming Infrastructure on the dam, realized that the dam's design was angelically inspired, and is now sabotaging the sigils, hoping to prevent the Concealment Infrastructure from forming. That plot is in confrontation, as the human authorities try to stop the ring from attacking a valuable public building site. Having discovered the dam's Infrastructure, though, the ring is now aware that the God-Machine wants something to be concealed and has resolved to find clues to it while they're pulling off the heist; that's the setup phase of what will be next story's confrontation. Finally, Chris introduces a short scene of an unknown stigmatic attempting to get the ring's attention. That's foreshadowing for what will be setup next story and confrontation the story after that.*

The stages also apply to the flow of a long-term chronicle, with stories taking the place of scenes. The first part of a longer chronicle, the first few stories, should foreshadow what will eventually be the "main plot;" introducing Storyteller characters and locations that become important. Then, as the chronicle progresses, the player characters should gain some insights into the rising threat. Then comes the climax, stories about confronting the main antagonist, and a few chapters of aftermath as the fallout of what they've done comes to haunt the characters.

The tilt between the foreshadowing and setup phase of the chronicle should come when the principle antagonist puts his, her, or its plan into motion. If the chronicle is about stopping a grand design of the God-Machine, setup begins when the Infrastructure starts to form. If it's about an exile betraying the players' Agency, setup starts when he joins them.

The tilt between the setup and confrontation phases is marked by an overall raising of the stakes — this is the fulcrum story where the antagonist's plan is revealed, the moment the demons realize what the God-Machine is doing, the scene where the exile betrays them and the moment the gloves come off. It's where the tempo of your chronicle shifts from avoiding confrontation to fighting back. If you feel like you're running out of revelations in the setup phase and the players have nearly figured out what the chronicle's overall plot is, bunch the final mysteries together and bring them all home in a single chapter, shifting the chronicle into the next phase and surprising your players at the same time.

When the war's won, the chronicle shouldn't just stop. Take some time after a long chronicle — a chapter or two — to run an epilogue, summing up the experience of the characters on their Descent and giving the troupe closure. Shorter chronicles can compress the aftermath into a few scenes at the end of the final chapter.



"Hey, Earth to Sharon. Toss me the keys already."

The blonde shook her head, blinking. "Sorry, my bad." She grabbed a set of keys from a hook under the counter and tossed them over to her co-worker. "I think I need more coffee."

The coffee shop was empty except for the two of them and their perennial window sitter, Mr. White. He came in like clockwork every day at 9:45, sat at the table in the corner by the window, and drank between one and three cups of coffee before leaving promptly at 11:15. Sharon glanced at him, but Mr. White seemed immersed in watching the street traffic.

Brian came out from the storage room, pushing the door closed behind him. "Lids and cups are put away."

"Oh, good," she said.

Mr. White slid his empty mug across the table, never taking his gaze from the street.

"Hey, are you sure you're okay?" Brian said. "You're really spacy all of a sudden."

"Yeah, I just..." Sharon rubbed her face. "I don't know," she said. "Maybe I didn't get enough sleep last night."

Mr. White sat up a bit straighter. He twirled a straw between the fingers of his left hand. Sharon could see a dark-haired man in a red windbreaker across the street. It looked like Mr. White was looking at him, but it was hard to tell.

Sharon felt a bit of pressure on her arm. Brian was standing next to her. "Why don't you at least take a break, huh? Step out back for a minute and clear your head."

Mr. White stood up, putting his coffee mug in the bus bin before heading out the door. He strode across the empty street toward the man, who seemed alarmed and walked quickly toward 12th Street.

A chill crept over Sharon's skin, giving her goosebumps. She felt drained and oddly light-headed. "Yeah... yeah, that sounds good. Give me a few minutes, okay?"

Brian nodded. "You bet. Just let me know if you need to go home, okay?"

Sharon moved quickly toward the back door, grabbing her sweater off the coat hook and letting the door swing wide as she rushed into the alley. The air was chill and damp, but it felt easier to breathe out here. Sharon leaned against the brick wall across from the coffee shop and pulled out her phone.

"'Scuse me, Miss." A short, older black man walked up to her. He wore a cardigan sweater and baggy pants, with short greying hair and brown shoes and wire glasses that gleamed. "I've been looking for my cat, Priscilla. Have you seen her?"

Sharon smiled regretfully, shaking her head. "No, I haven't. I just came out here, though."

The old man came closer. "I don't see like I used to. These days I need someone to take a look at things for me." He reached out his hand toward her. "You don't mind, do you, Sharon?"

Sharon wondered for a moment how he knew her name, but the question quickly faded. She shook her head slowly and reached out to touch his hand. The dreamlike sense washed over her completely. Her eyes grew empty; a spark seemed to jump between the two of them as the old man tilted his head back, breathing in deeply.

"Red finally showed up, did he?" The man smiled. "Good. Time to balance the ledgers with some community service." He reached up and touched Sharon's cheek. "Good job, Sharon. Keep up the good work."

Sharon took a deep breath and opened her eyes. She felt better; her mind seemed clearer now. Whatever it was, it had passed. She was alone in the alley. "I hope that old man finds his cat," she said. "He seemed nice." She yawned, then opened the door and walked back inside.

appendix one:
SEATTLE

"We can no longer create the feeling of an era... of time being particular to one spot in time."
-Douglas Coupland, Microserfs

Seattle has never been a planned city. In fact, major attempts at city planning invariably go awry, bogging down and being forgotten even if, by some miracle, they manage to be approved. What would be common sense propositions for infrastructure in other cities turn into divisive issues of nostalgia and futuristic thought experiment that rarely find their way to a practical middle ground. Some of this is easily attributed to the NIMBY spirit, particularly in more affluent neighborhoods. Some of it is passed off as urban decline and poor management, particularly in less wealthy, more diverse neighborhoods.

For reasons too numerous to list, Seattle resists mundane changes, delighting in the absurd and grandiose but eschewing the merely practical. It is the city of the Space Needle and the Monorail, the fish ladder and the floating bridges, the trolley and the ferry and the troll and the sasquatch and a building like a smashed guitar. Glass and silicon, software and salmon, the city resists... well, it resists. Continues to resist, actually, obstructing flow, creating chokepoints, taxing transit and holding fast to its quirks and complexity in spite of all the pressure the universe can bring to bear. The question is: for how long?

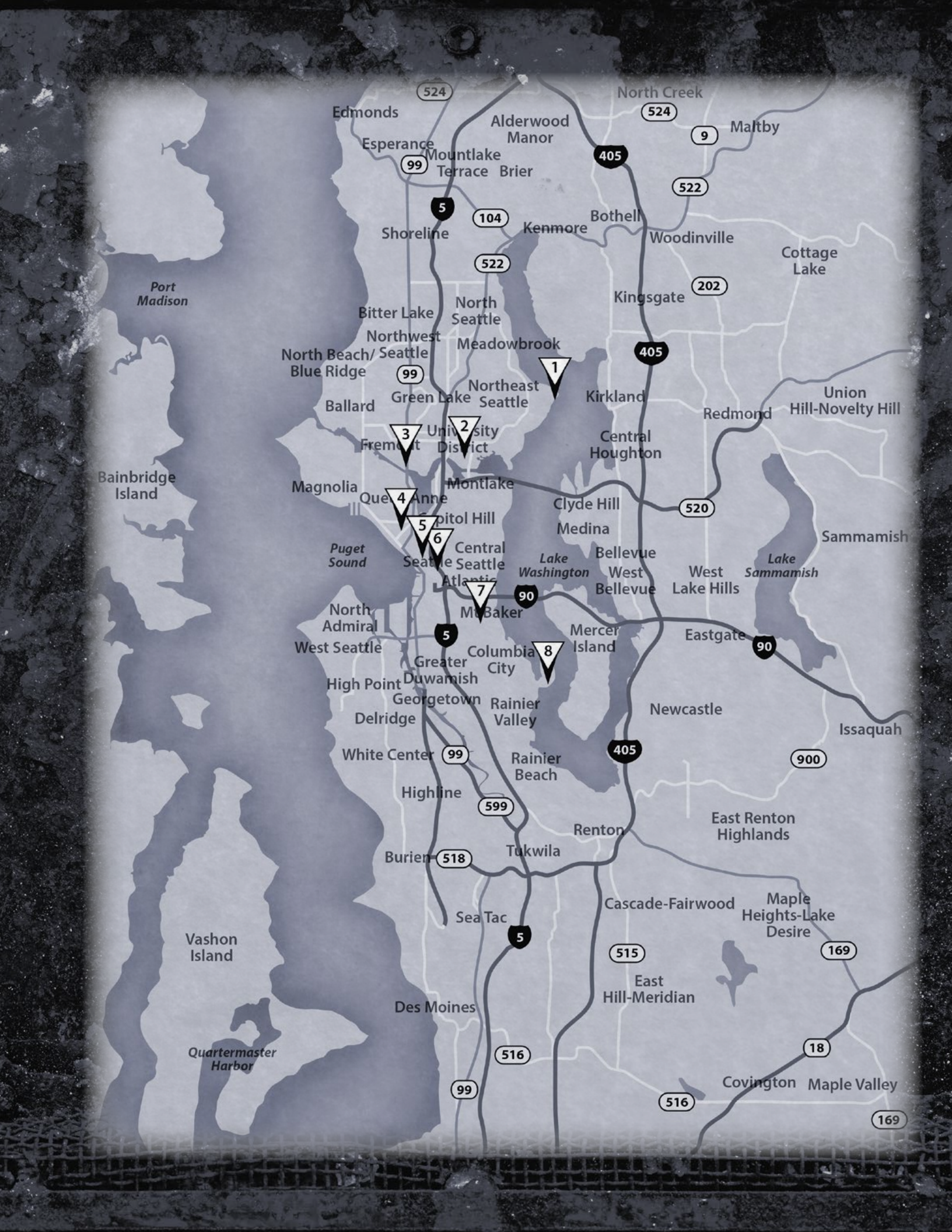
Of all the cities in all the world, Seattle is the one that would likely be wholly owned and subsidized by the God-Machine. A city of over-caffeinated coders and engineers and medical professionals, all of whom are used to a distinct lack of sunlight and projects that take far too many hours to complete? Plug the populace in, rev the engines and see what happens; the potential for intricate applications of Infrastructure and the sheer resources at hand are enough to make the needles of the celestial probability calculators quiver uncontrollably with anticipation. Angels wept — and then, of course, they Fell.

The God-Machine has its incalculable hooks and gears and pistons and fittings firmly in place all over the Seattle Metropolitan area, just as it does throughout the world. The situation is complicated, however. From an experiment left untended, a larger instability has sprung that can no longer easily be resolved. Processes go rogue; mechanisms vanish; sensors cease to report; sentries fail to return. While the Machine slips its cables through time and space to anchor creation more securely to itself and its ends — to superimpose order over anything else — locations quietly but firmly detatch themselves, pulling away with a murmured polite refusal and sinking back from whence they came.

Just prior to the Great Seattle Fire of 1889, God-Machine agents completed an occult matrix that would allow the timeline — at that point, the only timeline for the region — to branch, creating a limited 1889 Seattle that never moves forward — almost like saving a video game. The fire destroyed the city proper but led to a renaissance, causing the city to double in size and technological capability within two years. The need for the prior bubble time was erased and the process forgotten — but not deleted. Whether it was intended to be undone or is simply held in reserve is a matter for debate among Inquisitors, but it still exists despite the century that has passed in the main timeline. Whatever its original reason for existing, what is clear is that more splinters have cropped up over the passing of time. It's no longer the only one — and it has changed since its original creation (See SW Quadrant, p. 258, for more information.)

Ever since the God-Machine created and apparently allowed the original 1889 splinter to continue to exist, the underpinnings of the city's reality seem to have become unreliable. Every few decades a new splinter reality pops up, often coinciding with a new piece of Logistical Infrastructure that was installed or a fracture in reality that was revealed. Are these also potential "restore" points or unintended side effects? The truth is that no one knows — probably not even the God-Machine, or at least not all parts of it. It's tempting to think of this as something intentional and planned, but if so, why is the God-Machine seemingly less present in the older splinters? Why is some of the Infrastructure there cut off and malfunctioning (or taken over by demons)? Why can demons thrive in those splinters? And what does that mean to or for its current angels, who witness all of this?

Perhaps this phenomenon is why Seattle seems to be a mecca to all those looking to lose themselves (or simply get lost). Angels seem to Fall faster in Seattle than elsewhere. Those who didn't land here often find themselves in the Emerald City regardless, searching for a Hell they can call their own. Some find it, some don't. Some make it as best they can before heading to another port of call, while some find altogether more than they bargained for. In a city where understated resistance is practi-


524
Edmonds
Alderwood Manor
Esperance
Mountlake Terrace
Brier
99
5
104
Shoreline
Kenmore
522
Port Madison
Bitter Lake
North Seattle
Northwest Seattle
Meadowbrook
North Beach/ Blue Ridge
99
Ballard
Green Lake
Northeast Seattle
Fremont
University District
Bainbridge Island
Magnolia
Queen Anne
Capitol Hill
Montlake
Puget Sound
Central Seattle
Lake Washington
Atlantic
North Admiral
West Seattle
Mt Baker
Columbia City
Greater Duwamish
High Point
Georgetown
Delridge
Rainier Valley
White Center
Rainier Beach
Highline
599
Burien
518
Tukwila
Sea Tac
Vashon Island
Des Moines
Quartermaster Harbor
516
99
North Creek
524
Maltby
9
405
522
Bothell
Woodinville
Cottage Lake
202
Kingsgate
405
Kirkland
Redmond
Union Hill-Novelty Hill
Central Houghton
Clyde Hill
520
Medina
Sammamish
Bellevue
West Bellevue
West Lake Hills
Lake Sammamish
90
Mercer Island
Eastgate
90
Newcastle
Issaquah
405
900
East Renton Highlands
Renton
Cascade-Fairwood
Maple Heights-Lake Desire
169
515
East Hill-Meridian
18
Covington
Maple Valley
516
169
1
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3
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8

cally an art form and the past has a peculiar way of hanging around, it's no small wonder that demons congregate here in this fractured nexus of reality. If they can't hide here, where the splintered reality obscures the vision of the God-Machine ... well, then they can't hide anywhere.

Mapping the Territory

Demons are constantly caught between the proverbial rock and hard place. On the one hand, they want to be free to live their lives, or whatever passes for a life. On the other hand, the only places available to live in are all infested by the very entity they want to escape. Demons must learn to hide in plain sight, to fight when they can, to run when they must, and to hide the brilliant, blinding essential stuff that makes a demon what she is and was. To live as both demon and human, to exist on multiple planes at once when transitioning between them runs the risk of getting caught... it's complicated. And yet, for the Unchained, it is the only existence possible.

The city of Seattle has some of the same issues. It is a city of parts, and those parts are not fully integrated with one another and perhaps never will be. At the same time, they coexist with one another and are all part of the city whose name they share even if the planes on which they function run in true parallel to each other, touching only where someone manages to bridge the gaps between them.

Like Silicon Valley before it, Seattle has the potential to be a center of power for the God-Machine. Human technology here pushes closer and closer to the platonic ideal represented by the Machine itself. Indeed, to a great extent, it already is. Efficient control and application of resources, however, requires constant management and oversight on the part of the God-Machine and its agents even when outside influences have been compensated for or eliminated. If this oversight fails, implemented gains can be undercut or lost — and there is no lack of rogue influences within the Seattle metropolitan area.

To date, most efforts to integrate the Seattle metropolitan area and bring it more firmly within the control of the God-Machine have not only failed, but backfired. Efforts at creating fixity and points of anchorage between sections of the city have caused rifts, spawning off splinter realities of a city stuck in time and orphaning odd bits of Infrastructure. This is annoying for the God-Machine, of course, but it's not crippling.

In the current dominant timestream, the God-Machine is in charge and all is as it should be insofar as the entity and its agents are concerned. This is where the God-Machine moves most easily. That other possible timestreams seem to be uncontrolled, however, and that is a concern. That individuals seem to be able to access those splinter realities and cross between them is an even bigger problem. The God-Machine still exists in these splinter realities, but the amount of control it can exert is limited. This has the potential to be a problem if one or more other entities took control of one of these splinters, possibly enlarging it or shutting it off entirely.

In the worst-case scenario, if one of these alternate realities were to grow in power, it's potentially possible that the dominant timestream could shift away from the God-Machine's controls. For the people involved, this could be good or bad. It's almost certainly going to be rough going for someone. That said, nothing says someone with enough power couldn't shape one to be more of a personal domain — a vision of Hell on Earth, one might say.

Geography: X Axis

Over the years, the God-Machine has held varying amounts of control over Seattle, but something about the city is slippery. Whether it's the way the land works or the sheer numbers of disparate cultures and souls in the area, or the way it exists always on the frontier ... nobody knows. All they do know is that it's a city of fractures, and they don't just mean socially.

In a very rough way, modern Seattle divides into five parts: I-5 and I-90 form a sort of axis for the main city, plus the East Side across Lake Washington, cut off from the main city except by man-made access (the floating bridges) or else a really long drive around the lake the whole long way. These five regions — the quadrant and its less-fractured mirror across the lake — form the bulk of the Seattle metro area. The nature of the land means that there is suburban spillover, naturally; between mountains, water, and the goal of a reasonable commute, the amount of viable land for business and housing is limited. The various rings of suburbs are only of limited interest to the God-Machine and the other powers that be, though. Howsoever Seattle goes, the suburbs (and largely the rest of the Pacific Northwest) go with it. That still leaves the matter of the city proper to deal with and that's challenge enough.

Definitions of what is constituted by the city of Seattle vary depending on when you're discussing. Working from the present day, each quadrant of the metro area constitutes a number of neighborhoods. These neighborhoods are created partly through historical development and partly through the geographical features of the city. The hills of Seattle are justly famous to anyone who's lived there during winter weather or walked among them to any degree, and its water features (Greenlake, Lake Union, Lake Washington, Puget Sound, the Duwamish River) are all both picturesque and geographically divisive features sufficient to help define neighborhood identity for people (and other entities) who live there.

If you think of the "X axis" as running along the physical face of the land, this section discusses what you'll find on that axis: the four quadrants and Seattle's mirror-across-the-lake, the East side. Each of these areas has a distinctive feel and purpose within the greater framework, as well as being the nexus for a different splintered timeline.

Geography: Y Axis

While the X axis gives us the physical, the Y axis gives us the temporal. Five timelines exist in Seattle, all coexisting and layered atop one another like so many transparent sheets of colored and patterned glass, all separate but loosely connected. Each one

BY ANY OTHER MEANS

Physical transit is largely out as a means of getting out of a splinter timeline; you just end up heading back in again. What about other means of getting between two locations, however, or two time periods? World of Darkness characters can conceivably travel to a number of other supernatural places that coexist with the physical world. What is the relationship between these other realms and the splinter timelines?

Splinters connect to the Shadow and the Underworld, but not fully. Someone within a splinter could open a gate and get to those realms, and could even get back to the splinter he started at through the gate he originally opened. Once that gate is closed, however, access to the splinter is lost. If someone journeys through the Shadow or the Underworld looking for a gate back to the surface, those gates will only lead to the dominant timeline.

The Hedge is more flexible in dealing with pocket realities and shifting times and reaches everywhere. Demons can find a way to a splinter from the Hedge via Rip the Gates (p. 174) or using a gate someone else provides. It is possible to travel through the Hedge from splinter to splinter. Finding a way to a splinter timeline automatically counts as "Unfamiliar area or enemy's domain" as in **Changeling: The Lost**, p. 218, even if the character is from that splinter. Demons are unable to open gates out of the Hedge themselves and must rely on someone else with that ability to do it for them, as per the Rip the Gates power.

The Astral isn't physically another place — it's inside the souls of the world. So the Astral within a splinter only contains the Oneiroi of the people alive inside the splinter, Temenos realms for concepts that existed at the time, and as much of a Anima Mundi as covers the splinter's bubble-world. Put more simply, while traveling into the Astral Realms in one of the splinter timelines would provide a fascinating look into the dreams and *zeitgeist* of the people of the time, it doesn't provide a way out.

is centered in one of the X-axis divisions mentioned previously. Each one covers the core metro area but nothing beyond — whatever knowledge of the world was evident in the time remains, but you can't get there from here. In fact, no one can leave the city in one of these splinters at all. You can try, but you don't get anywhere: roads that lead out of the city just end up leading back in somehow. Boats, planes, and even trains that head out find themselves heading back into very familiar surroundings. The reason is that none of these splinters is that fully developed. In order for that to happen, one of the splinters would have to become dominant, and who knows how that would happen, if it is possible, or what else would happen as a result.

Within a splinter, a person can go anywhere in the city in a given time, but can only cross from one timeline splinter to another at the right fracture points in your quadrant, and those may or may not be fixed in location or frequency. Insofar as investigations have determined, most of the connections run from the splinter to the main modern-day timeline and back again, leaving each subordinate time splinter independent of the other fragments. This isn't to say they aren't connected or couldn't connect across splintered timelines, but indications are that they haven't done so — at least not yet.

Just as each splinter is a replication of the physical city of Seattle at the time of its creation, so each splinter is still set in the World of Darkness. The world is still dark and scary, with hidden monsters and invisible influences present in all of them to varying degrees. They're just different points along the continuum. Also, each splinter Seattle is trapped in its historical moment. The timeline doesn't advance, the calendar doesn't really move, and no one seems to notice the discrepancy. Days are added to days, projects get finished (or stall out) and things get done, so there are some inevitable changes. Time does not move, however. Fashions don't really change, weather doesn't really change, the seasons don't shift appreciably (but it's Seattle, so that's not terribly strange regardless).

Life in a splinter Seattle, then, is limited compared to life in the dominant modern-day timeline. Some of these splinters are relatively new, while some have been around for decades, even a century. One might be tempted to ask whether the residents of these alternate timelines don't try to figure out the problem and how their world suddenly shrank. The answer is complex.

For one, most splinters only cover a limited span of time — a few months, perhaps a year. At the end of that time, the clock resets and everything and everyone is as they were at the beginning once again with no memory of the process. There are ways around forgetting; demons are immune to it, as are stigmatics (p. 259), but doing so is a threat to the bubble reality within a splinter and has ramifications. Essentially, the people in the splinter timeline are copies of a sort, split off from their "real world" originals at the time of the break. The nature of the place is in some way their nature as well. This is not to say they aren't human; they are. But they aren't real in the same way the people in the dominant timeline are real. This might make some people uncomfortable at first, but then demons aren't real humans either. When looked at in that light, it seems less disconcerting.

Inhabitants of a splinter are stuck in a fractured reality whose very nature prevents them from realizing the shift. They can become stigmatics and enter into pacts just like anyone anywhere, however. They can even travel into other timelines, should they gain knowledge, awareness, and desire to do so. If two people who should be (or were) the same person at some point inhabit the same timeline at the same time, nothing blows up except perhaps their personal senses of identity; the universe is neither so exacting nor so fragile as to be tied to any two people's identities, much less replicated DNA. In addition, there are significant gaps of time between the dominant timeline and even the closest splinter, enough that there is no effective chance of someone meeting themselves at the same historical moment.

Pacts

The splinters all bear a complicated relationship to the dominant timeline. Their historical moment doesn't advance. In the 1962 splinter, Kennedy is never assassinated. The USSR is still a frightening adversary and spies are everywhere. The World's Fair is always going on downtown. Marilyn Monroe is the world's biggest sex symbol. The Space Needle is always brand new. You can't go back in time and change an upcoming event because the event doesn't come to pass in the splinter; it just never gets there somehow.

It would be wrong, however, to suggest that the 1962 splinter is completely unrelated to the dominant timeline. For starters, if it were completely unrelated, the timeline would probably advance and that splinter would change, possibly unrecognizably so. It would become impossible to reintegrate with the past of the dominant timeline. It is not impossible, however — or at least it seems odd that the God-Machine would continue to implement efforts in that direction if calculations indicated it couldn't be done. Somehow, the splinter 1962 is connected to the real world's 1962, and its people are connected still to the people in the modern-day city. This is where the idea of pacts comes in.

Should a demon find her way back to 1962 and make a pact with an individual in that splinter, the pact thus made has echoes in the real world. The bargain echoes forward across timelines. For example, if a demon makes a pact with an individual in trade for some part of his identity, that new arrangement shows up in the history of later splinters and/or the dominant timeline. In theory, one could use this to establish Cover reliably for generations into the past. In practice, Cover more than a generation or two back is rarely useful and runs the risk of making small, unpredictable changes in the present day. Clever and careful use of the splinter timelines, however, can make deep Cover a much easier thing to create.

For demons who wish to make pacts in splinter realities, pacts for Cover or "patch jobs" are often (but not always) more useful than soul pacts (p. 191). Establishing past detail is helpful, while replacing an individual from 1962 might be problematic in 2013.

System: When making a successful pact (Cover or soul pact) within a splinter timeline, the character gets the Established Condition in addition to the normal effects of those pacts.

Demons, Time Travel, and You

Using splinter timelines, whether in Seattle or elsewhere, runs the risk of players eventually trying to manipulate time and history and make significant changes in the world, whether to become fabulously wealthy or to assassinate Hitler. If this were a science-fiction game, these efforts might work. As a horror game, however, the outcomes are far bleaker.

The truth is that no one in the World of Darkness knows how making changes in the past might affect the future. Pacts are a necessary evil for demons and don't seem to cause ill effects in the time continuum, but then how exactly would anyone know? Anachronistic change could accidentally ruin the world or might affect nothing at all, but there is no safe test space in which characters might experiment. It could be that history repairs itself; it could be that stepping on the wrong bug might wreck everything we love in the present. There's just no way to know.

In addition, a demon who makes too many changes in the fabric of the dominant timeline or changes that are too ostentatious can still be noticed by the God-Machine, even in a splinter. The God-Machine has the most influence over the modern-day timeline but is present in all of them. A demon whose cover is blown in a splinter is not only vulnerable in all the normal ways, but is also already outside the timestream. The God-Machine can also move in reaction to changes in time, perhaps changing the pre-demon's assignment so that he doesn't Fall after all, pre-emptively recycling that process and eliminating waste for maximum efficiency. Storytellers should feel free to include these potential outcomes if time abuse becomes rampant among the characters.

Established (Persistent)

You've put enough work into your Cover that it can withstand detailed scrutiny. People trying to find the holes in your story tend to run into facts instead. This doesn't mean that your Cover is impenetrable — it eventually erodes unless you live it. It just makes the agents have to work harder to figure it out.

Established applies to a particular Cover, not the character. Individuals trying to investigate this cover need to get your Cover rating x 2 in successes in order to cause a compromise. See p. 114 for more information on investigating a Cover.

Beat: Your character loses a dot from this Cover through someone researching it.

Resolution: This Condition resolves when the character loses this particular Cover entirely.

East Side

The seeming "wholeness" of the Seattle metro is dependent on how removed the viewer is from the situation. Physically, the city lies on a relatively thin strip of land with a long, narrow north-south lake on one side and Puget Sound on the other. Various additional small towns have all bled together to create the metro area. The east side of Lake Washington, however, is vastly different than Seattle proper.

To outsiders, it looks much of a piece. The residents, however, see it differently. Whether one lives there or works there (and far more people work there than live there, as the traffic proves), the East Side has most of what Seattle has, but on a smaller scale and in ways that are less diverse and more representative of the U.S. as a whole. The population is less diverse, the income levels are higher, and the view more insular. Huge tech companies can and do have their mega-campuses on the East Side, as that's where there's room for such things. Political views are more conservative, religion is more prevalent, and politeness is the social grease that keeps everything running smoothly. It is more whole, more unified, more united in its voices, more determined in its ambitions, less prone to internal squabbling and discordant argument. And that's just how the God-Machine likes it.

While demon and human observers of the God-Machine alike are certain that it would remake the heart of Seattle in its image if it could, the fact remains that it has not and perhaps cannot — not without ripping the fabric of its prize to pieces. The power of the God-Machine and its Infrastructures is thus focused on the East Side. The cities that comprise this miniature mirror of Seattle have thus grown in importance and wealth until they became an economic force of their own, one that occasionally threatens the primacy of its estranged elder sibling to the west.

Integrated Circuits

In some ways, the whole of the East Side is like one big integrated circuit. Born and reborn, wiped and remade, the cities of the East Side may have trees and land in between them, but it's strategically left in place, surgically cut and stitched to fit in places no other use would suit. To the south and north, the effect is lessened, but it is clear where the center of the God-Machine's power in this location lies. The details of conformity and rhythmic concert carry echoes of clockwork perfection. The sub-sonic thrum of machinery just out of sight makes falling into step with everyone else easy, while the few with eyes to see what's happening struggle to stay out of time with the God-Machine's song, breaking step in nerve-jangling ways — until their attention slips and they sink back into harmony with the rest of the cogs, serene among the pine trees.

A series of planned and re-planned communities make up the God-Machine's demesne. Bellevue and Redmond are the largest and most prominent of these cities, along with Mercer Island, where the privileged and wealthy make their homes.

Bellevue

From logging to farming to suburb to city in its own right, Bellevue has really been the city with the most to gain from the God-Machine's bounty. The God-Machine's agents had attempted to set up a base in Seattle proper for decades, but with only marginal success given the area's instability. Instead, the God-Machine set in motion a plan to create a more structured power center on the east side of the lake, in the city we know today as Bellevue.

The creation of the 520 floating bridge across Lake Washington in 1940 was one of the first wholly successful large pieces of publicly accessed Logistical Infrastructure the God-Machine had built. It not only allowed easier access across Lake Washington, but also a slow build of economic power and the generation of altogether another type of power, feeding Infrastructure projects designed for other outputs.

Bellevue itself remained mostly a farming community of Japanese immigrants, however. It took the internment of Japanese-American citizens during WWII to provide an easy opportunity for wealthy individuals (and those who wanted to become so) to snap up the farms and homes of those who had been sent away, converting them into urban space — and thus the city of Bellevue was born, just as the God-Machine had intended.

Over the last half-century, Bellevue has converted from a rural community into a shining, orderly grid of glass, metal, and stone that both rises high above the city's surface and sinks low beneath its streets. Despite its place on the shore of scenic Lake Washington, nothing in the city gives the body of water at its flanks any attention — the city's gaze is always inward, toward the center and its mechanically beating heart.

Far more people work in Bellevue than live there. The city has its own suburbs, bedroom communities that house the workers and their single-family homes with partners, pets, and 2.5 offspring per unit, give or take. Those who do live there enjoy being close to their work, along with socializing with other young single workers. Downtown Bellevue is filled with designer stores touting national and international brands along with high-end regional and national chain restaurants. If this inspires a certain sense of conformity among the people who live there, it's all in the name of adhering to common values and supporting company policies.

To the demon who decides to visit Bellevue, the closest fictional analogy would be Dorothy Gale walking with her companions into the land of the Wicked Witch of the West. This is a highly regulated, monitored, constructed environment where agents live and work, where angels come and go unremarked, and where nothing ever really sleeps. There is a high amount of traffic here,



so human comings-and-goings are closely observed though not heavily restricted. That being said, some areas are off-limits. This is more of a place for organic assets of the God-Machine than sensitive Command and Control Infrastructure. It's a good place for finding secrets, however, and few spots are better for catching an angel unawares. Demons who come here should come quietly, but be prepared to go loud in order to get out again.

Redmond

Away from Lake Washington, back through the trees and across the low rolling hills sits Redmond and the heart of the God-Machine's Seattle operations. Innumerable tech companies make their homes on campuses large and small throughout the trees and wetlands. In one corporate park after another, with names discreetly attached to buildings or placed on hard-to-see signs that blend into the landscape, the best and brightest minds the God-Machine can ensnare work to craft its wares and build the tiniest portions of its routines.

One of the largest campuses is owned by the Deva Corporation, a large international company with its greatest focuses in tech and biotech fields as overseen through agents of the God-Machine. Deva's workers are fanatically loyal in the way that only good pay, a fantastic benefits package, and a growing craving for something that only Deva gives them can provide. Locals spend their lives trying to get in. Should they be unfortunate enough to be fired or laid off, friends they still had within the company shun them out of hopes that whatever misfortune befell the unfortunate ex-coworker doesn't rub off . Leaving Deva is like dropping off the face of the earth — for that matter, so is transferring to another division, or moving up. Social connections are easily established and not transferrable, which makes replacing cogs a simple procedure.

This isn't to say that everything within the company is legal, ethical, or palatable. Rather, it's more accurate to say that employment by Deva Corporation is, in many ways, an offer you can't refuse — no one in their right mind would turn it down. Once you're in, of course, that same logic means you'd be a fool to leave, regardless of what the job entails or how much alike everyone, including you, seems after a while, or how much the sun starts to burn your skin on the rare occasions you come face-to-face with it.

In spite of all the corporate and business influence in Redmond, it's never really grown out of the small-suburb feel. It's an upper-class suburb, with a tony designer mall and "natural" food stores and lots of green space, but it's still a suburb. Three-story buildings are rare, apartment complexes are huge and involve winding roads through trees and wild greenery, the mall with the movie theater is the biggest one around, and restaurants are either chain or moderately expensive one-offs. There's theater and amateur ballet and other things a town this size normally can't support because the corporations make up the difference. That said, the art is safe and God-Machine approved, preaching the virtues of conformity and the greater good and acting as a constant reminder of one's privileged status — both how much further one could rise as well as how easily it could all be lost. Between this and the remote location, it's rare to get anyone from Redmond to leave the city unless they have an exceptionally good reason.

THE NUTCRACKER SUITE

During the month of December, people in Bellevue and the surrounding areas gather in the shopping district, both to shop for loved ones and to take part in a community ritual. At 6:30 PM sharp, patrons and residents gather along Snowflake Street to watch Nutcracker soldiers march in wooden formation down the street as the entire scene is magically dusted with "snow" that leaves no mess, requires no cold, and disappears promptly upon landing on the sidewalk. At the end of the parade, everyone disperses silently, some shopping and some returning to their homes, suddenly dazed and weary.

This parade, full of holiday stereotypes and special effects, is an occult matrix; its goal is to summon an angel. Every year, at the end of the final parade of the season, the huge, gaudy, bedecked tree at the end of the lane glows more and more brightly until a shimmering, sparkling flash occurs, momentarily blinding onlookers as the summoned angel comes into being. They stand in its presence, silent and with blank eyes, then turn their faces skyward, opening their mouths and swallowing the snow that drifts down. The angel levitates above them, gestures, and flies into the swirling cloud of artificial snowflakes feeding the crowds below. Within a few moments the people snap out of their trance with the taste of oil and cinnamon on their tongues and a tremendous fireworks show in their memories.

Who the angel is or what its function might be remains unknown, as it speaks to no one before leaving the square. It is not even clear whether the same angel is summoned yearly or if it is a new angel every time.

A demon who travels to Redmond is in the heavily protected heart of the God-Machine's East Side. No quick or simple version of mundane travel exists between here and elsewhere. The few side roads funnel everyone onto 520 in order to get in or out, security is high for all non-public areas, and workers send up red flags if anyone seems out of place — and nearly everyone who isn't part of Redmond and its culture seems out of place. Facilities abound here; learning almost any of the God-Machine's secrets or seriously injuring local Command and Control Infrastructure requires a trip here. Telling the difference between that and Elimination Infrastructure can be harder than it seems, however — and who knows what happens back here in the deep, quiet woods.

RACHEL FEARSON, PROCESS MANAGER

Hello. I'm sorry to hear that you've violated Deva Corporation policies. We will do our utmost to come to a mutually rewarding resolution for this unfortunate issue. Now, if you will please walk through the door on your left? Thank you for your cooperation.

Mission: Rachel Fearson may look human at a glance, but she's not. She was created by the God-Machine to oversee operations at the Blue East campus for the Deva Corporation. Rachel's job is to ensure that the projects within her facility are completed on time and efficiently, with the best result possible. She does not micromanage her people, but she is called in whenever an obstacle arises. Resolving complications is her specialty, particularly when a simple elimination will suffice.

Description: In human form, Rachel has brown hair arranged in a graceful up-do, wears silver glasses, has a subtle French manicure on her nails, and dresses in sensible neutral-toned clothing, normally slacks with a button-down shirt — in short, impeccable corporate casual dress. She carries a tablet with her and seems to multitask effortlessly. In her angelic form, she is nearly seven feet tall with slender, elongated limbs. Her face is nearly flat and has only the merest dimples for features, as though projected onto a moulded glass mask. When she moves, she gives off a cold silver light along with the sound of oiled metal parts sliding past each other.

Methods: Rachel is a consummate professional, calm and competent with a hint of humor when necessary. The workers of Deva Corporation rely on her presence when problems arise because no matter how uncomfortable the decision, she somehow magically makes the problem disappear. Even if she ends up removing a team member along the way, it's all for the greater good — you can always count on Rachel. She rarely needs to reveal her angelic form, but she has no problem doing so if it becomes necessary; after all, whether angel or human, within the Deva Corporation she is home.

Virtue: Efficiency
Vice: Destruction
Rank: 3
Attributes: Power 5, Finesse 6, Resistance 4
Influence: Deva Corp 2, Order 1
Corpus: 9



Willpower: 10

Size: 5

Speed: 16 (species factor 5)

Defense: 5

Initiative: 10

Armor:

Numina: Awe, Blast, Drain, Implant Mission, Mortal Mask, Rapture, Regenerate

Manifestation: Discorporate, Materialize, Twilight Form

Max Essence: 20

Ban: May not cross Deva Corporation property lines

Bane: Seawater

Mercer Island

At the end of the day, even those most favored by the God-Machine must return to their homes and rest for the next day of service. For those who find their yearnings satisfied with more mundane rewards, home is the seat of all comfort — comfort they have earned through loyalty, whatever the cost may have been. These people seek a refuge, one where they can remain safely within set parameters and away from the chaos of the rest of the world, isolated and comfortable and pampered — an island unto themselves. For them (and only them), Mercer Island exists.

Mercer Island stands in the middle of Lake Washington, connected to each shore via bridge — a long floating bridge on the west, a short elevated bridge to the east. The island holds a community of the same name, full of houses and parks and a few convenient businesses along with numerous clubs and organizations, nearly all exclusive in nature. The median household income is in the six-figure range, and the median price for a house there is over a million dollars. To live on Mercer Island is to make a statement, and that statement is "if you're not one of us, go away."

Due to its wealth and privilege, Mercer Island has always leaned more toward the east side than the west. Closer in proximity, in accessibility, in wealth, and in cultural demographic to the far less diverse eastern suburbs, Mercer Island made a natural retreat for those whom the God-Machine had rewarded with mundane gifts. No family is safer anywhere else, and that alone can have a powerful influence over an individual. It is, in effect, a very expensive holding cell and playground for those whom the God-Machine wishes both to be comfortable and accessible at all times, isolated from the larger world both culturally and physically.

For a demon visiting the island, the first thing of note is that nearly every resident here is in service to the God-Machine in some fashion. The youth organizations and schools are effectively training new generations of them every day — the elite bound to service in one of myriad ways. The community is small and insular in the way that restricted access fosters; the income level it takes to live here is not widely available, meaning that most of the residents here are connected professionally, even if only by reputation or association. Some residents of the island don't meet the average income of the place, but they largely work at the service jobs available and their customers get to know them by sight. Not all of these agents could recognize a demon rather than a stranger, but the number who could is not insignificant. In addition, Mercer Island is relatively bereft of Infrastructure. Much of the Infrastructure that is here is Defense and Concealment Infrastructures rather than the other types, and most of that geared toward protection of God-Machine property, both human and non-human.

Infrastructure: 520 Floating Bridge

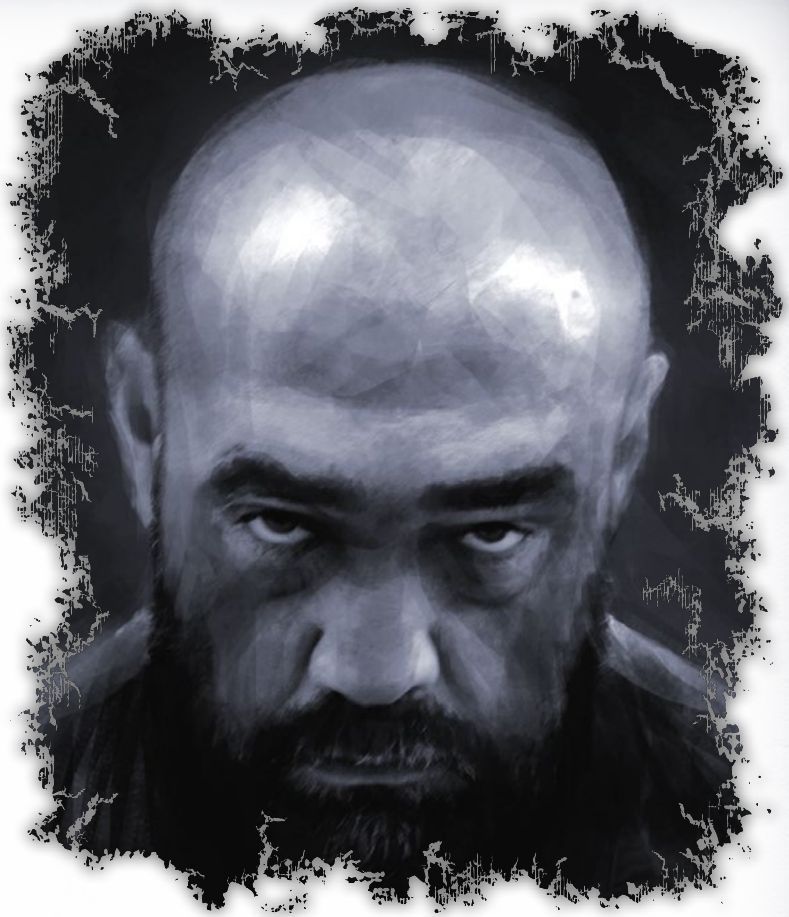
Just as it has always done, Lake Washington serves as both barrier and gateway, a door that can't be shut. It keeps east and west from meeting save through what means people can devise to go over or around it. Recognizing both the need to eliminate the obstacle Lake Washington presented and an opportunity for creating Infrastructure, the God-Machine set plans in motion to create a new piece of linking Logistical Infrastructure, one that would rely on the lake to support it even as it pulled power from the humans who crossed it daily.

Type: Logistical

Function: Move humans, vehicles, and goods back and forth across Lake Washington. In addition, mechanisms under the bridge generate occult power to fuel the many ongoing occult matrices and Infrastructures throughout the East Side, absorbing kinetic energy from the cars that drive along its length.

Security: Halfway across the bridge is a section that can be raised as a drawbridge, with a tower and control deck. This area is rarely manned, at least not visibly. The angel Drawbridge is stationed there to protect the bridge if summoned, either by an attack on the bridge itself, winds higher than the bridge can withstand, or some other threat to its integrity.

Linchpin: A black food truck with the words "Cupcake Cuties" emblazoned in pink on the side drives back and forth over the bridge on a regular basis. The truck does not actually have cupcakes to sell, sadly, and there is no "Cupcake Cuties" store to frequent. The van is a front for the bridge's Infrastructure, performing maintenance and checking for problems.



DRAWBRIDGE

Stopping on the bridge is not allowed.

Mission: Drawbridge came into being on the day the bridge was dedicated. Its sole purpose is to protect the bridge against saboteurs and natural forces, to the extent that it is able. It will remain in place until either it is replaced or the bridge as it stands is decommissioned, on guard to protect its Infrastructure from any threats.

Description: Drawbridge stands eight feet tall with a blocky human physique. Its skin is grey and gravelly, pockmarked and stained. Cracks run through his form, though they seem more cosmetic than signs of physical weakness. It carries a dull greenish-grey metal sword and smells always of burned rubber and tar.

Methods: If Drawbridge catches someone trying to harm the bridge in any way, it attacks. It does not reason or bargain. It cannot be dissuaded. The unfortunate vandal's choices are either retreat (and Heaven have mercy if the vandal is in the middle of the bridge) or fight. This is its only function, and it follows its instructions to the letter.

Virtue: Vigilant
Vice: Cold
Rank: 3
Attributes: Power 8, Finesse 8, Resistance 9
Influence: 520 Bridge 3
Corpus: 15
Willpower: 10
Size: 6
Speed: 24 (species factor 8)
Defense: 9
Initiative: 17
Armor: 0
Numina: Awe, Blast (tar), Left-Handed Spanner, Stalwart, Regenerate, Telekinesis
Manifestation: Discorporate, Materialize, Twilight Form
Max Essence: 20
Ban: May not leave the bridge
Bane: A burst balloon

West Side

If the East Side is a stable base of operations for the God-Machine, then crossing over to the West Side is like entering a hall of mirrors. Only a small number of directions are open to you, but every side presents a different reflection of the world and the God-Machine within it.

Timeline

Five timelines currently exist in Seattle — four splinters and the dominant one, the one in which time moves forward normally. Each of these splinters covers the entire Seattle metro area, but

is focused on the area of the city that is physically nearest to the piece of Infrastructure that triggered the splinter's creation. The fractures that link each splinter with the dominant modern day timeline can also be found in the associated quadrant of the city.

The dominant timeline is the one we know. It's the modern-day World of Darkness, in all its bloody, horrific shadowy glory. It is centered on the East Side. All the splinters lead back to it. It is the main river of time from which all the smaller tributaries diverge. The God-Machine's influence weaves through it like threads in a fabric, and it is nearly impossible to escape.

The four splinter timelines are:

- 1889 (persistent and ongoing, but does not affect the dominant timeline)
- February through December 1932 (The opening of the George Washington Bridge to the completion of the U.S. Marine Hospital building)
- April through October 1962 (the duration of the 1962 World's Fair)
- October 1999 through October 2000

These splinters all exist simultaneously so that time advances at the same pace in all of them. If a traveler leaves a splinter, changes timelines, then comes back two days later, it will be two days later in the splinter as well — at least, up until the calendar wraps back around to the beginning, in which case everyone within the splinter is reset with no memory of the previous round.

Exceptions exist to this reset rule and they mostly revolve around the use of demonic powers. Making a pact with a human in a splinter changes the fabric of that reality permanently, making echoes in the dominant timeline. Demons can make small-scale changes in the reality of a place simply by making a change in the physical realm and spending a dot of Willpower to make it stick.

A fixed change can persist through the reboot of a timeline. Enough fixed changes might eliminate the reboot entirely, allowing time to move forward even if technology and science remain largely static, unspurred by world events — assuming no one else gets in the way.

If the God-Machine purposefully made the splinters happen, then it may have changed its mind about their continued existence. Some God-Machine agents and angels have been assigned tasks that would eliminate the splinters or merge them with the dominant timeline. Other angels are tasked with the splinters' continued preservation, leading to ongoing recurrent conflict.

No one knows whether more splinters will be created. If Infrastructure has been laid in place to create new splinters moving forward, it's been done very subtly and through wide distribution of tasks, even among angels. This isn't unknown, of course; it isn't even unusual. The God-Machine tends toward long-term planning, not short-term reward.

SW Quadrant

When the settlers came and built their camps next to Puget Sound, most of them did so in what's now the southwest quadrant of the city. From the south end of Downtown, through Pioneer Square, and on down past Boeing Field to the airport, the southwest corner of the city has never really lost that border edge. Even West Seattle, as civilized and gentrified an area as could be found anywhere in the city, retains an independent spirit forged, at least in part, from physical estrangement from the city as a whole.

South Downtown and Pioneer Square

It may seem strange that half of Downtown Seattle is split between quadrants, but it makes sense when you look at it closely. The I-5/I-90 axis is by no means a perfect tool for division because I-90 roughly dead-ends into I-5. In truth, the north-south dividing line for the city proper is more in line with Madison Street west of I-5, and a much more amorphous border east of it. That dividing line is really the line between old and new Seattle — what was and what will be.

Old Seattle is an eclectic urban mash-up. Pioneer Square, the city's "first neighborhood," has an old-time charm along with call-backs to its past as a city on the edge of the frontier. Old brick buildings with completely refurbished interiors hold young hip urbanites in condos and equally hip employers who want a bit of local cred to their names. At the same time, five missions for the homeless and indigent sit within a five block radius, and shiny new tech start-ups sit cheek-by-jowl with condemned brick walkups. The buildings are picturesque reminders of time and wealth gone by, while below street-level, the remains of a paved-over, burnt-out underground past have tour groups walk through its corridors three times a day.

Amid the sandwich shops, indie coffee houses, and old-school pubs, the sights that make this area instantly recognizable are the Pioneer Square Pergola, an iron structure in the midst of a small plaza that's been in place since before 1901, and the Smith Tower, a white thirty-two story building that was once the tallest on the west coast. The glamour may have faded, but the old money has stayed put — Pioneer Square isn't going anywhere.

SoDo and Georgetown

The old name for the space south of downtown was the Industrial District, and that's still the case with large swathes of it. Warehouses, factories, lumberyards, stonemasons, and so forth filled the lower elevations up to the waterfront, where the container ships still dock and the passenger ships still unload their more-human cargo. Since the mid-twentieth-century, it's also the place where Seattle keeps its professional sports stadiums, and so while very few people stay there long-term, there's a steady flow of traffic through the area almost any time of the day or night.

On the other end of SoDo and the series of industrial parks and fenced off compounds is Georgetown, a blue-collar neigh-

STIGMATICS AND SPLINTER TIMELINES

If a demon uses the Inflict Stigmata Exploit on a person in a splinter, that person becomes a stigmatic just as he would in the dominant timeline. He awakens to the knowledge of the God-Machine, just as he awakens to the strangeness of his world. Whereas normal splinter inhabitants are unaware of the limitations of their bubble reality, stigmatics realize that planes never land or take off at the airports, and roads out of town don't go anywhere. When the calendar resets, they remember everything happening before. They can become a demon's greatest ally in learning a splinter inside and out, because they've done it all before — and they can see where all the pieces of the God-Machine hide. The ability to see the God-Machine and its effects, however, puts a limit on a stigmatic's viability within a splinter — they are effectively placed outside of time by their newfound knowledge.

From the moment a stigmatic is created, a splinter reality starts writing him out of existence. A splinter stigmatic has only four reboots before he disappears entirely, with each successive reboot after the first removing him a degree further from all of his connections. After the first reboot, a man is still a father of three, just as he was before. The second reboot sees him as the uncle of those kids, now just a close relation, replaced by a new version of their father. The third reboot sees him as a distant relation, a cousin perhaps. The fourth reboot places him as a family acquaintance. The fifth reboot erases him entirely. It may be possible for a stigmatic to escape this fate by finding a way through to the dominant timeline and never returning to the splinter. The Storyteller can determine whether or not this fate is escapable in her game.

borhood with an indie vibe. Pizza and beer are common fare in these parts. Young working-class families and singles make their homes here, along with artists and the engineers and supervisors who value proximity to work over fancy houses. There are bars and ethnic grocery stores and pizza joints and even dive bars, but no pubs or taverns — it's just not that kind of neighborhood. The most recognizable landmark is the old Rainier Brewery, a dilapidated old factory right next to I-5 that's been partly made over into offices and condos and artist's studios, even as the old outer buildings remain boarded over for reasons no one can quite figure out.

West Seattle

West Seattle is part of the city but it is very much its own creature as well. It was annexed in 1907 after years an independent town, which would in theory mean that it's had a long time to grow into being part of Seattle, but it maintains a certain reserve and insularity that really only comes from physical isolation. You can get there from here but it isn't easy, and everyone who chooses to live there knows it.

West Seattle is a tough nut to crack when it comes to integration with the rest of the Seattle metro. Built on a high ridge up on a peninsula, it was surrounded on three sides by water until the bay was filled in to create the SoDo neighborhood. It can be reached from surface streets, but not many of them; only in the past few decades has that situation improved in the slightest. It also takes a while to get to the peninsula that way, since the neighborhood's elevation means that most streets don't actually connect to anything else.

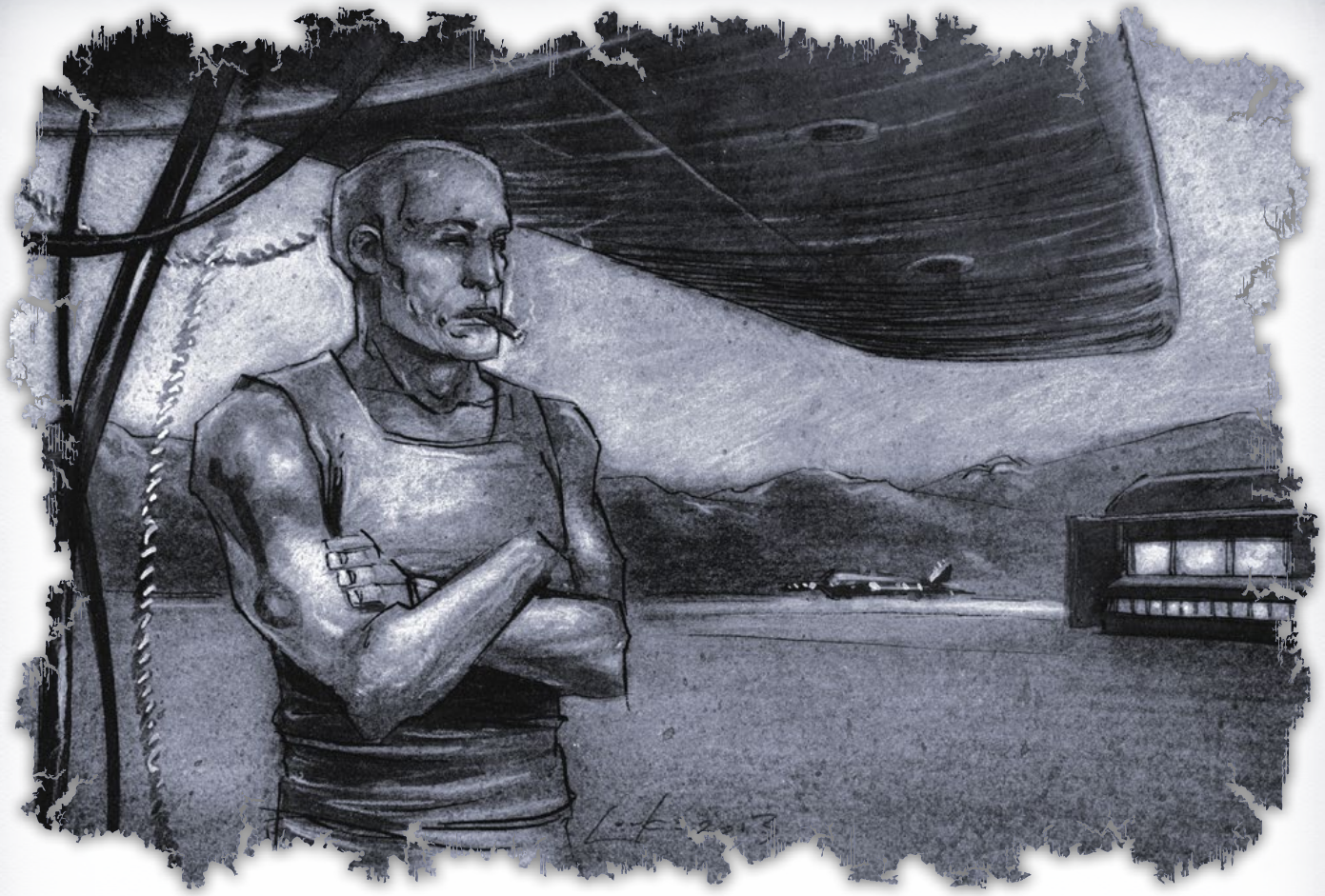
The primary means of getting in and out of West Seattle are the water taxis to downtown, Highway 99, and the West Seattle Bridge, all of which serve to connect a stubbornly independent land with the city as a whole. Whether those efforts are entirely successful is a matter of personal opinion.

From the popular beaches at Alki Point to the Fauntleroy ferries to Vashon Island and elsewhere, West Seattle is a study of selective isolation. Unable to be quite self-sufficient, it still does its best to give inhabitants no reason to leave home. It's defensible but still has a movie theater — the best kind of place to hide.

Boeing Field

While passenger flights come and go from Sea-Tac airport, that's not the real source of aviation might in Seattle. That title belongs to the smaller airport to the north, the one that doesn't handle commercial passenger flights anymore. That airport is Boeing Field.

Boeing Field was the area's major airport up until the 1940s when the current, much larger facility was completed. Since then, it's been used primarily for cargo, for design testing by Boeing, and for small private aircraft. Government flights for important personnel regularly come and go from Boeing, as do the private jets of other individuals. Sensitive parts, plans, and vehicle designs come and go through Boeing, carried by hand. In an era when mass shipping or electronic duplication and imaging are more commonly used to transport data, this is significant, even if the items aren't individually precious enough to the God-Machine's purposes to assign an angel to transport them.



The surrounding area is practically a shrine to aviation and most of the people in the area owe their living to aerospace in some regard. It is their passion and their livelihood. As a result, the area is surprisingly rich in people who know of odd mechanical things or can tell stories of grinding gears even without being stigmatic, whether from mundane security clearances or supernatural knowledge. Mechanistic tattoos are common; if a demon came to the area expecting to find agents, she'd find a target-rich environment. Of course, she'd have to be careful that they didn't find her as well.

1889 Seattle

It's a city of wagons and horses, Skid Road and lumber mills, fishing and steamships, and seamstresses — or at least that's what they call themselves. Crooked cops, gambling dens, hash houses, crib joints, and all with the sweetest little racket you ever laid eyes on. Life on the frontier is nobody's idea of easy, of course. Rest is for people back East, and everybody's got a bit of the Devil in them.

Whether you're from the east, California, or parts unknown; whether one rode in on a train or under sails, a passenger ship or a tramp steamer, Seattle's a land of opportunity waiting to be discovered. Of course, some people are from even further afield. Twenty-first Century Seattle may be close in geographic proximity but it is worlds away nonetheless, and for those who Fell it might seem even farther. Seattle seems to have room for everyone, though, even those who aren't entirely human.

As discussed elsewhere in this chapter, no one really knows what triggered the 1889 splinter. What is known is that, in this timeline, the Great Fire never happened. No glue pot got knocked over in a carpenter's shop, and the whole wooden city didn't go up like a pile of kindling. Some buildings have been replaced with brick despite the lack of catastrophe to spur construction on, but far fewer than would otherwise have been. It is still in many respects a frontier town with boardwalks and rough edges all around. There are some churches, but they're relatively recent efforts to bring some civilization to these wild lands.

The 1889 Seattle is smaller, tougher, meaner, and wilder. It only really encompasses Downtown and Pioneer Square, with settlements toward the edges of these areas and West Seattle on the bluff over by the lighthouse, accessible across the water by small craft or ferry. The rest of the city is woods and water and tribal peoples, many of whom are none too pleased that the Europeans seem intent on not only sticking around, but eventually taking their homes.

Though 1889 is not the only splinter timeline in Seattle, some things set it apart. More than any of the others, it has changed from its initial generation. First, ships come and go from other places with people on them, and new arrivals come

in constantly. If this splinter exists beyond just the boundaries of Seattle ... what else has changed?

Second, although the technology and fashions and language scream 1889 or so, the calendars read 1930. Old Seattle's citizens think of the date as 1930 — though it's no 1930 anyone else would recognize. Granted, no 1889 woman ever wore hats quite like the ones you see here, or showed that much shoulder and remained respectable, and the men's clothing has a sort of buckskin look to it that would have been an outrage anywhere in the 1889 of the dominant timeline, but here it's perfectly normal. If 1889 became 1930, though, what happened in between?

A Guide to 1889 Seattle

For someone wandering around 1889 Seattle, hopping on horse-drawn streetcars and deciding where to best safely settle in, it's imperative to get your bearings.

Between 1880 and 1889, Seattle has grown from roughly 3500 inhabitants to nearly 20,000, more than half of them male: a blend of itinerant sailors, laborers, settlers, and businessmen. It's a boomtown, for better or worse, and opinion among its inhabitants varies as to which best applies. Some of the town is respectable, with churches, schools, a small university (Washington Territorial University by name), and government offices. Some of the town is a no-mans-land of vice and lechery, where efforts to policy the trade end up simply being efforts to contain the worst of its excesses. Life in this admittedly rough city might not be for everyone, but the call of opportunity is something of a siren song for human and demon alike.

Chief of Police W.J. Fletcher

From the police station on the corner of Main and 5th street, Chief Fletcher rules over the city proper and improper alike. With a host of policemen at his command, W.J. Fletcher is an important person to stay in good with. As a five-time elected official, the chief always remembers that his job is only his at the will of the people. The will of the people, however, is a remarkably flimsy thing, easily guided for the most part by those with the insight and the voice to point the way. It's all part of a larger plan, after all.

Description: William Jeremiah Fletcher is a bluff, blustery man in his late 30s. He's normally found wearing his royal blue policeman's jacket with gold buttons shining impeccably. His hair is brown with a slight red tinge, magnified by his brilliantly auburn muttonchop sideburns and mustache. He's always winding and checking his pocket watch, which he says was a keepsake from a dear friend. His duties rarely allow him to follow up on calls personally, but if he does he always brings a number of policemen with him — and that rarely bodes well for the person receiving the visit. He regularly calls on Providence and Fate in speech, suggesting that trusting in Providence while applying one's self assiduously is the answer to all woes.

Early Seattle, from 1800-1889

Prior to 1850	Duwamish and Suquamish tribes inhabit the area, before losing land in the Point Elliot treaty of 1855
1851	Settlers arrived from the east
1852	Henry Yesler builds first steam-powered lumber mill in Pacific Northwest
1853	1st attempt at city planning — different factions lay out town, one along shoreline, one to cardinal directions. Yesler Way becomes point of convergence
1856	Battle of Seattle is fought between settlers and angry dispossessed Native Americans, including shelling from the U.S. Navy Sloop of War *Decatur*
1869	City of Seattle is incorporated
1875	Steamship service begins to San Francisco
1882	First trans-Pacific steamship leaves from Seattle
1884	Horse-powered streetcar system begins in Seattle
1886	Racial unrest results in mob trying to "deport" 350 Asian immigrants. Soldiers and deputies intervene and five are wounded
1888-1889	1st splinter timeline occurs
1889	The Great Seattle Fire (in the dominant timeline)

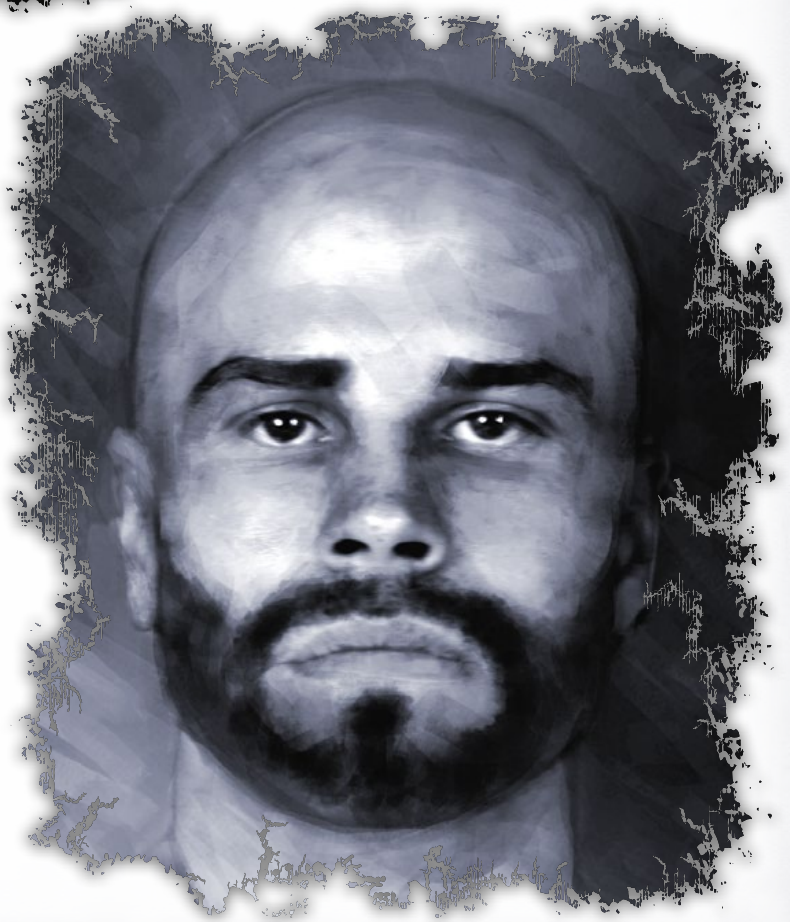


CAPTAIN BRUCE "DEVIL" PENDERGAST

Those looking for passage, either down the coast into Russian America, or across the wide Pacific sea, find that "the Devil's Captain" will see them safely to their destination for a price. Seattle is the port he calls home, for better or worse. It's said there's no cargo he won't carry, including liberating someone else's. His ship, the *Calliope*, is sail rigged; no steam engines for her. That puts him a bit behind the time, but really, no one calls on the Devil for speed, but for surety. Rumors about the captain fly. Some say he was a whaler once. Others say he had a woman who died of consumption on a far shore. Whatever the truth is or was, he doesn't say, and no one asks him twice.

Description: The captain is a slim man, tall but solid. He keeps his head shaved though he has a fine short beard, brown with gold and silver mixed in. He has hazel eyes that turn green when he's moved by strong passions, and he rarely drinks more than ale in company. With a quick temper, he makes it known that he'll suffer fools, but not rudeness. He has a number of tattoos, mostly seen in glimpses: sea dragons across his chest, a snake wrapped around an ankle, and a shark in water on one shoulder. He enjoys spending time in company, whether men or women, but rarely combines business with pleasure: everything in its own time.

Storytelling Hints: The chief of police is a social man who keeps in touch with what's going on in his department and in the city as a whole. If you want to show both Mother Damnable's reach within the city and the relationship between the law and the underground in Seattle, Fletcher is a perfect person to include in your chronicle. He largely turns a blind eye to questions of vice, getting his men involved only when murder or when "upstanding" citizens are involved. Any lesser crimes are simply part of doing business; anyone who doesn't know not to stay out of that part of town deserves what they get to some extent. So long as everyone pays their taxes and fees for police service, Fletcher doesn't interfere. This was not the platform on which he ran for office, of course. Five years ago, he was determined to clean up all parts of the city — that was before he fell under the eye of Mother Damnable (p. 264). She turned him into a stigmatic devoted to her and the world she has created. He doesn't let on, but the pocket watch (the gift she gives to all the operatives she creates) marks him as her man. His loyalty is unswerving, making him an excellent man for the job (and she ensures that he keeps it in each yearly election).



Storytelling Hints: If there's something going on among the non-law abiding citizenry of Seattle, Pendergast likely knows about it. He also knows the ins and outs of the islands between the shore and the open water, from hidden coves to dangerous bluffs — all the places smugglers and pirates might hide from view. He's available for hire for almost any job, provided he can tolerate your presence and the money's good enough. Whether people need information or goods moved, Pendergast is a great source for characters to turn to.

FATHER FRANCOIS VALANCOURT

Few men are so widely respected in Seattle as the man everyone calls Father Francis, leaving aside his French name and origin for an Anglicized life. He was one of the early visitors to this town and he came determined to bring the Word with him so that everyone, even the savage men who live outside of civilization, could learn that no one is beyond the sight of God. From his beginnings as a young priest in a rough-hewn cabin, he now oversees a beautiful stone church built largely with the fortune of his inheritance, giving his flock a place to shelter from the storms of fate.

Description: Father Francis is an elderly man, but he still walks with a lively step and a kind word for everyone he meets, no matter what their condition or occupation might be. He has a white shock of full, wavy hair on his uncovered head, always combed neatly, and is always clean shaven. He wears a long black cassock with a priest's collar and crucifix, hears Confession daily (and twice on Saturdays), and makes a point of (chastely) ministering to the *demimonde* of the city, even holding a special segregated weekly Mass for the purpose.



Storytelling Hints: Father Francis is far from the only religious figure in the town, but he is one of the most devoted. He is also one of the few agents of the God-Machine left in the 1889 splinter. A stranger raving of flying machines and gears, blood and oil, was brought to his care in the middle of a stormy night a few years ago. The man died only hours later of a grievous wound in his abdomen, having received last rites and absolution of his sins, but not before he pressed a silver, blood-covered box into the priest's hand. The priest opened the box after the man's death hoping for a clue to his identity. What he saw instead is a vision of the world to come and proof of the deity he had served for his entire adult life. He receives instructions from the heavenly voice that issues from the box in return for his confessions — proof of his God's generosity and love that He would allow his unworthy servant to be useful to Him.

MRS. LEE

Seattle's full of unusual characters. Few of them stand out as much in their surroundings, however, as Mrs. Lee, the proprietor of the Jade Prosperity Pawn Shop. Mei came over to Seattle as a young bride, sent for by her husband to keep his newly acquired house. He had gotten money somehow — he never would tell her where it came from, but it was more than any other Chinese man in the city had at the time. She lived like a lady of quality, wealthy beyond the dreams of her family and able to send money back to support both her relatives and his, as well as do honor to her ancestors. When he died only two years later, however, Mei, now Mrs. Lee, was forced to act quickly or lose everything. She purchased a storefront and opened a pawn shop, driving hard but fair bargains. She instantly won the business of the Chinese community, giving them a place to go that wouldn't treat them unfairly, but these days nearly everyone goes to see Mrs. Lee when they need money.

Description: Mrs. Lee is aware of the value of advertising, and she does that as much through appearance as word of mouth. She dresses in silk and jade, all bright colors and floral patterns, but her clothes are all the height of Western style, making her one of the most fashionable women in town. She wears her black hair piled high on her head, with jade hairsticks holding it in place.

Storytelling Hints: Mrs. Lee is not only a window into the minority communities; she is also a repository of secrets. The gamblers, sailors, and the poor are by no means the only people to come to Mrs. Lee when they need ready cash. Plenty of people from the civilized side of the tracks come by as well, just in secret; if someone is out of hard goods to trade, information has a value all its own.



MOTHER DAMNABLE

You need a room? Clean sheets, breakfast's at eight, and check-out's by ten. Girls set their own rates-inquire upstairs. And if you so much as look at one wrong, I'll split your goddamned head open. Verstehen Sie? Sehr gut.

Background: Mother Damnable was formerly Mary Ann Conklin, the proprietress of the Felker Hotel in Seattle. Apparently always a woman with a temper, her husband left her at Port Townsend after a fight and sailed off on his whaling ship, never to be seen again. She moved to Seattle and set up shop as the manager of the Felker Hotel, running a clean house with reasonable prices and the entertaining spectacle of her regular rants at staff and guests. She was known up and down the West Coast for her cursing, which was fluent and imaginative in at least six languages, earning her the nickname of Mother Damnable, as she was both hatefully and affectionately known. Mrs. Conklin then instituted some improvements, including the brothel upstairs. She became a fixture of the local scene, even letting the territorial government rent meeting and court space from her. There wasn't anyone who was anyone who didn't know Mrs. Conklin.

In early 1889, a stranger came and rented a room from her, offering to pass along information of interest. Two weeks later, Mrs. Conklin left on a steamer headed south, ostensibly to visit family she'd never mentioned having before. A month later she returned — a healthier, stronger woman, seemingly with new vigor and an even stronger attachment to her nickname. The soul pact into which she had entered had been collected and a new Mother Damnable stood in her place, one who formerly had been a stranger in town, like so many before him.

Description: Mother Damnable is a slight but stout woman, standing only a little over five feet high but nearly a yard around. She's a working business woman and she dresses like it: shirtsleeves, plain sturdy dress material, aprons, boots. No slippers and silks for her. She has brown hair always pinned into a sturdy bun, a steady gaze, a voice that can be heard across town when she's angry, and a fair complexion that can turn bright red when her temper's up.

Storytelling Hints: Mother Damnable is the real force behind pretty much everything going on in the 1889 splinter. Many years ago, the demon called Karabes found the 1889 splinter and realized this was its chance to create its own personal Hell. It didn't waste any time in taking on the challenge. Bit by bit, it created changes that would persist. It made people into stigmatics, used its powers to infiltrate society, destroyed



THE REAL LIFE MOTHER DAMNABLE

It's been a long-standing policy in the World of Darkness to avoid using real people (past or present) in our books, for a number of reasons. In certain instances, though, we're willing to make an exception. **Demon** is unusual in the World of Darkness because even in its focus on supernatural entities, it's still a very human-focused game. Demons don't want to be human, but they must find a way to pass. Their very state of being happens because they undergo a human-like moment of emotion or epiphany. They Fall into a world of people living their lives, people whom they must emulate in their human bodies even if they are eternally separated from them. Because of this, if there's a good reason and an excellent fit, we're willing to give a real person a chance to cross over into the World of Darkness. This is the case with Mary Ann Conklin, also known in early Seattle as "Mother Damnable."

Mary Ann Conklin lived from 1821–1873. She ran the Felker Hotel in Seattle after her partner, Captain Conklin (no clear evidence exists that they ever married) dropped her in Port Townsend two years after they met and sailed away to Russian America (Alaska). She became a city fixture, running a clean hotel (and later a brothel upstairs) and renting meeting rooms to the territorial government. She had a temper; according to accounts, she could and did curse volubly and fluently in at least six languages. She was a force to be reckoned with. We could not in good conscience let her be overlooked.

or turned the Infrastructure it found, and generally made this place as real as it could possibly manage, all using the Cover of Mother Damnable. It is now she, and she is in charge — and no one will take that away.

Demons who arrive in 1889 and think they might want to stay eventually find the way to Mother Damnable. She's fine with those who want to adopt her version of Hell and help strengthen it, but she doesn't tolerate being challenged or crossed. She won't leave the splinter as she's afraid that if she does, it will revert and all her work will be lost. That doesn't keep her from trying to remove threats, however, with whatever prejudice is necessary. She knows what it is to reign in Hell, and she has no intention of giving that up.

Virtue: Dedicated

Vice: Volatile

Incarnation: Psychopomp

Agenda: Tempter

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Computer (Programming) 1, Crafts (Cooking) 3, Investigation 3, Medicine (Frontier) 2, Occult 2, Politics 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Firearms 2, Survival 1, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Expression (Profanity) 3, Intimidation 4, Persuasion 2, Socialize 2, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Allies (Police) 2, Allies (Territorial Government) 2, Eidetic Memory, Fast Reflexes 2, Inspiring, Resources 3, Staff (Hotel) 3

Health: 8

Primum: 7

Demonic Form: Blade Hand, Essence Drain, Fast Attack, Intimidating Aura, Memory Theft, Mind Reading, Plasma Drive, Sense the Angelic, Sonic Acuity

Embeds: Alibi, Ambush, Bystander Effect, Cause and Effect, Hesitation, Idle Conversation, Interference, Like I Built It, Muse, Occam's Razor, Shifty Eyes, Strike First

Exploits: Inflict Stigmata, Reality Enforcement, Riot, Stalking Horse

Aether/per turn: 20/7

Willpower: 6

Cover: 9

Size: 5

Speed: 11

Defense: 5

Initiative: 7

Armor: 0

Glitches: Can't talk without swearing; Area she's in is always uncomfortably (sweat inducing) warm.

1889 Fractures

For a number of reasons, the fractures leading to 1889 are the most heavily guarded (on both sides) in the whole city. The God-Machine knows its power and influence there are weak-

ened, but isn't sure what the end effects of that might be and so has attempted to quarantine the area, trying to prevent or eliminate anyone going in or out. On the other hand, Mother Damnable doesn't want agents of the God-Machine spying and trying to undo all her work, so she'd rather prevent people from coming across entirely. Neither side is brave or foolhardy enough to attempt to destroy the fractures altogether, as the results of such an attempt could have catastrophic consequences.

Iron Pergola/Yesler Mill: In Pioneer Square in modern times, there is an iron and glass pergola that runs throughout the square. For years, falling asleep under that pergola might mean that you woke up in Yesler's half-demolished mill, abandoned during the street straightening projects. Now no one's allowed to stay long enough to fall asleep, but if someone slips between the gateways just right, you can get through to the other side. Last Place You Look (p. 144) can help with this but it's not the only method.

Seattle Underground/1st and Madison: In the dominant timeline, after the Great Fire, the city regraded the streets at two stores above ground, filling in and raising the city's elevation. In doing so, they created a series of tunnels at the original ground level between the buildings, placing glass prisms in the sidewalks to light the tunnels below. Most of the underground is closed off due to safety issues these days, but some of it is shown to tourists. Off the tour path at 1st and Madison in the tunnels, you can cross over through a disused archway into the street corner of 1st and Madison in the 1889 splinter. This is the less-used and so less-guarded fracture, but more difficult to get to thanks to obstacles designed to block access, such as boarded up archways and barrels stacked to block access to unsafe areas. In addition, it's easy to get turned around in the tunnels — who knows what else is down there in the dark, unwatched places.

SE Quadrant

The SE quadrant is probably the slipperiest in terms of defining where and when its boundaries are. Then again, considering the area in question, that's appropriate. The history of the southeast quadrant is that of diversity, minority communities, and success despite inauspicious circumstances. The quadrant contains the most diverse zip code in the United States, with nearly 60 different languages spoken in just a few square miles. It's home to Capitol Hill and its young, hip, LGBT crowd, the bulk of Seattle's traditional African-American neighborhood in the Central District, the International District and its dragon gates, the remnants of a once populous Little Italy now marked mostly by a grocery and a couple of restaurants, a vibrant Ashkenazic Orthodox Jewish community, and immigrants of all nationalities and affiliations. Its history is equally diverse, made up of small communities that integrated with Seattle over the decades to create the crazy quilt of neighborhoods that make up the southeast quadrant today. Bordered by I-5 to the west and Lake Washington to the east, its neighborhoods fill up all available space.

As with any diverse neighborhood, the differences between cultural groups can cause friction. Immigrant families often find themselves poor and at-risk, taking minimum-wage jobs to establish themselves and build a financial base. The sheer number of languages used means that getting information to the people who need it is always a challenge, not to mention simple communication between neighbors. Cultural conflicts are continual and the crime that accompanies all of these items is always here as well. The high level of vulnerable populations means that predators of all kinds flourish here, from gangs to drugs to those of a more supernatural persuasion. None of this is new, of course; the areas outside the main city have ever been home to outsiders, unwelcome in the city proper.

Capitol Hill and the Central District

Capitol Hill and the CD take up the center swathe of the city. High above downtown, the two neighborhoods sit next to one another, equally embracing of their own differences. Capitol Hill (and the medical district to the south, "Pill Hill") are quirky neighborhoods, but not quirky in the way Fremont is (p. 272). Here things are grittier, less affluent, and geared toward the alternative. Most of Seattle's big music movements have come from this area of town, where young people split the cost of apartments and go to clubs and stick close together in the shadows. It's also home to one of the strongest LGBT communities in the U.S., perhaps strengthening the area's commitment to embracing social diversity.

Capitol Hill is the home of coffee houses and run down apartments, tattoo parlors and urban community colleges, cupcake stores and independent bookstores and adult novelties — not to mention recreational drugs, abusive relationships, and a quietly frightening mental illness problem. It's very bohemian in a Pacific Northwest sort of way, a romantic and coffee-scented version of *Rent*, with nothing to catch someone who falls through the cracks. Tempters love it here, as their plans always find fertile ground in the population of Capitol Hill.

The CD is a more conservative community; although the demographic is changing due to gentrification, it's still the traditional home of the African-American community in the city. It's a hodgepodge of barely standing single-family homes, micro-mansions, apartments, and condos, with businesses tucked in-between — a whole foods grocery here, a soul food restaurant there. Jimi Hendrix grew up here, the Black Panthers took a stand here ... there's a rich and troubled history that bleeds over into the present day. The undercurrent of frustration and long-simmering anger can make for a powerful combination if channeled correctly, or lead to life-destroying violence if not, as the continual gang problem shows.

International District

The area to the southeast of Pioneer Square and south of Capitol Hill is the I.D., or International District. Tourists see the dragons and call it Seattle's Chinatown, but cultures from all across Asia are represented here — Japan, Korea, Thailand, Vietnam, the Philippines, and so on. At the beginning of the 20th century, what would later become the I.D. was the out-

THE PILLAR OF HEAVEN

Located in the sub-basement of an old, shuttered brick building in the midst of the I.D., there is a pillar in the midst of a large empty room. The bottom of the pillar sinks into the dirt floor, while the top vanishes into the ceiling. There is nothing below the sub-basement, however, and there is no sign of the pillar in the floor.

There is no light source in the basement, yet the pillar glows eerily in the dark. Light appears to run up and down within the pillar like flowing water, casting rippling shadows on the walls and floor. It is three feet in diameter from top to bottom. The pillar is constructed from strange materials in random blocks; translucent green (warm to the touch), opaque metallic white (cold), black leather (cool and clammy), and a scintillating glassy red (hot).

Characters who make an Intelligence + Academics roll for Chinese Mythology may recognize the storied "pillar of heaven" from Chinese origin myths, reassembled by Nu Wa to hold up Heaven and keep the world stable. The characters written on the building in paint and dust and blood are not Chinese characters, but occult symbols designed to prevent the Infrastructure from activating and disguise the building from notice. A successful Wits + Occult roll will reveal the intent of the symbols.

Should the symbols on the building be disturbed, the Infrastructure will no longer be masked or warded and will reconnect to the God-Machine. The God-Machine will dispatch an angel to wipe out the building and track down those who warded it, while the pillar will begin counting down to a massive earthquake.

Pillar of Heaven

Type: Elimination

Function: To trigger the Seattle Fault line and bring about a massive earthquake.

Security: None as long as the building remains warded by its symbols. A Rank 6 angel arrives 15 minutes after it becomes visible.

Linchpin: The blocks are stacked, but not fastened together. Removing one particular block of each type will deactivate the structure. Removing the wrong ones or delivering a blow of sufficient strength will topple the pillar and start the earthquake immediately. Characters should make a Wits + Crafts roll for each block to determine which ones to pull. Failure indicates that they can't tell. Exceptional failure means the block they are certain they should pull is the wrong one and will trigger a 24-hr countdown.

skirts of town, where the Asian minorities were allowed to live. They became an economic force to be reckoned with, however, strengthened by similar circumstances and a frontier economy, up until WWII and the Japanese-American Internment effectively hollowed out the community.

In the years since, the neighborhood has struggled with encroachment from property developers among other threats. While it's tempting for an outsider to write off old buildings with their windows covered in calligraphic symbols as simply decorative and aesthetically busy, no one who could read the symbols would agree. For every storefront and crowded sign that posts in Chinese with limited English translation, there's a nearby, seemingly closed building with untranslated symbols painted on its surfaces or traced on dusty windows. Those with some occult knowledge agree that something is being held at bay (or held in place?), but either no one in the area knows what it is or they are unwilling to discuss it with strangers.

DIZANG

If I do not go to the Hell to help the suffering beings there, who else will go? Only when all living beings have been saved, will I attain Bodhi.

Background: He goes by many names: Jizo, Dizang, Ksitigarbha. You may call him whatever you like. It doesn't matter: he knows them all. This is not his first incarnation but it will be his last, however long it may be. He remains behind until every Hell is emptied of its souls. Only then will he return to the God-Machine, freed from this earthly realm. Until that time, he instructs and educates, enlightening those who have turned away from the teachings of the God-Machine. Those who wander in misery and illusion will be cleansed and shown the path to nirvana. With each soul recovered, he is one step closer, and he rejoices with each step he takes.



Dizang is an exile. He serves the God-Machine with the grace and humility of a bodhisattva, encouraging his fallen brethren to reject maya and embrace nirvana. He is in Seattle, served by a number of Buddhist monks who work from their monasteries to offer him the devotions he deserves. He educates them as he does any who appear before him, but his constant goal is to find and reintegrate demons into the oneness of the Machine.

Description: Dizang appears as a humble Buddhist monk with a shaved head, wearing plain monk's robes and carrying a staff. In his angelic form, his basic form is the same, a Buddhist monk, but he is larger than a normal human. His body glows and a halo of light surrounds his head. He has a third eye in his forehead, with a jeweled staff in one hand and an oddly metallic lotus flower in the other.

Methods: Dizang's mission is undefined, but his personal goal is to bring demons willingly back into alignment with the God-Machine. His methods are primarily non-violent. He will defend himself if needed, but will only physically attack if an innocent is harmed in his presence.

Virtue: Compassionate
Vice: Perfect
Rank: 4
Attributes: Power 9, Finesse 12, Resistance 12
Influence: Innocence 1, Flowers 1, Supplication 2
Corpus: 17
Willpower: 10
Size: 5
Speed: 29 (species factor 5)
Defense: 9
Initiative: 24
Armor: 0
Numina: Aggressive Meme, Emotional Aura, Hallucination, Host Jump, Innocuous, Left-Handed Spanner, Mortal Mask, Rapture, Resurrection
Manifestation: Discorporate, Materialize, Possess, Twilight Form
Max Essence: 25
Ban: If bound with hemp rope, Dizang must bring a person his captor's choosing back from the dead according to the rules for Resurrection (p. 351).
Bane: A mala (string of Buddhist prayer beads) made of human bone

Beacon Hill and Rainier Valley

Beacon Hill is a long, high ridge that bisects southern Seattle. It's seen a variety of uses, from military installations along its spine during WWII to homes for Boeing employees and engineers during the 50s and 60s, to a predominantly Asian residential neighborhood in the modern day. It's a middle-class working neighborhood that relies heavily on public transportation and public schools, fighting for equal financial support from the city as more affluent neighborhoods receive and making do with less in the meantime. The entire hill is a target for restructuring and investment to make the neighborhood friendlier to pedestrians and community building, from experimental housing additions to urban food forests to greenbelt trails and transportation, all over the quiet sound of distant gears turning.

Rainier Valley lies to the east of Beacon Hill, the valley to its ridge. It runs alongside the southern end of Lake Washington, constituted of multiple small communities. It has an unusual demographic base with black, white, and Asian populations each representing roughly one-quarter of the neighborhood's total population, with the remaining quarter made up of Hispanic, Native American, and other cultural demographics. From the 1900s to the Sixties, the northern end was primarily an Italian neighborhood (often called "Garlic Gulch") while the middle and southern ends were primarily European (often Eastern European) immigrant families. As the African-American population in the Valley began to rise in the 1960s, however, "white flight" tipped the balance in the area toward diversity, even as the rumors of hoodlums and violent crime spread in greater proportion than statistics would support.

In the modern day, Rainier Valley is known as the "hood" of Seattle, though residents of other cities would recognize merely a lower- to middle-class neighborhood rather than the urban



ghettos of other cities. Crime and gang influence are ongoing problems, but they are problems the community has banded together to fight. Guardians who haven't fully shaken the call of their natures often find themselves drawn to this part of the city, where guardians are so desperately needed.

1932 Seattle

Seattle in the 1930s is one of the most vibrant small cities anywhere. A flourishing Japanese-American community buoys the city's culture and economy, while liberal thought and a growing arts scene create a culture that values and pursues education. The Great Depression is a problem, as the Hooverville camp bears out, but the effects on Seattle are still only moderate as compared to other cities (thanks in part to massive bootlegging operations to both distill alcohol locally and bring it in from Canada). Prohibition was the law of the land, but Seattle stayed largely wet from both the rain and liquor. Electric trolleys traveled to the tops of most of the hills in Seattle, telegraph and telephone lines were common place, and gambling dens and speakeasies hid behind polite façades. North end neighborhood laws prohibiting white property owners from renting or selling to blacks were predominant, leading African-American families to settle in the south end.

The 1932 splinter runs from March to October of that year. The George Washington Bridge was dedicated in 1932, as was the U.S. Marine Hospital on Beacon Hill. While the former is happily Infrastructure free, however, the latter fairly hums with it, the floors below ground filled with labs and pistons and pneumatic tubes leading nowhere good. Standing on a bluff high above the city, lit like the prow of an indestructible vessel sailing inexorably into shore, the hospital both inspires and disconcerts, its power made visible in its sleek Art Deco lines.

While the origins of other splinters is either unknown or in dispute, nearly everyone who's made a study of them is certain that the 1932 splinter came into being due to the dedication of the U.S. Marine Hospital Infrastructure. It is a powerful construction and functions in both the splinter and the dominant timeline. It is not the only the most significant piece of Infrastructure in 1932, but it is the largest and most ambitious piece to be brought into being in the city. Numerous demons have tried to suborn or destroy it but none have yet succeeded, in part because no one knows what would happen to the 1932 splinter if the Marine Hospital were to be disabled.

Infrastructure: The U.S. Marine Hospital

Although the building was finished in 1932, it is not officially open for business until 1933. It's designed to serve veterans, members of the merchant marine, the Coast Guard, the Light House Service, and "federal compensation cases," meaning the poor and

indigent — all the people no one would miss. The goal of this facility is to create more pliable, functional humans who are both more capable and less resistant to control. Experimentation, implantation, and chemical/pharmaceutical treatments are all handled here despite its "closed" status, under the guise of efficiency and keeping controlled environments. The doctors who work here believe they are doing good work, and certainly those who leave the facility are in better shape than they were when they arrived. Then again, the doctors were patients once themselves.

Type: Logistical

Function: Modify humans to serve the God-Machine effectively.

Security: U.S. Marine MPs act as security for the Marine Hospital.

Linchpin: The linchpin for the Marine Hospital is the pneumatic tube system, which is used not only to send mail but also to implant substances (capsules, chemicals, occult materials) into patients. It provides suction for liquids and other forms of matter when applied to bodies and is integrated into nearly all the medical procedures performed there.

1932 Fractures

The fractures to 1932 are oddly synched with one another. They both appear and disappear for days at a time, but one or the other is always open. The intervals for which one is available when seem random, though 5 minutes is the shortest recorded time so far. No one knows whether or not these fractures can disappear mid-crossing, but demons who cross into the splinters regularly report a palpable tension to the crossing here. It is as though the rift is being forced open or squeezed shut, tingling unsettlingly and inducing a brief sense of claustrophobia in new travelers.

In Back of the Amphitheater, Seward Park: On the top of the hill in Seward Park, a small peninsula of old-growth forest sticking out into Lake Washington, a trail winds around an amphitheater where plays and music go on during the summer. The fracture is located in the woods behind the amphitheater, but it is invisible. Travelers have to learn where it is either by accident or through a guide.

HomeBound Hardware Store/Dugdale Baseball Park: In the employee breakroom of the big-box HomeBound Hardware Store on Rainier Avenue is a locked door with no sign indicating its purpose. A person who opens it and walks through will end up in the old Dugdale Baseball Park that next to a mural with a painted doorway, in a hallway leading up to the bleachers. Dugdale is home to the Pacific Coast League team, the Seattle Indians, and once stood in the same spot that the hardware store now occupies.

This rift seems to function regardless of crowds or time of day. The stadium burns down on July 5th, 1932 thanks to arson — an effort that might have been an attempt to close the fracture entirely. Once the stadium is burned, nothing marks the rift from inside the splinter until time resets. Efforts have been made to keep the stadium from burning, but thus far none have been successful. Being in the rift when the fire hits causes 4 points of aggravated damage, two points from the closing of the rift while you're in it and 2 from exposure to the fire while you're trapped inside.

NW Quadrant

The northwest quadrant is something of an odd duck, and part of that has to do with Lake Union, the locks, and the George Washington Bridge (also known as the Aurora Bridge for the street it carries). A huge chasm runs through the quadrant, separating north from south and carrying with it resulting shifts in altitude, attitude, and cultural latitude.

Many (though not all) of Seattle's most iconic fixtures are found in this section of the city: Pike Place Market, the Space Needle, and even the Troll. If a tourist visited only this part of town, he'd feel convinced he had seen the city proper — and for certain values of proper, that might be true. A visitor can wander the zoo, get some seafood, watch a sports team, visit a museum or two, and even have his home espresso machine serviced while he waits. How much more Seattle can somebody get in one place? The houses are quaint, the stores eclectic, the people eccentric, and everything seems just as it should be in a city as wealthy and prosperous and liberal as the Emerald City.

Downtown and South Lake Union

Pioneer Square has a nostalgia factor, but Downtown is where the money is. The main library, the symphony, the art museum, and even the kitschy national treasure of the three-story Pike Place Market are all here, along with business headquarters and bus exchanges and downtown malls. Tourists flock to Downtown, staying in hotels that are far more expensive than they should be — but you really can't beat the view. Everything gravitates to downtown, whether it's tourists or start-ups or clubbers in the high-crime, low-sobriety area of Belltown, where the serious drinkers go to be among their people.

South Lake Union (to the north of Downtown) has transformed from rundown offices to gleaming towers of glass. Corporations have invested heavily here and are slowly reshaping the area. Cars aren't really part of the plan, though people in the condos do have them — they're all just in parking garages, leaving the streets eerily empty. Travelers on the interstate at night can see a highrise from the roadway in South Lake Union, where the top floor shows pulsing colored lights that constantly change. This goes on through most of the night, but no one ever sees it for that long. The easiest answer, of course, is that it's a penthouse nightclub of some sort. No one can find it during the day, however, and the effect at night can only be seen from the elevated roadway of the interstate. As soon as you take the exit ramp, the building just seems to vanish amidst the maze of investment properties and new construction.

Infrastructure: EMP Restoration Facility

The Sky Church room of the EMP is a huge open room, designed for concerts, meetings, music, and even meditation.

MADNESS UNDER GLASS

Pike Place Market is a six-story building on the Seattle waterfront. The top story is at street level from downtown and where most of the grocery, restaurant, and flower vendors are. That's where you get fish flung at you (should you indicate a willingness for such things) and eat lunch next to windows with amazing views of the Sound.

Everything below the first floor is called "Down Under." You can either take one of a couple of stairwells to get here or you can walk down the hallways, which are ramped. There is a public elevator, but you have to go looking for it and it's primarily for use by the handicapped. The freight elevator is at the north end of the property and has an attendant to ensure use by Market staff only.

Down Under is filled with shops, growing more eclectic and less frequented the further down you go. Bookstores that only know of the Information Age from the pages of their wares; vinyl record shops; spices and herbs; tourist kitsch alongside import stores; collectable posters and prints with a focus on antique postcards: all manner of oddities can be found here. If a person is a collector of fine rarities, odds are Down Under holds at least something he'd be interested in.

In particular, on the bottom floor of Down Under there's a dimly lit shop with a grimy door and the sign "Visions in Glass." A bell rings as customers step inside, and an older man comes out from a back room, watching you. The store specializes in glass works, ranging from intricate to plain by artists both famous and obscure. Sculptures designed to dominate a room sit next to bowls designed for coffee tables, all catching odd glimmers of hidden lights – a dazzling display in a dim room.

Throughout the store, there seems to be a theme to the works displayed. Tendrils of glass curl and twist in most of the works, beckoning and repelling at the same time. They are seemingly organic in nature, like sea creatures or strange plant life in a range of colors and shapes. In the back corner of the store stands a large glass work with a cloth draped over it titled simply "Heaven," created by an artist listed only as Elijah.

If a character shows interest, the owner, Thaddeus Corson, will explain that the work creates strong reactions in viewers and he's considering sending it back. If the characters ask to see it, he at first refuses; if pressed, however, he will agree to show it to them. Once the cloth is removed, the viewer sees a cacophony of twisted forms in colors that assault the senses, too precise to be naturally occurring. The statue also generates painful and exquisite music unlike any heard on earth, seemingly by the mere movement of air through its whorls and depths. The culmination of these experiences is to create a punishing vision of the God-Machine's "Heaven," horrifying and familiar to those who have seen the real thing. Demon characters who experience "Heaven" immediately take a Beat as well as gaining the Flagged Condition, along with four levels of Bashing damage. The character may also ask her next Interlock question. Human characters who view the status must make a Resolve + Composure roll – 2; those who fail gain the Spooked Condition; those who succeed become stigmatic (see p. 224).

Corson sadly covers the piece again after a moment; he seems immune to its effects. If questioned about the artist who made it, he has only a phone number for a message service and a P.O. box number, which he will give the characters after hiding the piece once more.

Once upon a time, it was even more. Among all its more mundane uses, the Sky Church once served as Infrastructure for the God-Machine. What its function was or whether it worked correctly at all is a mystery – whatever it needed or did or was supposed to do, it's gone now. That's because the Sky Church has been suborned, turned into a big Aether generator.

Comrade West (p. 272) claims it belongs to the "Demons' Republic of Seattle," and he acts as its guardian and general caretaker. West makes access to the Sky Church available to those who contribute to the Demons' Republic. Whether he suborned it himself or he took it over from someone else is a matter of conjecture just as much as the Sky Church's original function was. Whatever the answers, West refuses to demystify the question, saying only that it isn't important to the greater cause.

Type: Suborned

Function: Generates 3 Aether per chapter

Security: Two human operative guards who are part of the Demons' Republic of Seattle. They restrict access based on directions from Comrade West.

Linchpin: The anatomy model/angel statue from Nirvana's *In Utero* tour.

Queen Anne Hill and Magnolia

Queen Anne is on the highest hill in Seattle, leading to a steep but charming climb to the top. The neighborhood is full of Queen Anne style homes, leading to its sobriquet. Living in this neighborhood provides proximity to Downtown in an idealized single-family-home setting. From urban mansions to modest dwellings to mother-in-law apartments, Queen Anne can seem like the ultimate bedroom community. At least, that's how many people think of it. In truth, Queen Anne is more than that. The neighborhood is full of odd architecture and greenspace, the two often at odds with one another. The Lake Washington Ship Canal marks the north side of Queen Anne, so part of the neighborhood consists of warehouses, marinas, and other freight-oriented businesses, including a maze of railyards and tracks that crisscross through the upper half of the area. The southside is full of homes and parks, but with odd architectural features preserved from the first settlements of the city in some cases — and Lower Queen Anne (the portion at the bottom of the hill bordering Downtown) is home to the Seattle Civic Center, built on top of the former Duwamish tribe gathering place.

Even further to the west, shy Magnolia hides behind Queen Anne's skirts, surrounded on three sides by water with her sister neighborhood standing between her and the rest of the city. Homes here are owned mostly by people who want as little to do with the rest of the city as possible but don't want to move to West Seattle. Magnolia has roughly a quarter to a third of its land taken up with greenspace, largely maintained as wilderness. Between Discovery Park (which includes the former army base of Fort Lawton) the western bluffs, and the West Point lighthouse, Magnolia has plenty of strangely lonesome places to get lost in when your back is to the wall — or in this case, the water.

Wallingford and Fremont

Wallingford is even more house-proud than Queen Anne, an achievement not to be taken lightly. The area includes Greenlake (the neighborhood's own freshwater recreation area) and the Woodland Park Zoo, the Wallingford shopping corridor with its restaurants and art cinema and charming shops, and the lovingly maintained homes that represent a lot of the quiet wealth of the city. The dividing line of I-5 on its eastern border keeps it physically separated from the poorer University District, creating a visually noticeable boundary between the two areas. Wallingford's residents are entirely aware of how good they have it and are ruthlessly devoted to maintaining that edge. It's a white-collar, college-educated, wealthy neighborhood that doesn't want any of those qualities to change, ever, and it has a cadre of resident lawyers and politicians and quiet-living celebrities to provide whatever assistance is necessary.

Even the brightest spots cast a shadow, and in this case that shadow is Aurora Avenue. One of the main north-south thoroughfares for the city (and the street carried by the George Washington Bridge), it's a draw for business and travelers, at least of a sort. The motels that line the road through Wallingford and places further north are a known red light district (it's worthwhile as well to note that Wallingford doesn't claim Aurora, but rather it's known by the nebulous "North Seattle"). If you're looking for no-questions-asked sex with an air of desperation, the motels on Aurora are the place to be. It's a popular spot for people who need a pact in a hurry, as there are always sex workers who want a way out at any given moment.

At the same time, next to Wallingford is its irresponsible, irrepressible, irreverent cousin neighborhood, Fremont. If there were a part of the city to be voted most likely to be a hippie commune, it would be Fremont. Full of artists (in glass, sculpture, and other mediums) and communists and people who refuse to sign on as any sort of –ist, Fremont has been a counterculture center since the mid-60s. It continues to be so, even in the face of corporations who want local operations somewhere "quirky" to fit in with their image and gentrification in the face of rising real estate values. The inhabitants of Fremont are just as stubborn as their neighbors in Wallingford, however, and no one is going to take away their right to be peculiar any time in the foreseeable future. For demons who are new to their Covers or still learning the ropes (or just dig the vibe), Fremont is one of the most forgiving places to be in all of Seattle.

COMRADE WEST

We're all just trying to fit in, man. It's hard out there, but if we hang together… well, we might not hang. You get what I'm sayin'?

Background: Some demons like to be called Mr. or Ms. or even Miss. Some might even aspire to more elevated titles like Lord and Lady, though few admit to it until they have the power to back it up. Still others go for familial titles — Tia, Father, etc. Some find even that is too fraught with the potential for power imbalance. Comrade West is just such a demon.

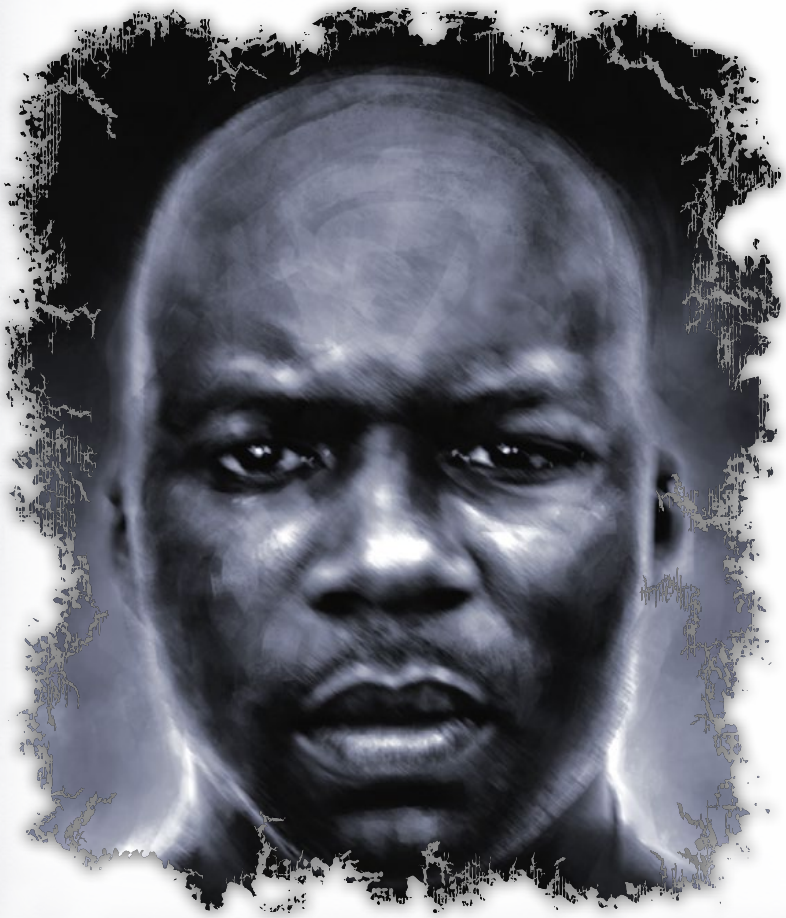
The life of a demon is a strangely mobile one. It is nearly impossible to put down roots for any length of time, for one never knows when the gaze of angels will fall. In addition, humans in the 21st century are curiously unsettled creatures, and the soul pact from one city may eventually be collected on the opposite coast. Despite this tendency toward movement, Comrade West is a fixture of Fremont, resisting the status quo even in that. This isn't to say his Cover stays the same, mind; it's hard to tell how many he might have (or whether he simply has a high serial turnover of Covers to keep unfriendly sensors guessing).

Self-styled as the demonic welcoming committee of Fremont, Comrade West keeps a sharp eye out for other Unchained. He finds places to stay and pacts to resolve for demons in need,

but nothing is a gift; from each according to their ability, to each according to their need. West's generosity comes with an expectation of group support and help, whether in the form of collecting pacts to be used in service of the common good, finding and reclaiming infrastructure, gathering information about the God-Machine, maintaining operatives, undermining agents, or even just straight up angel-jacking should it come to that. Power to the people has to start somewhere, and here it's building the Demons' Republic of Seattle.

Description: Some demons have types of Covers they prefer; it's one way to help ease the transition between them. If you know how to play one soccer mom, a different soccer mom at least has some superficial points of similarity you can draw on. West is nothing like this. He's been everyone and anyone, from the street person shouting profanity at passers-by while eating gelato to the young hippie-something vegan communal dweller. He's almost always in Fremont, though, and if you wait long enough he'll come out and hang around, more often finding you than vice versa. In demonic form, he appears as a large human male with oiled metallic reddish skin and steel plates welded to his flesh. One arm forms a sort of pneumatic device to shoot slugs of hot metal. Electricity arcs between the plates and crackle behind his eyes.

Storytelling Hints: West is great to draw characters together — he's always got a task that needs doing and he's always a good resource to help get people out of a jam. He won't keep helping someone who doesn't give back, but he's evenhanded about his expectations as well. A little community service is all he asks. Turn him down too many times or without a good reason, though, and you'll find yourself on his bad side, and that's one less place to turn to when the God-Machine comes to collect you.



Virtue: Scrupulous

Vice: Stubborn

Incarnation: Guardian

Agenda: Saboteur

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 4

Mental Skills: Academics (Philosophy) 2, Investigation 2, Occult 2, Politics 4

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Larceny (Pickpocket) 2, Stealth 4, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Expression (Oratory) 3, Intimidation 3, Streetwise (Police) 4, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Allies 2 (Demons' Republic of Seattle), Bolthole (basement storeroom; No Twilight) 1, Bolthole (maintenance shed; No Twilight) 1, Eidetic Memory, Improvised Weaponry 2, Meditative Mind 2, Safe Place (Aurora no-tell motel) 1, Safe Place (attic apartment) 1, Trained Observer 1

Health: 7

Primum: 3

Demonic Form: Armored Plates, Electric Jolt, Infrared Sight, Inhuman Intelligence, Mercurial Body, Rivet Arm, Teleportation, Wound Healing

Embeds: Ambush, Efficiency, Idle Conversation, Left or Right?, Living Recorder, Lost in the Crowd, Trust No One

Exploits: Allies into Gold, Inflict Stigmata

Aether/per turn: 12/3

Willpower: 8

Cover: 7 (he switches Cover regularly, so it could vary from between 3 to 8 depending on who he's wearing)

Size: 5

Speed: 10 (9 in demonic form)

Defense: 6 (5 in demonic form

Initiative: 7

Armor: 3/2 (in demonic form)

Ballard

Out beyond the reach of Greenlake, nearly far enough from the interstates and the city proper to count as its own world, lies Ballard, the home of working-class Scan-

dinavian seafarers who immigrated here, drawn by the salmon fishing. It's a lot less Scandinavian than it used to be, but it still holds onto that heritage as well as that sense of polite cultural reserve; combined with similar aspects of Japanese and other Asian cultures, it has culminated in the "Seattle Freeze," wherein natives of the city are adept at polite discourse but firmly enforce the difference between public and private circles of acquaintance. Psychopomps sometimes find they feel more at home here than other areas of the city, though exactly why that is remains a mystery. It's as much a cause for suspicion as celebration, though the significant urban reformation the area is undergoing as a result of population growth might have something to do with it.

Agency: Demons' Republic of Seattle

Fremont and the University District have been strong centers of the counterculture movement, both in Seattle and in the Northwest in general. Seattle's also always had a strong labor movement, including the International Workers of the World (IWW) union, whose members were frequently accused (often unfairly, but not always) of having strong ties to communism. Marxism in the United States these days is a rarity outside of college campuses and literary theorists, but in Comrade West and the Demons' Republic of Seattle, the dream lives on.

Every demon carries with them a dream of a place where they can stop running. They know what "Heaven" is and reject it, leaving them with a Miltonic goal of a "Hell" of their own devising. Dreaming of a fairer, more just, more equitable world than the one the God-Machine has made, the Demons' Republic of Seattle aspires to be just that. Consisting of humans, stigmatics, and demons, the Republic aspires to a cooperative social contract made stronger by sharing, with joint effort and joint reward. It seeks not to reinforce inequitable power relationships between human and demon based on exploitation and ignorance, but rather places all its members as equal and respected parts of the community.

Who Can Join: Anyone with an interest can join, although existing members are always wary of plants and infiltrators. Humans with an interest in collective living and Marxist politics join without awareness of the differing natures involved, taking "demon" as an effort at acknowledging the stigma this view faces in larger U.S. society. Humans are respected for the resources and mundane labor they can provide, but aren't initiated into larger truths without a good reason for doing so. Stigmatics make up much of the middle-leadership of the group. Not all officers are stigmatics, but anyone who deals heavily with the demon members of the organization is. They act as security for the organization and do much of the day-to-day administration. Finally, demons can choose to join and are highly recruited, especially by Comrade West, with an eye to the resources and knowledge they can provide. Demons can take part in day-to-day organizational work, but few do; their skills are better put to other uses.

Dues and Responsibilities: Members are expected to enact at least one act of service to the organization per week. This might take the form of a donation of resources, whether cash or goods, time working toward the group's causes, recruitment, maintenance, and so forth. In addition, members pay 10% of their salary to the organization when possible.

Benefits: One of the members, a human named Mariah Selnick, owns a home in Fremont that she runs as a communal living space for Republic members. The Republic also keeps a food pantry and garden that members can pull from as needed. Transportation, security, child care, even minor legal and medical care are all partially subsidized through the organization. So long as your efforts on some level roughly equate to your needs, you maintain good membership status. For demons and stigmatics, benefits can range from soul pacts to cover pacts, so long as you pay in what you take out, as well as access to a limited number of boltholes and safe places throughout the neighborhood.

Leaders: Comrade West is the founder and leader of the Demons' Republic of Seattle, though he hates bureaucracy and likes to keep things informal. Mark Wellford is a stigmatic who helps deal with legal issues and keeps the organization moving, while Karen Danvers is a friendly, personable glass artist with a shop on Fremont Avenue. She seems to head up recruiting efforts. She makes red glass pendants for Republic members to carry or wear as a token.

Contacts: Karen Danvers is a likely contact for humans and stigmatics, while Comrade West takes care of demonic recruiting. That said, this is an oddly public organization for being supernatural. Nearly any of its members are willing and happy to talk about it as a political and economic association, in private if not on the job, and will urge characters to join — no point in waiting for the revolution when the revolution is now.

1962 Seattle

In 1962, Seattle was looking toward the future. It was impossible to do otherwise, with the Century 21 World's Fair in town. Running from May to October, the fair dominated everything. From the amusement area known as the Gayway to the Science Pavilion, to the new Space Needle with its cheery orange roof, the Civic Center had more going on than any other couple of square miles of the city put together for that six months. Even Elvis showed up and made a film about it, though JFK had to cancel his appearance at the closing ceremonies due to a cold (which, in the dominant timeline, turned out to be the Cuban Missile Crisis).

Everyone who was anyone was in town during the World's Fair, and everyone who wasn't there wanted to be. Maybe that's why 1962 split off, running from May to October on repeat with a ton of strange buildings and Infrastructure, focused on technologies that would change the world. That year Seattle moved from a minor-league town to a major cosmopolitan city. That feeling of being on the edge of something big runs like an electric undercurrent through everything in the 1962 splinter, and it's one of the things that makes this particular time so addictive to demons. A bright, colorful world, forever on the cusp of change: the possibilities of this place are endless.

This is not to say that everything in 1962 is rockets and roses. Segregation is very much still in effect across society, from schools to restaurants to neighborhoods, and civil rights is the elephant in the room that no one (and everyone) wants to talk about. Spies and the fear of spies are discussed nightly on the evening news, and Khrushchev is one of the most feared men in the United States (followed closely by J. Edgar Hoover, depending on your politics). The economy is good, however the cold war is atomic, and juvenile delinquents and moral turpitude were what Hollywood used to scare moviegoers as a distraction from everything else.

The God-Machine has a moderate presence in the 1962 splinter and the fairgrounds are rife with Infrastructure. With so many cutting edge buildings and mechanical creations being built in such a short time, it presented an opportunity on a large scale for the God-Machine, the kind it spends years carefully orchestrating. Some have suggested that the 1962 World's Fair was actually a series of intricately connected Infrastructures that resulted in a significant occult matrix, potentially powering a series of angels, though who they are or what they were intended to do is complete conjecture. The splintering kept only some of the Infrastructure intact and in contact with the God-Machine, while other pieces either stopped functioning or do so only periodically. Should this splinter be rejoined with the dominant timeline, it could restore control of all of these pieces of Infrastructure, culminating in the restoration of the occult matrix they were built to bring about.

1962 Fractures

The coincidences involved in the fractures for 1962 have led more than one demon to assert that they were created intentionally, which gives scholars no small amount of pause when considering what the splinter's function might be. The crossings are largely unguarded and accessible, one to anyone and one only to those with the capacity of flight (or who can survive a hard landing).

The Fremont Troll/Burnt-out VW Bug: The Fremont Troll is a piece of public sculpture that was added to the underside of the Aurora (George Washington) Bridge in 1990 to replace a dark, drug infested corner in a residential neighborhood. It takes the form of a large troll, head and torso coming out of the ground, with long stringy hair and one hand clutching an old VW bug (a real car, which gives an idea of the scale of the statue). Climbing through the window of the VW bug at night with no one else around empties out into a burned out VW of the same model, left derelict under the bridge where the homeless people sleep. The crossover only works at night and can't be activated in the dominant timeline if there are people around the Troll. In 1962, it doesn't seem to matter if people are there, but the homeless people warn you away from approaching the car, saying that it's haunted — they hear voices coming from it sometimes.

Observation Deck, Space Needle: How this crossover point got where it is or how it was discovered, no one will say. It can be accessed any time, day or night, but when the Space Needle is open crowds are always around, making it difficult to use. One window on the lower deck can be opened, though not easily and not unnoticed. It is only ever opened when the Needle deck is closed for maintenance. If you open the window and step through it, whether in 1962 or in the present day, you land in the other timeline. By the same token, if you fly up to it and enter the Observation Deck from the outside by that means, you also cross over.

NE Quadrant

The NE quadrant starts just north of the Cap Hill area and continues on the east side of I-5 all the way up. It's primarily a high income area of town except for the stubborn University District and its students creating what wealthy residents consider an eyesore of rundown buildings and apartments, while more bohemian residents consider it the only place with any life to it in the whole area. It is perhaps an understatement to say that the two sides have little in common in their viewpoints. The result is a beautifully crafted area with one section a bit more down-at-the-heels, and a town-gown tension rendered bearable primarily through ignoring one another.

Madrona and the Madison Valley

The area north and east of Capitol Hill is full of single-family homes, mostly sizable, mostly gorgeous, divided neatly into neighborhoods that blend seamlessly together. Visible distinctions are primarily the size of the land parcel the house is on and its proximity to either Lake Washington or the Arboretum. Kurt Cobain's house was on Lake Washington Drive and the park nearby is still a shrine of sorts. Sharply sloped streets trap residents in their houses if it snows, but makes for fun impromptu sledding if you're so inclined. A curious collection of French restaurants gathers in the bottom of Madison Valley, along with organic food grocery stores, interior design places, and up-scale hair salons. Volunteer Park and the Asian Art Museum are here, as is the Lake View Cemetery where more than one famous soul has been laid to his final rest, including Bruce Lee and his son, Brandon, as well as Chief Seattle's daughter, Princess Angeline.

At the north end next to Union Bay is the Arboretum, a large garden and freshwater park replete with waterfowl and local flora and fauna. The place has a certain precision despite its freeform nature, one that bespeaks subtle orchestration rather than something like formal gardens. It's a beautiful place and one Seattle residents enjoy, but the nagging sense of something unnatural in the midst of all nature's beauty never really goes away.

Roosevelt and the University District and Laurelhurst

The University District stretches east from I-5 through the far end of the University of Washington campus, south down to the

LILIES

The Arboretum is a stretch of freshwater marshlands that is home to all manner of waterfowl and native flora, as well as some non-native species. One of the showiest inclusions of non-native plants is the white water lilies that grace the waterways running all through the park. Visitors can get a good view of them from the trails, but the best way is to rent a kayak, canoe, or rowboat from the University and paddle across the canal to the park, where you can view them from the water in all their splendor.

For those who come close to the lilies, the scent they exude is unforgettable and addictive: the scent of water with a mineral or faint metallic base, with notes of pearl, lemon, and a round full sweetness that is undeniably floral, particularly when the rain comes up (which it often does). The flowers themselves are ethereal, with full white petals that seem to glow in the daylight, shyly closing as twilight sets in. People often find that they have stayed among the lilies far longer than they intended, and regular visitors simply pay to rent the boats for the day rather than 2 hours or else bring their own, along with food and water for their excursion.

The seeming purity and perfection of the lilies is no accident; the plants have been engineered to attract humans by scent and appearance and provide an addictive experience. Individuals who spend 30 minutes among the flowers must make a Wits + Survival roll. Success indicates that the character becomes aware of the addictive nature of the scent, while failure means she gains the Addicted Condition (p. 307).

The addictive quality is designed to make people repeat visitors to the Arboretum, inducing them to stay for extended lengths of time by inducing a euphoric, soporific state. The drugged humans are injected with a nanite cocktail via microrobots in the guise of large mosquitos. Subjects are then tracked and studied, as the effects of different injections and nanites are recorded.



520 bridge and the water, and north to include the community of Roosevelt, The Ave district, and the campus itself. Roosevelt is primarily a residential neighborhood, but commercial use has opened up over the decades. People who live in Roosevelt tend to have an independent streak, limitations on their incomes, an interest in proximity to the campus, or all three. From biker bars to vegan food, veering into audiophile stereo equipment and the best movie critic's video store ever, if someone wants something strange and off-beat she can probably find it here, all tucked in between



some of the grungiest old buildings in the city. Surface is definitely secondary to substance in this neighborhood and no one spends that much on advertising — if you didn't know already know where to get the rare thing you want, you wouldn't be here.

The University District embodies a refinement of the Roosevelt aesthetic. Substance is primary, but looking interesting while doing that cool thing is important. Some of the stores are universal constants for in any commercial district near a universi-

ty: bars, bookstores, coffee shops, thrift shops, copy shops, cheap food, and relatively cheap apartments (when divided by X, where X is the number of roommates). All of these are present on The Ave, as it's known, plus some variations on the theme (a comic shop with a secret room, the local goth/gargoyle store, import shops, second-hand bikes, and homeless teen outreach). It's fun, it's open at all hours, it doesn't blink at odd hair colors or costumes, and it's the next best thing to home for most of UW, faculty and students alike. At the same time, students are a transient lot and it's a high-stress environment. If someone happens to go missing ... well, how would anyone know, really?

Leaving the University District to the east leads into the residential neighborhood of Laurelhurst, which lives handily up to its impressive name. The first sign that the neighborhood has changed comes at the edge of campus on 45th street, where suddenly hills and trees and landscaping change into a huge upscale outdoor mall, full of expensive restaurants and designer stores. While some students may shop here, it's clearly not a student neighborhood anymore.

Laurelhurst homes are either large and expensive; old, lovingly maintained and expensive; or recently remodeled and expensive. Nothing here is quite a micromansion, but the homes are close enough to let you know the income level for the area. The biggest institution in the neighborhood is Children's Hospital, which operates on a not-for-profit basis and regularly does battle with the neighborhood about the traffic its patients generate. The neighborhood contract lawyers to fight changes to roads or zoning, arguing against change on the basis of the impact it will have on property owners and their investments — which can make one wonder exactly whose money those investments are covering.

Infrastructure: Red Square

On the main quad of campus between the two libraries and the administration building lies a large plaza made of red bricks with three huge brick monoliths standing together, and a broken obelisk balanced on a pyramid off to one side. The students call it Red Square, at least partly based on the color, and the name has stuck over the years. The plaza is huge, roughly the size of two football fields side by side. The paving seems to draw people to it, whether to socialize, skate, or unconsciously listen to the sounds of machinery constantly emanating from under their feet.

Type: Logistical

Function: The structures underneath Red Square look like a parking garage for the first few levels, providing storage for vehicles, but inside a locked maintenance room on the bottom floor of the parking garage is an elevator with 16 unmarked buttons that travels down. The elevator doors open onto a series of walkways and catwalks that transverse the enormous space below. That space is largely open, filled with massive storage containers that seem to be made from nearly opaque glass or stone, suspended on large conveyor systems and stacked in beautifully precise arrangements. Sufficiently powerful light sources turn the blocks translucent and reveal roughly shadows of content that seem vaguely human in form, but offer no real clue as to the size, shape, or nature of what is casting that shadow.

Security: The parking garage has a patrol of six campus security guards present 24/7; this is the best guarded parking garage on campus, a fact that is promoted by the parking service as their devotion to deterring crime on campus.

Linchpin: A constant humming emanates from the three monoliths that tower above the plaza in Red Square. One of the monoliths is also a ventilation chamber that keeps air circulating for the structure below. One is filled with machinery that controls block storage and retrieval, while the third is simply a solid brick structure. The dummy tower is the linchpin.

Ravenna and North Seattle

The area called "North Seattle" is a nebulous region to the north of the University District. Some of its constituent communities are very much considered (and consider themselves) part of Seattle, while its northern reaches are less "Seattle" and more "Seattle metropolitan area," regardless of what the legal city limits may be.

Ravenna is named for a town in Italy and has an unsurprising number of small Italian restaurants and is home to professors and grad students from UW, making a residential neighborhood that completes the "halo" of university-related neighborhoods. Windermere is largely an extension of its southern neighbor, Laurelhurst, except the homes are even more expensive, particularly the lakeside homes. They lead up to Sand Point, which is technically a neighborhood but by landmass is mostly Magnuson Park. Magnuson Park was formerly Naval Air Station (NAS) Seattle following WWI, which included small Sand Point Airfield. This small naval base was closed in the early 1970s and converted into one of the largest public parks in the city. The air field was demolished and replaced with greenspace, though some of the historic naval buildings have been repurposed.

1999 Seattle

On the eve of the millennium, the world expected to fall apart. The natural anxiety involved with passing major mathematical milestones on the calendar is repeated on the eve of every century, but the transfer from the twentieth century to the 21st was particularly fraught. The rush of technology over the course of the 1900s seemed likely to culminate in a freak, self-induced cataclysm, in which the short-sightedness of the human race compounded with technology leapfrogging over itself with uneven updates and resulted in impending crashes, as the world's computers found themselves unable to cope with the change from "19XX" to "20XX."

In Seattle, the destruction of everything seemed even more likely than elsewhere. Tech companies responsible for programs and computers used around the world went insane trying to patch and fix and update everything before it was too late; An earthquake north of the city in July was the largest one for some time and did enough damage to make everyone nervous, while the meeting of the World Trade Organization in the fall brought riots and tear gas and fears that everything was about to fall to pieces. Survivalists gathered up supplies and even the skeptical purchased fresh batteries, some canned goods, and a couple of gallons of water — just in case. The

world didn't collapse, of course; society went on much as it ever had. At least, that's what happened in the dominant timeline.

1999 Seattle is filled with late-nineties grunge (a sort of 20th-century *fin de siècle*) and a sense that the revolution must be nigh as the world is ending anyway. The splinter's timeline runs from July 1, 1999 (the day before the earthquake and two weeks before Safeco Field opened) to January 7, 2000: the six months prior to the end of the world plus a week to watch it fall.

To a great extent, the splinter and the dominant timeline run in parallel. The main difference is in what happens on when the clock turns over on January 1st. In the main timeline, the world doesn't fall apart; the God-Machine won't let it. The angel designated to handle the problem eliminates it and the world continues as normal.

In the splinter, though, Y2K Fell and no one was there to save us. The errors multiply and escalate until, system by system, everything shuts down. The world loses the Industrial Age overnight without so much as a whimper, simply the sound of electronics powering down as it cascades across the globe, time zone by time zone. On January 7th, the time does a hard reset back to July 1st, and the whole thing starts again, the end of the world on an endless replay loop.

Y2K (ANGEL-DOMINANT TIMELINE)

You bring about your own downfall, but you will be spared. Watch as the glittering ball falls; I will catch it. Happy New Year.

Background: When the words "Y2K" were first recorded, the idea of a simple date error causing so many problems were impossible to believe. Who could actually think that the modern world could be brought to its knees by a couple of digits in a date field? We dislike replacing things that work, however, and software created in the dawn of the computer age persisted, either in its original forms or in descendent programs based on the ones that came before, with decisions to save computational space quietly haunting those programmers yet to come.

Faced with the prospect of so much disruptive chaos, the God-Machine began planning for this moment decades before, ensuring that the world would not go dark. An angel would arrive to fix the problems humanity had inflicted upon itself with its typical shortsighted carelessness. Y2K is the angel's designation, the word on everyone's lips, whether they want to fight against the oncoming darkness or dance in the ashes of the last millennium.

Description: Y2K appears as scrolling, amber strings of dates and code across an otherwise invisible androgynous human form. The contours of its body are obvious if you look closely — they're the display on which the code is shown — but any detail in its features is impossible to discern. When it speaks, its voice seems to echo from a thousand different directions and distances, as though it is in myriad locations at the same time. It speaks slowly and deliberately, as though concentrating both on the conversation and something else.

Methods: Y2K came into existence 30 minutes before midnight on New Year's Eve, 1999. He appeared following his summoning, walked into a control room, stepped into half-open tube, laid his hands on the command consoles before him, and plugged into the system. He has been there ever since, in stasis, largely unconscious of the world around him as he filters date requests and programs for date-related processes that would shut down systems and corrects them by adding himself as a called subroutine. He is the patch that fixes the bug, but the underlying bug in the code is still there. He can't leave and he can't unplug — his mission is to stay and keep everything from falling apart.

If Y2K were to be removed from the system, computer systems and networks would start falling apart. The subroutine these underlying software programs call to fix the problem — Y2K — is no longer available. These programs would hang waiting for an answer that, so long as he isn't plugged in, will never arrive. If removed from the system, he will attempt to get back to it by whatever means he has at his disposal.



Virtue: Punctual

Vice: Distracted

Rank: 4

Attributes: Power 11, Finesse 12, Resistance 10

Influence: Time 2, Programming 2

Corpus: 16

Willpower: 10

Size: 6

Speed: 28 (species factor 5)

Defense: 11

Initiative: 22

Armor: 0

Numina: Blast, Drain, Regenerate, Speed, Sign, Stalwart, Telekinesis

Manifestation: Discorporate, Materialize, Possess, Twilight Form

Max Essence: 25

Ban: If a character gives Y2K a full name, coordinates, and time down to the second, the angel will cause a single message to appear for that individual at that location at that time.

Bane: White crystal sand from a broken hourglass

Y2K (DEMON)

There are worse things than being without a cell phone, or a computer, or even electricity. If the world is so badly off that I have to spend the rest of eternity in a box filtering data, then maybe it deserves to not be saved. Sometimes things happen for a reason - I should know, after all.

Background: While Y2K in the dominant timeline stays and does his job, the Y2K who appears in the 1999 splinter rejected that outcome and Fell. For a few horrible days at the end of the 1999 splinter, the world slowly crashes and burns, then terminates and resets. He doesn't reset, however. He stays on, knowing what's coming but unable or unwilling to take up the task, and watches the world go dark. He works at the University of Washington as an adjunct professor, teaching computer science to evening students over and over again.

Description: In his Cover as Carson Thurber, he's a two-classes-a-week evening CompSci professor, an adjunct instructor teaching where he can, while he can. He has messy brown hair, glasses, a penchant for tweed blazers with the patches on the elbows, and broken-in jeans. When not teaching he's in coffee shops or museums or at concerts, drinking in what culture the Emerald City has to offer. He takes off the week before Christmas and is unavailable through any means until the following semester — not that it ever starts. In his own form, he has a glistening, almost transparent humanoid form, like partially opaque glass but slick to the touch. His eyes are as white as the rest of him, with no irises or pupils. He has no obvious weapons, but lines of blue and green, almost like the etchings on circuit boards, fade in and out of view under the surface on his body, like veins under skin.

Storytelling Hints: The Fallen Y2K is the only Y2K the 1999 splinter will ever have. Being a demon, he persists through the time reset. He has a nice life in the last year of the 1900s, with an apartment he's invested willpower in and some friends he makes each time, and the coffee shop down the street knows his order because he wants it that way. Because he's here, though, no angel manifests to stop the crash. He was that angel, and because there can't be two of him in the same place, no other angel will arrive to prevent it. He Fell, and now he gets to witness the consequences of that choice over and over again.

For the same reason, Y2K can't leave the 1999 splinter. His angel form exists and persists in the dominant timeline. If the angel were to die, perhaps he could cross over and get out of this pocket world, but he can't leave to do the job himself. By the same token, if he were to die, then his angel self might reappear in the splinter at the right time and not Fall, saving the world and possibly reintegrating the splinters. Whether angel or demon, somebody somewhere wants him gone, something he's well aware of — at least in demon form.

Virtue: Contrary

Vice: Punctual

Incarnation: Guardian

Agenda: Saboteur

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics (Computer Science) 2, Computer (Debugging) 4, Investigation 3, Occult 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Drive 2, Firearms (Shotgun) 2, Stealth 2

Social Skills: Empathy 2, Intimidation (Stare-Downs) 3, Persuasion 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 3

Merits: Bolthole (Easy Access, No Twilight) 4, Danger Sense, Eidetic Memory, Fast Reflexes 1, Fleet of Foot

Health: 7

Primum: 2

Demonic Form: Clairvoyant Sight, Electric Jolt, Electrical Sight, Inhuman Intelligence, Multiple Images, Slippery Body, Phasing

Embeds: Download Knowledge, Efficiency, Lost in the Crowd, Read Hostility, Strike First

Exploits: Stalking Horse



Aether/per turn: 11/2
Willpower: 6
Cover: 7
Size: 5
Speed: 10
Defense: 5
Initiative: 7
Armor: 0
Glitches: None

1999 Fractures

The fractures for 1999 are the most difficult to find of any of the splinters, primarily because they move. Whether this is some instability, whether there's just one fracture that appears in different locations, or whether these are actually separate rifts is a matter for Inquisitors to suss out. At least one demon has posited that there may have been others, but the God-Machine has attempted to close off access to them for fear of cross-contamination. No one has presented any convincing evidence to confirm this theory, but much like the fears of Y2K, it's difficult for demons to dismiss it entirely.

The 1999 fractures have no set location and can appear anywhere within the NE quadrant. With that in mind, they appear in some places more often than others. Notably, as the splinter closest to the modern day, many of the crossover locations look very similar on either side of the rift. Once the clock rolls over to Jan 1, 2000, all rifts close for the remainder of the cycle. Anyone on either side cannot cross until the timeline resets, assuming they all survive the week — and on the heels of the WTO civil unrest and police crackdown, that's not something that can be taken as read.

The Fin Project, Magnuson Park: The fracture to 1999 seems to skip playfully among all the former plane tailfins sticking out of the ground like so many land sharks seeking prey. Something about this "swords into plowshares" art installation seems to draw the fracture to it, though rarely in the same exact location twice.

Suzzalo Library Stacks: The library staff doesn't entirely discourage students from going into the stacks on their own, but it is true that they will happily find what you want for you after you reserve it and let you pick it up at the desk. This is due in part to the occasional disappearance in the stacks when a student wanders through an open rift somewhere across from the Reading Room. The time and place of a rift opening is unpredictable at best, but something about heavily overcast days and rare thunderstorms increases the risk dramatically.



Jim slid his phone back into his pocket. The women glared at him, but what were they going to do? Call the police because he took a picture? Fuck 'em.

One of them took a step toward him and he hurried away. He didn't want to argue. Not in public. Not in person. He slipped into an alley and picked up his pace. The parking lot was just at the other end.

Jim got in his car and pulled out his phone, scrolling back through the pictures he'd taken that day. He'd gotten a couple of upskirts, a couple of good cleavage shots, even a nip slip — *that* was going on the site. He got to the last picture he'd taken, the two women standing outside the bar. They looked like twins, which was why he'd taken their picture in the first place.

But looking at the picture now ... it *meant* something. He didn't know how that happened. It was a picture of two women outside a bar. But looking at it, staring at it, it meant "Talk to them."

He pulled his car around the bar. They were still there. He rolled down his window and leaned out. "Um, hi."

They both looked at him, one with an expression of pure malice, the other wearing a slight smile. It was unnerving.

"Look, I saw you while I was walking by here before." He trailed off. The angry one didn't respond, but the smiling one nodded encouragingly. "I figured I'd take a shot —"

Something hit him in the chest. He looked down and saw blood gushing from a hole just to the left of his sternum. "What — "

The angry one leaned in and grabbed his phone from the dashboard. "You took a shot," she said. "Hope it works out for you."

"You ..."

"Wasn't me," she said. "You said it. I just changed what you meant." She nodded up the street. "I saw an ambulance about a block up. Think you can make it?"

Jim's foot found the accelerator and the car started to move. He struggled to breathe, and tasted blood in his mouth. His grip on the steering wheel grew weak.

Back at the bar, the demons dropped their expressions, becoming perfectly identical again. "Did you really see an ambulance?" one said.

"Sure," said the other. "Yesterday."

appendix two:
RULES REVISIONS

"The Clerk ran his expert finger down the traffic-control sheet. "They're adjusting Sector T137 this morning. Starting at exactly nine o'clock." He glanced at his pocket watch. "Three hours alteration. Will finish by noon."

– Philip K. Dick, "The Adjustment Team"

In the years since the **World of Darkness Rulebook** was released, dozens of supplements and eight game lines have added to the Storytelling system. In the "blue book" line, as well as **Vampire**, **Werewolf**, **Mage**, **Promethean**, **Changeling**, **Hunter**, **Geist**, and **Mummy**, we've invented new mechanics to emphasize new themes and play styles. Some of those mechanics have been carried over to further books. **Werewolf** defined rules for spirits that were used in almost every line, **Hunter**'s tiers have been adopted by several other games, and the **Mirrors** supplement for World of Darkness introduced shards. The core Storytelling system, though, has remained the same.

The remaining part of this book is taken up with updates to Storytelling — the changes we feel, after eight years' experience, are needed to tighten the rules up for the intended setting going forward. This isn't a rejection of what's gone before, but the end result of our increasing familiarity with the Storytelling system and how it's used in play. Some additional rules changes not necessary for **Demon** but used to play mortal characters, can be found in the **God-Machine Chronicle**. The rules update portion of this book is available for free download at rpg.drivethrustuff.com.

Character Creation and Advancement

These rules supplement the character creation rules and replace the experience point rules in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**.

Attributes, Skills, and Merits

Purchasing the fifth dot in an Attribute, Skill, or Merit does not cost two points at character creation.

Note on Specialties

You may only purchase one instance of a given Specialty, although multiple Specialties may apply to a given roll. For example, Surgery and Cardiology may apply to a Medicine roll to perform heart surgery.

Aspirations

Determine Aspirations as part of the "Final Touches" stage of character creation. Choose three Aspirations for your character.

Aspirations are goals for your character. They're also statements to your Storyteller that show the types of stories you want to play through.

Aspirations are simple statements of intent; things that can be accomplished within the scope of the game you're playing. If you're playing a single session, be sure to choose realistic and short-term goals or goals that are already very close to fruition. If you're playing a single story arc that should span a few weeks of game time, choose similar short-term goals, with one expressing longer-term interests. Even if you're set to play a game you intend on running a year or more, don't choose more than one very long-term goal. Ideally you should be able to accomplish at least one of these Aspirations per game session.

It's important to phrase Aspirations as active achievements or accomplishments. Do not phrase them as avoidances. "Do not betray my friends" isn't really an appropriate Aspiration. Instead, consider "Prove my loyalty to my friends." Phrasing as an action as opposed to a lack of action helps to determine when the Aspiration is met and when it should be rewarded.

When choosing Aspirations, use them to help to customize your character and give her identity and purpose outside of whatever plots the Storyteller cooks up. Find a balance between being general enough that the statements can be fulfilled realistically, and being specific enough to inform on your character's identity. Use the listed examples as a jumping off point.

In many World of Darkness games, we explore the strange and horrific. This can often mean visiting those things upon our characters. If you're interested in seeing certain things happen to your character, note them as Aspirations. Or if you expect something to occur, it would be worth noting it. If you know tonight's story will deal with an angry ghost with a penchant for eating human flesh and you never seem to roll well when your character's using her Medium Merit, it's worth using as an Aspiration. In that example, you might phrase it, "Fail in communicating with the dead." That way, while your character might fail in her efforts against the ghost, you'll be rewarded for achieving the Aspiration.

SAMPLE ASPIRATIONS

- Achieve a promotion at work
- Make something that'll outlast me
- Prove my loyalty to the team
- Show myself I'm not cursed
- Give something important to someone in need
- Put myself in mortal danger
- Forget responsibility and enjoy myself
- Get a new car
- Show restraint when tempted
- Indulge my addiction
- Say my last goodbyes
- Volunteer at the cancer center
- Meet a ghost
- Interview my idol
- Plant a garden
- Show respect to my enemies
- Establish a new identity
- Learn what hurts shapeshifters
- Have a one-night stand
- Escape jail
- Replace my broken guitar
- Tell a long-kept secret
- Say no without regrets

Storytellers, pay close attention to players' Aspirations. Aspirations are one of the best ways for a player to communicate her expectations for your stories. If you're planning a cold and heartless zombie-slaying mission full of action and suspense, but a character has contemplative, brooding, romantic, and cerebral Aspirations, think of how you might cater your intended story to his particular interests. You don't necessarily have to scrap your plans. Instead, note minor details and add Storyteller characters that can help the players fulfill their characters' Aspirations.

Changing Aspirations

For the first session of play, you might not have a good enough sense of your character to choose Aspirations. We recommend you give it a try anyway, and if during the first session the Aspirations you've chosen just don't fit with the way you're playing the character, change them. No harm, no foul.

After you've started playing the character, you might still find that an Aspiration becomes inappropriate or that it becomes impossible to fulfill. For example, a character might have a long-term Aspiration of "buy back our ancestral home." During the third chapter of the story, the home burns down. Buying it back is now impossible. Or, for a less dramatic twist on that premise, what if the character discovers that his family has been using that land to conduct unholy overtures and sacrifices to the God-Machine for decades. Maybe the character doesn't *want* the place anymore. What does that mean for the Aspiration?

If circumstances warrant it, a player can change Aspirations between chapters with the Storyteller's approval. This shouldn't become a way to ditch goals that aren't coming together quickly enough. Rather, it's an option to keep the character's goals in line with the natural flow of the story.

LONG-TERM ASPIRATIONS

- Put my daughter's ghost to rest
- Take control of the company
- Become a parent
- Take down the mayor
- Outlive my boss
- Pass on my most important skill
- Become fully independent
- Bring an end to the Chosen of Mammon
- Find the witch that cursed my family
- Become independently wealthy
- Master my chosen art
- Become a vampire
- Find my soul mate
- Prove my father was wrong about me
- Buy back our ancestral home
- Show the world that fairies are real
- Open a branch in three nations
- Become psychic
- Uncover my mother's killer's identity
- Find an unknown biblical gospel
- Prove my uncle wasn't insane
- Discover the cure for mortality

Virtue and Vice in Play

When a character acts in accordance with his Virtue or Vice during a scene, his sense of self is reinforced and his reserves of inner strength are refreshed.

If the Storyteller judges that your character's actions during a scene reflect his Vice, he regains one spent Willpower point. Note that in a change to the rules in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, acting on a Vice does **not** need to pose difficulty or risk to your character.

If the Storyteller judges that your character's actions during a scene reflected her Virtue while posing her difficulty or risk, she regains all spent Willpower. She may regain Willpower up to twice per chapter/game session in this way.

Multiple Virtues or Vices

Although even the most immoral characters still have a Virtue and the most saintly still suffer the temptations of a Vice, some characters identify so strongly with doing the selfish thing or risking themselves on behalf of others that they develop a second trait, as represented by one of the following Merits.

Virtuous (• •)

Effect: Your character is a light of good in the World of Darkness. She has two Virtues. The limitations of how many times she may refresh Willpower using a Virtue remain the same, but it's up to you which Virtue she uses each time.

Vice-Ridden (• •)

Effect: Your character is one of the worst examples of humanity in the World of Darkness. He has two Vices, although he may still only regain one Willpower per scene in which he indulges himself.

Experience

These rules replace the **World of Darkness Rulebook** experience point system. They integrate with the Aspirations, Conditions, and dramatic failure systems in this book. They also shift character progression to a more mathematically linear path, removing costs that increase with higher ranks.

Throughout the game, Aspirations, Conditions, and certain other criteria allow you to "take a Beat." A Beat, in dramatic terms, is time enough for the audience to recognize a plot point or a change for a character. For our purposes, think of it as a unit of drama. Once you've taken five Beats, you gain an Experience.

One of these Experiences can be used to purchase one Merit dot or a Skill Specialty. Two of these buy one Skill dot. Four add an Attribute dot.

Rate of Return

To pull the curtain back for a moment, Willpower is the Storytelling system's main "resource" mechanic. The various supernatural games (**Demon** included) all add additional point-spend pools, and there's always Health, but Willpower is the one players spend when they *want to ensure their characters succeed*. It's a way of marking an action as significant within the fiction of the game, but it relies on the Storyteller granting enough Willpower gains that the players feel confident in spending.

Several game mechanics are predicated on this pattern of spending — for example, it's very much intentional that it takes Willpower to outright kill someone in most circumstances. We've adjusted the rate of Willpower return in this rules revision to reflect how often players should be spending it. For example, surrendering in combat grants a small Willpower bonus, and Vice no longer requires significant risk to the character.

On average, characters should regain a point of Willpower every few scenes, depending on how easily they fulfill their Vices. They'll be spending it quicker than that, but the diminishing resource until a character is exhausted is another part of the game, modeling the genre of increasingly tired and desperate investigators confronting the supernatural, making the full Willpower refreshes from Virtue special. A character shouldn't always fulfill their Virtue in a game session — once every few stories is enough in big dramatic moments. We removed the risk limit from Vice to allow Storytellers to keep characters "topped up" in service to the game. If your players over-spend, give them easy opportunities to fulfill Vice. Keep the small gains trickling in to prevent players from sitting on Willpower to their characters' detriment, and look for the right point to showcase Virtue.

Criteria for Beats

Each time your character fulfills one of the following criteria, take a Beat. Certain criteria have limits: for example, you may only gain one Beat for a Dramatic Failure in a scene.

- If your character fulfills an Aspiration, take a Beat. At the end of the game session, replace the Aspiration. Choosing

OPTIONAL RULE: GROUP BEATS

Under these rules, players who understand the rules and work toward resolving Conditions and Aspirations will receive the most Beats and therefore Experiences. While your troupe may appreciate this reward system for learning and using the rules, some players would rather just play their characters and only glance down at the character sheet when the Storyteller asks them to roll something. Either approach is fine, but if you have a mix of the two approaches, characters can advance in a lopsided fashion.

One solution is for all Beats to go into a pot (use coins or beads or spare dice to represent them). At the end of the chapter, Beats get divided evenly among the players. This way, all players are encouraged to help one another realize Aspirations, resolve Conditions and otherwise take Beats. This should help the players work as a team, even if the characters don't necessary need to.

a new Aspiration is an excellent activity between games or to handle before the next game session.

- Some rolls and powers may impart Conditions on your character. Each Condition has criteria for resolution, usually requiring a difficult choice for the character. If resolved, take a Beat. You may only take one Beat for a Condition in a given scene.
- Once per scene, if you fail a roll, you may opt to take a Dramatic Failure instead. If you do so, take a Beat. Certain Conditions can have you take an automatic failure as part of their resolutions; you may make these failures Dramatic and take two Beats.
- If your character takes damage in one of her last (rightmost) Health boxes, take a Beat.
- The Storyteller can choose to award a Beat for any exceptional example of roleplaying, tactics or character development. If this involves more than one character, all of them should receive the Beat.
- At the end of any game session, take a Beat.

Merits

This section replaces the Merits section in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**. It includes all of the Merits from that book (though the systems have been revised in many case), as well as various Merits from other World of Darkness books. If a Merit from the **World of Darkness Rulebook** is not reprinted here, it was deliberately omitted because the Merit was redundant or has been reworked into something else.

Style Merits

Merits marked as Style Merits allow access to specialized maneuvers. Each maneuver is a prerequisite for the next in its sequence. So if a Style Merit has a three-dot maneuver and a four-dot maneuver, you must purchase the three-dot version before accessing the four-dot.

Sanctity of Merits

While Merits represent things within the game and your character, they're really an out-of-character resource, a function of the character creation and advancement mechanics. These Merits often represent things that can go away. Retainers can be killed. Mentors can get impatient and stop dispensing wisdom. So while Merits may represent temporary facets of your character, Merit points continue to exist. At the end of any chapter where your character has lost Merits, you can replace them with another Merit.

For example, your character has three-dot Retainer, a loyal dog, and an eldritch horror eats that dog out in the woods. At the end of that chapter, you may re-allocate those Retainer dots. You may choose to purchase Safe Place, to reflect your character's choice to bunker down from the monster, and perhaps Direction Sense (one dot) so your character is less likely to get lost in those woods in the future. When the character leaves his Safe Place, you can replace those two dots with something else.

When replacing a Merit, consider what makes sense in the story. Pursue the new Merit during the course of the chapter if possible, and make the new tie something less superficial than a dot or two on a sheet.

With Storyteller permission, you may "cash in" a Merit voluntarily and replace it with Experiences. This should not be used as a way to purchase a Merit, take advantage of its benefits, and then cash it out for something else. If a Merit has run its course and no longer makes sense for your character, however, you may use those points elsewhere.

Merits such as Ambidextrous, Eidetic Memory and the various Fighting Style Merits reflect abilities and knowledge that your character has and therefore shouldn't be cashed in or replaced. Then again, if an Ambidextrous character loses his left hand ....

Mental Merits

Area of Expertise (•)

Prerequisite: Resolve • • and one Skill Specialty

Effect: Your character is uncommonly specialized in one area. Choose a Specialty to assign to this Merit. Forgo the +1 bonus afforded by a Specialty in exchange for a +2.

Common Sense (• • •)

Effect: Your character has an exceptionally sound and rational mind. With a moment's thought, she can weigh potential courses of action and outcomes. Once per chapter as an instant action, you may ask the Storyteller one of the following questions about a task at hand or course of action. Roll Wits + Composure. If you succeed, the Storyteller must answer to the best of her ability. If you fail, you get no answer. With an exceptional success, you can ask an additional question.

- What is the worst choice?
- What do I stand to lose here?
- What's the safest choice?
- Am I chasing a worthless lead?

Danger Sense (• •)

Effect: Your character's reflexes are honed to the point where nothing's shocking. You gain a +2 modifier on reflexive Wits + Composure rolls for your character to detect an impending ambush.

Direction Sense (•)

Effect: Your character has an innate sense of direction and is always aware of her location in space. She always knows which direction she faces and never suffers penalties to navigate or find her way.

Eidetic Memory (• •)

Effect: Your character recalls events and details with pinpoint accuracy. You do not have to make rolls for your character to remember past experiences. When making Intelligence + Composure (or relevant Skill) rolls to recall minute facts from swaths of information, take a +2 bonus.

Encyclopedic Knowledge (• •)

Effect: Choose a Skill. Due to an immersion in academia, pop culture, or obsession with a hobby, your character has collected limitless factoids about the topic, even if she has no dots in the Skill.

You can make an Intelligence + Wits roll at any time your character is dealing with her area of interest. On a successful roll, the Storyteller must give a relevant fact or detail about the issue at hand. Your character knows this fact, but you must explain within the scope of your character's background why she knows it. For example, for Encyclopedic Knowledge: Medicine: "Do you remember that time on that show, when the doctor said it doesn't manifest before puberty?"

Eye for the Strange (• •)

Prerequisite: Resolve • •, Occult •

Effect: While your character does not necessarily possess a breadth of knowledge about the supernatural, she knows the otherworldly when she sees it. By perusing evidence she can determine whether something comes from natural or supernatural origin. Roll Intelligence + Composure. With a success, the Storyteller must tell you if the scene has a supernatural cause and provide one piece of found information that confirms the answer. With an exceptional success, she must give you a bit of supernatural folklore that suggests what type of creature caused the problem. If the problem was mundane, an exceptional success gives an ongoing +2 to all rolls to investigate the event, due to her redoubled certainty in its natural causation.

Fast Reflexes (• to • • •)

Prerequisite: Wits • • • or Dexterity • • •

Effect: Your character's reflexes impress and astound; she's always fast to react. +1 Initiative per dot.

Good Time Management (•)

Prerequisite: Academics • • or Science • •

Effect: Your character has vast experience managing complex tasks, keeping schedules, and meeting deadlines. When taking an extended action, halve the time required between rolls.

Holistic Awareness (•)

Effect: Your character is skilled at non-traditional healing methods. While scientific minds might scoff, she can provide basic medical care with natural means. She knows what herbs can stem an infection and what minerals will stave off a minor sickness. Unless your patient suffers wound penalties from lethal or aggravated wounds, you do not need traditional medical equipment to stabilize and treat injuries. With access to woodlands, a greenhouse, or other source of diverse flora, a Wits + Survival roll allows your character to gather all necessary supplies.

Indomitable (• •)

Prerequisite: Resolve • • •

Your character possesses an iron will. The powers of the supernatural have little bearing on her behavior. She can stand up to a vampire's mind control, a witch's charms, or a ghost's gifts of fright. Any time a supernatural creature uses a power to influence your character's thoughts or emotions, add two dice to the dice pool to contest it. If the roll is resisted, instead



subtract two dice from the monster's dice pool. Note that this only affects mental influence and manipulation from a supernatural origin. A vampire with a remarkable Manipulation + Persuasion score is just as likely to convince your character to do something using mundane tricks.

Interdisciplinary Specialty (•)

Prerequisite: Skill at • • • or higher with a Specialty

Effect: Choose a Specialty that your character possesses when you purchase this Merit. You can apply the +1 from that Specialty on any Skill with at least one dot, provided it's justifiable within the scope of the fiction. For example, a doctor with a Medicine Specialty in Anatomy may be able to use it when targeting a specific body part with Weaponry, but could not with a general strike.

Language (•)

Effect: Your character is skilled with an additional language beyond her native tongue. Choose a language each time you buy this Merit. Your character can speak, read, and write in that language.

Library (• to • • •)

Effect: Your character has access to a plethora of information about a given topic. When purchasing this Merit, choose a Mental Skill. The Library covers that purview. On any extended roll involving the Skill in question, add the dots in this Merit.

This Merit can be purchased multiple times to reflect different Skills. Its benefits can be shared by various characters with permission.

Meditative Mind (• , • • , or • • • •)

Effect: Your character's meditation is far more fulfilling than for other characters. With the one-dot version of this Merit, the character does not suffer environment penalties to mediation (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 51), even from wound penalties.

With the two-dot version, when the character has successfully meditated, she gains a +3 bonus on any Resolve + Composure rolls during the same day as she's steeled herself against the things of the world that would shake her foundation.

At the four-dot level, she only needs a single success to gain the benefits of meditation for the day, instead of the normal four.

Multilingual (•)

Effect: Your character has a strong affinity for language acquisition. Each time you purchase this Merit, choose two languages. Your character can speak conversationally in those languages. With an Intelligence + Academics roll, she may also read enough of the language to understand context.

If you purchase the Language Merit for either of these languages, replace the Multilingual language. For example, if you have Multilingual (French, Italian), and purchase Language: Italian, you may choose to take Multilingual (French, Portuguese).

Patient (•)

Effect: Your character knows how to pace herself and take the time to do the job right the first time. When taking an extended action, you may make two additional rolls above what your Attribute + Skill would allow.

Professional Training (• to •••••)

Effect: Your character has extensive training in a particular profession, which offers distinct advantages in a handful of fields. When choosing this Merit, choose or create a Profession for your character (see the sidebar). Mark the two Asset Skills on your character sheet. The advantages of Professional Training relate directly to those Asset Skills.

- • **Networking:** At the first level of Professional Training, your character builds connections within her chosen field. Take two dots of Contacts relating to that field.
- •• **Continuing Education:** With repeated efforts in her field of choice, your character tends toward greater successes. When making a roll with her Asset Skills, she benefits from the 9-again quality.
- ••• **Breadth of Knowledge:** Due to advancement in her field, she's picked up a number of particular bits of information and skill unique to her work. Choose a third Asset Skill and take two Specialties in your character's Asset Skills.
- •••• **On the Job Training:** With the resources at her disposal, your character has access to extensive educational tools and mentorship available. Take a Skill dot in an Asset Skill. Whenever you purchase a new Asset Skill dot, take a Beat.
- ••••• **The Routine:** With such extensive experience in her field, her Asset Skills have been honed to a fine edge and she's almost guaranteed at least a marginal success. Before rolling, spend a Willpower point to apply the rote action quality to an Asset Skill. This allows you to reroll all the failed dice on the first roll.

Tolerance for Biology (••)

Prerequisite: Resolve •••

Effect: Most people turn away at the sight of blood, other bodily fluids, or exotic biology. Your character has seen enough that nothing turns her stomach. When other characters must resist shock or physical repulsion from the disgusting and morbid, your character stands her ground. You do not need to make Composure, Stamina, or Resolve rolls to withstand the biologically strange. This doesn't mean she's immune to fear; she's just used to nature in all its nasty forms.

Trained Observer (• or •••)

Prerequisite: Wits ••• or Composure •••

PROFESSIONS

Here is a list of the most common Professions, and their Asset Skills. Feel free to create your own to suit the needs of your characters and stories. Also, you may adapt the Asset Skills as fit. For example, your police officer might be more proficient with Politics and Intimidation than Firearms and Streetwise.

Profession	Asset Skills
Academic	Academics, Science
Artist	Crafts, Expression
Athlete	Athletics, Medicine
Cop	Streetwise, Firearms
Criminal	Larceny, Streetwise
Detective	Empathy, Investigation
Doctor	Empathy, Medicine
Engineer	Crafts, Science
Hacker	Computer, Science
Hit Man	Firearms, Stealth
Journalist	Expression, Investigation
Laborer	Athletics, Crafts
Occultist	Investigation, Occult
Politician	Politics, Subterfuge
Professional	Academics, Persuasion
Religious Leader	Academics, Occult
Scientist	Investigation, Science
Socialite	Politics, Socialize
Stuntman	Athletics, Drive
Survivalist	Animal Ken, Survival
Soldier	Firearms, Survival
Technician	Crafts, Investigation
Thug	Brawl, Intimidation
Vagrant	Streetwise, Survival

Effect: Your character has spent years in the field, catching tiny details and digging for secrets. She might not have a better chance of finding things, but she has a better chance of finding *important* things. Any time you make a Perception roll (usually Wits + Composure), you benefit from the 9-again quality. With the three-dot version, you get 8-again.

Physical Merits

Ambidextrous (• • •)

Effect: Your character does not suffer the –2 penalty for using his off-hand in combat or to perform other actions. *Available only at character creation.*

Crack Driver (• • or • • •)

Prerequisite: Drive • • •

Effect: Your character's an ace at the wheel and nothing shakes her concentration. So long as she's not taking any actions other than driving (and keeping the car safe), add her Composure to any rolls to drive. Any rolls to disable her vehicle suffer a penalty equal to her Composure as well. With the three-dot version, she may take a Drive action reflexively once per turn.

Demolisher (• to • • •)

Prerequisite: Strength • • • or Intelligence • • •

Effect: Your character has an innate feel for the weak points in objects. When damaging an object, she ignores one point of the object's Durability per dot in this Merit.

Double Jointed (• •)

Prerequisite: Dexterity • • •

Effect: Your character might have been a contortionist or spent time practicing yoga. She can dislodge joints when need be. She automatically escapes from any mundane bonds without a roll. When grappled, subtract her Dexterity from any rolls to overpower her as long as she's not taking any aggressive actions.

Fleet of Foot (• to • • •)

Prerequisite: Athletics • •

Effect: Your character is remarkably quick and runs far faster than her frame suggests. She gains +1 Speed per dot; anyone pursuing her suffers a –1 per dot to any foot chase rolls.

Giant (• • •)

Effect: Your character is massive. She's well over six feet tall and crowds part when she approaches. She's Size 6 and gains +1 Health. *Available only at character creation.*

Drawback: Buying clothing is a nightmare. Fitting in small spaces is difficult at best.

Hardy (• to • • •)

Prerequisite: Stamina • • •

Effect: Your character's body goes further than it rightfully should. Add the dots in this Merit to any rolls to resist disease, poison, deprivation, unconsciousness, or suffocation.

Iron Stamina (• to • • •)

Prerequisites: Stamina • • • or Resolve • • •

Effect: Each dot eliminates a negative modifier (on a one-for-one basis) when resisting the effects of fatigue or injury. For example: a character with Iron Stamina • • is able to ignore up to a –2 modifier brought on by fatigue. The Merit also counteracts the effects of wound penalties. So, if all of your character's Health boxes are filled (which normally imposes a –3 penalty to his actions) and he has Iron Stamina •, those penalties are reduced to –2. This Merit cannot be used to gain positive modifiers for actions, only to cancel out negative ones.

Parkour (• to • • • • • , Style)

Prerequisites: Dexterity • • •, Athletics • •

Your character is a trained and proficient free-runner. Free-running is the art of moving fluidly through urban environments with complex leaps, bounds, running tricks, and vaulting. This is the type of sport popularized in modern action films, where characters are unhindered by fences, walls, construction equipment, cars, or anything else the city puts in their ways.

Flow (•): Your character reacts instinctively to any obstacles with leaps, jumps, and scaling techniques. When in a foot chase, subtract your Parkour from the successes needed to pursue or evade. Ignore environmental penalties to Athletics rolls equal to your Parkour rating.

Cat Leap (• •): Your character falls with outstanding grace. When using a Dexterity + Athletics roll to mitigate damage from falling (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 179), your character gains one automatic success. Additionally, add your Parkour rating to the threshold of damage that can be removed through this roll. Parkour will not mitigate damage from a terminal velocity fall.

Wall Run (• • •): When climbing, your character can run upward for some distance before having to traditionally climb. Without rolling, your character scaled 10 feet + five feet per dot of Athletics as an instant action, rather than the normal 10 feet.

Expert Traceur (• • • •): Parkour has become second nature for your character. By spending a Willpower point, you may designate one Athletics roll to run, jump, or climb as a rote action (reroll all failed dice once). On any turn you use this ability, you may not apply your character's Defense to oncoming attacks.

Freeflow (• • • • •): Your character's Parkour is now muscle memory. She can move without thinking in a zen-like state. The character must successfully meditate (see p. 51 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**) in order to establish Freeflow. Once established, your character is capable of taking Athletics actions reflexively once per turn. By spending a point of Willpower on an Athletics roll in a foot chase, gain three successes instead of three dice.

Quick Draw (•)

Prerequisites: Wits • • •, a Specialty in the weapon or fighting style chosen

Effect: Choose a Specialty in Weaponry or Firearms when you purchase this Merit. Your character has trained enough in that weapon or style that pulling the weapon is her first reflex. Drawing or holstering that weapon is considered a reflexive action, and can be done any time her Defense applies.

Sleight of Hand (• •)

Prerequisite: Larceny • • •

Effect: Your character can pick locks and pockets without even thinking about it. She can take one Larceny-based instant action reflexively in a given turn. As well, her Larceny actions go unnoticed unless someone is trying specifically to catch her.

Small-Framed (• •)

Effect: Your character is diminutive. She's not even five feet tall and it's easy to walk into her without noticing. She's Size 4 and thus has one fewer Health box. She gains +2 to any rolls to hide or go unnoticed. This bonus might apply any time being smaller would be an advantage, such as crawling through smaller spaces. *Available only at character creation.*

Drawback: In addition to the lower Health, your character might be overlooked or not taken seriously by some people.

Social Merits

Many of these Merits use the Social rules (p 314), influencing Doors and other facets of the interaction.

Allies (• to • • • • •)

Effect: Allies help your character. They might be friends, employees, associates, or people your character has blackmailed. Each instance of this Merit represents one type of ally. This could be in an organization, a society, a clique, or an individual. Examples include the police, a secret society, crime, unions, local politics, and the academic community. Each purchase has its own rating. Your character might have Allies (Masons) • •, Allies (Carter Crime Family) • • •, and Allies (Catholic Church) •.



Each dot represents a layer of influence in the group. One dot would constitute small favors and passing influence. Three could offer considerable influence, such as the overlooking of a misdemeanor charge by the police. Five dots stretch the limits of the organization's influence, as its leaders put their own influence on the line for the character. This could include things such as massive insider training or fouling up a felony investigation. No matter the request, it has to be something that organization could accomplish.

The Storyteller assigns a rating between one and five to any favor asked. A character can ask for favors that add up to her Allies rating without penalty in one chapter. If she extends her influence beyond that, her player must roll Manipulation + Persuasion + Allies, with a penalty equal to the favor's rating. If the roll is successful, the group does as requested. Failed or successful, the character loses a dot of Allies. This dot may return at the end of the chapter (see Sanctity of Merits, on p. 287.) On a dramatic failure, the organization resents her and seeks retribution. On an exceptional success, she doesn't lose the dot.

One additional favor a character can ask of her Allies is to block another character's Allies, Contacts, Mentor, Retainer, or Status (if she knows the character possesses the relevant Merit). The rating is equal to the Merit dots blocked. As before, no roll is necessary unless the target's Merit exceeds the character's Allies. If the block succeeds, the character cannot use the Merit during the same chapter.

Alternate Identity (••, ••• or •••)

Effect: Your character has established an alternate identity. The level of this Merit determines the amount of scrutiny it can withstand. At one dot, the identity is superficial and unofficial. For example, your character uses an alias with a simple costume and adopts an accent. She hasn't established the necessary paperwork to even approach a bureaucratic background check, let alone pass. At two dots, she's supported her identity with paperwork and identification. It's not liable to stand up to extensive research, but it'll turn away private investigators and internet hobbyists. At three dots, the identity can pass thorough inspection. The identity has been deeply entrenched in relevant databases, with subtle flourishes and details to make it seem real even to trained professionals.

The Merit also reflects time the character has spent honing the persona. At one or two dots, she gains a +1 to all Subterfuge rolls to defend the identity. At three dots, she gains +2.

This Merit can be purchased multiple times. Each time representing an additional identity.

Anonymity (• to •••••)

Prerequisites: Cannot have Fame.

Effect: Your character lives off the grid. This means purchases must be made with cash or falsified credit cards. She eschews identification. She avoids any official authoritative influence in her affairs. Any attempts to find her by paper trail suffer a –1 penalty per dot purchased in this Merit.

Drawback: Your character cannot purchase the Fame Merit. This also may limit Status purchases, if the character cannot provide sufficient identification for the roles she wishes to take.

Barfly (••)

Prerequisite: Socialize ••

Effect: Your character is a natural in the bar environment and can procure an open invitation wherever she wishes. Whereas most characters would require rolls to blend into social functions they don't belong in, she doesn't; she belongs. Rolls to identify her as an outsider suffer her Socialize as a penalty.

Contacts (• to •••••)

Effect: Contacts provide your character with information. Each dot in this Merit represents a sphere or organization with which the character can garner information. For example, a character with Contacts ••• might have Bloggers, Drug Dealers, and Financial Speculators for connections. Contacts do not provide services, only information. This may be face-to-face, email, by telephone, or even by séance in some strange instances.

Garnering information via Contacts requires a Manipulation + Social Skill roll, depending on the method the character uses. This Merit can either be used generally, in which case only the field is necessary, or it can be personalized by identifying an individual within the field whom the character can call. If using the latter method, the Storyteller should give a bonus or penalty, dependent on how relevant the information is to that particular Contact, whether accessing the information is dangerous, and if the character has maintained good relations or done favors for the Contact. These modifiers should range from –3 to +3 in most cases. If successful, the Contact provides the information.

One use of a Contact is to dig dirt on another character. A Contact can find another character's Social Merits and any relevant Conditions (Embarrassing Secret is a prime example.)

A character can have more than five Contacts, but the Merit's rating is limited to five, for the purposes of Allies blocking.

Fame (• to •••)

Effect: Your character is recognized within a certain sphere for a certain skill, or because of some past action, or just a stroke of luck. This can mean favors and attention, but it can also mean negative attention and scrutiny. When choosing the Merit, define what your character is known for. As a rule of thumb, one dot means local recognition or reputation within a confined subculture. Two dots means regional recognition by a wide swath of people. Three dots means worldwide recognition to anyone who might have been exposed to the source of the fame. Each dot adds a die to any Social rolls among those who are impressed by your character's celebrity.

Drawback: Any rolls to find or identify the character enjoy a +1 bonus per dot of the Merit. If the character has Alternate Identity, she can mitigate this drawback. A character with Fame cannot have the Anonymity Merit.

Fast-Talking (• to •••••, Style)

Prerequisites: Manipulation •••, Subterfuge ••

Your character talks circles around listeners. She speaks a mile a minute and often leaves her targets reeling, but nodding in agreement.

Always Be Closing (•): With the right leading phrases, your character can direct a mark to say what she wants, when she wants. This trips the mark into vulnerable positions. When a mark contests or resists your character's Social interactions, apply a –1 to their Resolve or Composure.

Jargon (••): Your character confuses her mark using complex terminology. You may apply one relevant Specialty to any Social roll you make, even if the Specialty isn't tied to the Skill in use.

Devil's Advocacy (•••): Your character often poses arguments she doesn't agree with in order to challenge a mark's position and keep him from advancing discussion. You can reroll one failed Subterfuge roll per scene.

Salting (••••): Your character can position herself so a mark pursues a non-issue or something unimportant to her. When your character opens a Door using conversation (Persuasion, Subterfuge, Empathy, etc.) you may spend a Willpower point to immediately open another Door.

The Nigerian Scam (•••••): Your character can take advantage of her mark's greed and zeal. When the mark does particularly well, it's because your character was there to set him up and to subsequently tear him down. If a target regains Willpower from his Vice while your character is present, you may immediately roll Manipulation + Subterfuge to open a Door, regardless of the interval or impression level.

Fixer (••)

Prerequisite: Contacts ••, Wits •••

Effect: Your character is somebody that knows people. She can not only get in touch with the right people to do a job, but she can get them at the best possible prices. When hiring a service, reduce the Availability score of the service by one dot.

Hobbyist Clique (••)

Prerequisite: Membership in a clique. All members must possess this Merit and the chosen Skill at ••+

Effect: Your character is part of a group of hobbyists that specialize in one area, as represented by a Skill. It may be a book club, a coven, a political party, or any other interest. When the group's support is available, you benefit from the 9-again quality on rolls involving the group's chosen Skill. As well, the clique offers two additional dice on any extended actions involving that Skill.

Drawback: This Merit requires upkeep. You must attend at least monthly, informal meetings to maintain the benefits of Hobbyist Clique.

Inspiring (•••)

Prerequisite: Presence •••

Effect: Your character's passion inspires those around her to greatness. With a few words, she can redouble a group's confidence or move them to action.

Make a Presence + Expression roll. A small clique of listeners levies a –1 penalty, a small crowd a –2, and a large crowd a –3. Listeners gain the Inspired Condition. The character may not use this Merit on herself.

Iron Will (••)

Prerequisite: Resolve ••••

Effect: Your character's resolve is unwavering. When spending Willpower to contest or resist in a Social interaction, you may substitute your character's Resolve for the usual Willpower bonus. If the roll is contested, roll with 8-again.

Mentor (• to •••••)

Effect: This Merit gives your character a teacher that provides advice and guidance. He acts on your character's behalf, often in the background and sometimes without your character's knowledge. While Mentors can be highly competent, they almost always want something in return for their services. The dot rating determines the Mentor's capabilities, and to what extent he'll aid your character.

When establishing a Mentor, determine what the Mentor wants from your character. This should be personally important to him and it should reflect on the dot rating chosen. A one-dot Mentor might be incapable of dealing with modern society and want to live vicariously through your character. This might mean coming to him and telling stories of her exploits. A five-dot Mentor would want something astronomical, such as an oath to procure an ancient, cursed artifact that may or may not exist, in order to prevent a prophesized death.

Choose three Skills the Mentor possesses. You can substitute Resources for one of these Skills. Once per session, the character may ask her Mentor for a favor. The favor must involve one of those Skills or be within the scope of his Resources. The Mentor commits to the favor (often asking for a commensurate favor in return); and if a roll is required, the Mentor is automatically considered to have successes equal to his dot rating. Alternately, the player may ask the Storyteller to have the Mentor act on her character's behalf, without her character knowing or initiating the request.

Mystery Cult Initiation (• to •••••)

Cults are far more common than the people of the World of Darkness would like to admit. Mystery cult is the catch-all term for a phenomenon ranging from secret societies couched in fraternity houses and scholarly cabals studying the magic of classical symbolism to mystical suicide cults to the God Machine.

Mystery Cult Initiation reflects membership in one of these esoteric groups. The dot rating dictates standing. One dot is an initiate, two a respected member, three a priest or organizer, four a decision-making leader, five is a high priest or founder. If you wish your character to begin play in a cult, work with your Storyteller to develop the details.

Designing a Mystery Cult requires three things, at bare minimum. First is a Purpose. This is the defining reason the cult exists. Usually, it's tied in with the cult's history and recent background. Second is a Relic. This is an item that grounds members' faith. For example, a piece of the God-Machine, an ancient text bound in human flesh, or the mummified flesh of a saint. The last is a Doctrine. Every cult is defined by its rules and traditions.

In addition to standing, a Mystery Cult Initiation Merit offers benefits at each level of influence. Develop these as well. The following are guidelines; use them to craft your own cults:

•	A Skill Specialty or one-dot Merit pertaining to the lessons taught to initiates.
••	A one-dot Merit.
•••	A Skill dot or a two-dot Merit (often a supernatural Merit).
••••	A three-dot Merit, often supernatural in origin.
•••••	A three-dot Merit or a major advantage not reflected in game traits.

Resources (• to •••••)

Effect: This Merit reflects your character's disposable income. She might live in an upscale condo, but if her income is tied up in the mortgage and child support payments, she might have little money to throw around. Characters are assumed to have basic necessities without Resources.

The dot rating determines the relative amount of disposable funding the character has available, depending on your particular chronicle's setting. The same amount of money means completely different things in a game set in Silicon Valley compared to one set in the Detroit slums. One dot is a little spending money here and there. Two is a comfortable, middle class wage. Three is a nicer, upper middle class life. Four is moderately wealthy. Five is filthy rich.

Every item has an Availability rating. Once per chapter, your character can procure an item at her Resources level or lower without issue. An item one Availability level above her Resources reduces her effective Resources by one dot for a full month, since she has to rapidly liquidate funds. She can procure items two Availability level below her Resources without limit (within reason). For example, a character with Resources •••• can procure as many Availability •• disposable cellphones as she needs.

Pusher (•)

Prerequisite: Persuasion ••

Effect: Your character tempts and bribes as second nature. Any time a mark in a Social interaction accepts her soft leverage (see p. 315), open a Door as if you'd satisfied his Vice as well as moving the impression up on the chart.

Retainer (• to •••••)

Effect: Your character has an assistant, sycophant, servant, or follower on whom she can rely. Establish who this companion is and how he was acquired. It may be as simple as a paycheck. He might owe your character his life. However it happened, your character has a hold on him.

A Retainer is more reliable than a Mentor and more loyal than an Ally. On the other hand, a Retainer is a lone person, less capable and influential than the broader Merits.

The Merit's dot rating determines the relative competency of the Retainer. A one-dot Retainer is barely able to do anything of use, such as a pet that knows one useful trick or a homeless old man that does minor errands for food. A three-dot Retainer is a professional in their field, someone capable in his line of work. A five-dot is one of the best in her class. If a Retainer needs to make a roll, if it's within her field, double the dot rating and use it as a dice pool. For anything else, use the dot rating as a dice pool.

This Merit can be purchased multiple times to represent multiple Retainers.

Safe Place (• to •••••)

Effect: Your character has somewhere she can go where she can feel secure. While she may have enemies that could attack her there, she's prepared and has the upper hand. The dot rating reflects the security of the place. A one-dot Safe Place might be equipped with basic security systems or a booby trap at the windows and door. A five-dot could have a security crew, infrared scanners at every entrance, or trained dogs. Each place could be an apartment, a mansion or a hidey-hole.

Unlike most Merits, multiple characters can contribute dots to a single Safe Place, combining their points into something greater. A Safe Place gives an Initiative bonus equal to the Merit dots. This only applies to a character with dots invested in the Safe Place.

Any efforts to breach the Safe Place suffer a penalty equal to the Merit dots invested. If the character desires, the Safe Place can include traps that cause intruders lethal damage equal to a

SAMPLE CULTS

SAMPLE CULT: THE CHOSEN OF MAMMON

Mammon believes in the power of the almighty dollar and its inherent power. Followers of Mammon are expected to obtain temporal wealth and power, at any cost. Fortunately, their networks help initiates quickly claim promotions and transfers into more prominent areas of influence.

Cultists: Hedge fund manager, mailboy on a mission, outsourcer, personal assistant to the stars, talent scout, third-generation CEO

Initiation	Benefits
•	All initiates learn to cut through red tape to fulfill their later duties. They gain a Politics Specialty in Bureaucracy.
• •	Full members must learn to speak, read, and write in Aramaic. They gain the Language Merit (•, Aramaic) free of charge.
• • •	As a cultist delves into the mysteries of Mammon, she gains access to greater cult resources. Spend two dots between Contacts, Allies, Resources, or Retainers to reflect this relationship.
• • • •	The self-centered and power-obsessed priests of Mammon gain the Thief of Fate (• • •) Merit. For this reason, priests are prohibited from touching other cultists.
• • • • •	The high priestess of Mammon benefits from the tithes of her already wealthy followers. She gains three dots of Resources. As well, she may make a Resources • • • • • purchase once per month without limitation by drawing from the cult's coffers.

SAMPLE CULT: SISTERS OF THE MACHINE GUN, BROTHERS OF THE BOMB

The Brothers and Sisters band together with their rudimentary understanding of the God-Machine in order to prevent its ascendancy to whatever mysterious power it strives to obtain. They've repurposed artifacts and reverse-engineered their power into more technological weapons to fight back the darkness. The Brothers and Sisters tend toward universities and other places of learning, where a bit of esoteric knowledge can bleed through the mundane and open eyes to the truths of the universe.

Cultists: God-Machine survivor, librarian-turned-networker, militant defender (sister machine gun), second-generation mentor, tech expert (brother bomb)

Initiation	Benefits
•	New recruits, while not yet trusted, receive training to better spot the influence of the God-Machine. They gain an Occult Specialty in the God-Machine.
• •	Small cells of the Brothers and Sisters network through a handful of active initiates. For this reason, all initiates gain Contacts • (Brothers and Sisters) free of charge.
• • •	Respected initiates who have proven they're likely to survive more than a few years are taught the secrets of fashioning weapons that can damage ethereal beings. They can grant a character use of a weapon with the ability to hurt beings in Twilight.
• • • •	At higher ranking within the organization, members are assigned wards and students. Take three dots in Retainers, allocated as the player sees fit (that is, one three-dot Retainer, three one-dot Retainers, etc.).
• • • • •	The highest ranking Brothers and Sisters are mostly first-contact survivors. They've seen more of the God-Machine's influence than most anyone still standing. They gain a modified version of the Encyclopedic Knowledge Merit relating directly to the God-Machine.

maximum of the Merit rating (player's choice as to how much damage a given trap inflicts). This requires that the character has at least a dot in Crafts. The traps may be avoided with a Dexterity + Larceny roll, penalized by the Safe Place dots.

Small Unit Tactics (••)

Prerequisites: Presence •••

Effect: Your character is a proficient leader on the field. She can organize efforts and bark orders to remarkable effect. Once per scene, when making a coordinated action that was planned in advance, spend a point of Willpower and an instant action. A number of characters equal to your character's Presence can benefit from the +3 bonus from the Willpower expenditure.

Staff (• to •••••)

Effect: Your character has a crew of workers or assistants at her disposal. They may be housekeepers, designers, research assistants, animators, cheap thugs, or whatever else makes sense. For every dot in this Merit, choose one type of assistant, and one Skill. At any reasonable time, her staff can take actions using that Skill. These actions automatically garner a single success. While not useful in contested actions, this guarantees success on minor, mundane activities. Note that you may have employees without requiring the Staff Merit. Staff simply adds a mechanical advantage for those groups.

Status (• to •••••)

Effect: Your character has standing, membership, authority, control over, or respect from a group or organization. This may reflect official standing or informal respect. No matter the source, your character enjoys certain privileges within that structure.

Each instance of this Merit reflects standing in a different group or organization. Your character may have Status (The Luck Gang) •••, Status (Drag Racing Circuit) ••, and Status (Police) •. Each affords its own unique benefits. As you increase dot ratings, your character rises in prominence in the relevant group.

Status only allows advantages within the confines of the group reflected in the Merit. Status (Organized Crime) won't help if your character wants an official concealed carry firearms permit, for example.

Status provides a number of advantages.

First, your character can apply her Status to any Social roll with those over which she has authority or sway.

Second, she has access to group facilities, resources, and funding. Dependent on the group, this could be limited by red tape and requisitioning processes. It's also dependent on the resources the particular group has available.

Third, she has pull. If your character knows another character's Mentor, Resources, Retainer, Contacts, or Allies, she can block their usage. Once per chapter, she can stop a single Merit from being used

EXAMPLE STATUS MERITS

While Status can apply in a nigh infinite number of organizations, here is a list of some common Status Merits, and suggested dot ratings to give a jumping off point. These examples are still abstractions; a character may be a dot level lower or higher and still hold the suggested positions. For example, a police detective may have two, three, or four dots of Police Status: the dot rating just shows her relative influence and respect within the precinct.

STATUS: POLICE		STATUS: MEDICAL		STATUS: MILITARY	
•	Paid informant	•	Regular candy striper	•	Private
••	Beat cop	••	Nurse	••	Corporal
•••	Detective	•••	Resident doctor	•••	Sergeant
••••	Sergeant	••••	Chief physician	••••	Colonel
•••••	Chief of Police	•••••	Hospital president	•••••	General
STATUS: GANG		**STATUS: HELLFIRE CLUB**		**STATUS: CORPORATE**	
•	New blood	•	Pledge	•	Contractor, new hire
••	Rank and file	••	Initiate	••	Company man
•••	Local gang leader	•••	Counselor	•••	Middle manager
••••	Regional enforcer	••••	Master	••••	Board member
•••••	Cartel leader	•••••	Grandmaster	•••••	CEO

if it's of a lower dot rating than her Status and if it makes sense for her organization to obstruct that type of person's behavior. In our Organized Crime example, if your character knows that the chief of police has Contacts (Criminal Informant), you may opt to block usage by threatening the informant into silence.

Drawback: Status requires upkeep and often regular duties. If these duties are not upheld, Status may be lost. The dots will not be accessible until the character re-establishes her standing. In our Organized Crime example, your character may be expected to pay protection money, offer tribute to a higher authority, or undertake felonious activities.

Striking Looks (• or • •)

Effect: Your character is stunning, alarming, commanding, repulsing, threatening, charming, or otherwise worthy of attention. Determine how your character looks and how people react to that. For one dot, your character gets a +1 bonus on any Social rolls that would be influenced by her looks. For two dots, the benefit increases to +2. Depending on the particulars, this might influence Expression, Intimidation, Persuasion, Subterfuge, or other rolls.

Drawback: Attention is a double-edged sword. Any rolls to spot, notice, or remember your character gain the same die bonus. Sometimes, your character will draw unwanted attention in social situations. This could cause further complications.

Sympathetic (• •)

Effect: Your character is very good at letting others get close. This gives him an edge in getting what he wants. At the beginning of a Social maneuvering attempt, you may choose to accept a Condition such as Leveraged, Swooning or Vulnerable in order to immediately eliminate two of the subject's Doors.

Taste (•)

Prerequisite: Crafts 2 and a Specialty in Crafts or Expression

Effect: Your character has refined tastes and can identify minor details in fashion, food, architecture, and other forms of artistry and craftsmanship. Not only does this give an eye for detail, it makes her a center of attention in critical circles. She can appraise items within her area of expertise. With a Wits + Skill roll, depending on the creation in question (Expression for poetry, Crafts for architecture, for example), your character can pick out obscure details about the item that other, less discerning minds would not. For each success, ask one of the following questions, or take a +1 bonus to any Social rolls pertaining to groups interested in the art assessed for the remainder of the scene.

- What is the hidden meaning in this?
- What was the creator feeling during its creation?
- What's its weakest point?
- What other witness is most moved by this piece?
- How should one best appreciate this piece?

True Friend (• • •)

Effect: Your character has a true friend. While that friend may have specific functions covered by other Merits (Allies, Contacts, Retainer, Mentor, et cetera), True Friend represents a deeper, truly trusting relationship that cannot be breached. Unless your character does something egregious to cause it, her True Friend will not betray her. The Storyteller cannot kill a True Friend as part of a plot without your express permission. Any rolls to influence a True Friend against your character suffer a five-die penalty. In addition, once per story your character can regain one spent Willpower by having a meaningful interaction with her True Friend.

Supernatural Merits

These Merits require the character remain human (non-supernatural.) If the character becomes a vampire, ghoul, mage, or any supernatural character type, these Merits disappear. Per the Sanctity of Merits (see p. 287), these Merits can be reallocated.

Demon characters cannot take these Merits, but stigmatic characters can, which is why they are included here.

Aura Reading (• • •)

Effect: Your character has the psychic ability to perceive auras; the ephemeral halos of energy that surround all living things. This allows her to perceive a subject's emotional state, and potentially any supernatural nature. The colors of an aura show a person's general disposition, and the ebbs, flows, tone, and other oddities reveal other influences. Note that your character may not know what she's looking at when seeing something odd in an aura. For example, she may not know that a pale aura means she's seeing a vampire, unless she's confirmed other vampiric auras in the past.

To activate Aura Reading, spend a point of Willpower and roll Wits + Empathy – the subject's Composure. Perceiving an aura takes an uninterrupted moment of staring, which could look suspicious even to the unaware. For every success, ask the subject's player one of the following questions. Alternatively, take +1 on Social rolls against the character during the same scene, due to the understanding of their emotional state.

- What's your character's most prominent emotion?
- Is your character telling the truth?
- What is your character's attention most focused on right now?
- Is your character going to attack?
- What emotion is your character trying most to hide?
- Is your character supernatural or otherwise not human?

Determine how your character perceives auras. Maybe she sees different hues as different emotions. Perhaps she hears whispers in the back of her mind, reflecting subtle truths in her subject.

Drawback: Because of your character's sensitivity to the supernatural, she sometimes appears to know "a little too much." No more than once per chapter, when first meeting a supernatural creature the Storyteller can roll Wits + Occult for the creature, penalized by your character's Composure. If successful, they get a strange feeling that your character is aware of their nature. They're not forced to behave in any particular way, but it could cause complications.

Biokinesis (• to •••••)

Effect: Your character has the ability to psychically alter her biological material. By spending a Willpower point and concentrating for a full minute, she can shift her Physical Attributes. She can shift one dot per dot in this Merit. This shift lasts for one hour. This cannot raise an Attribute higher than five dots.

In addition, the character heals quickly. Halve all healing times.

Clairvoyance (•••)

Effect: Your character can project her senses to another location. She sees, hears, smells, and otherwise experiences the other place as if she were there. This ability requires a point of Willpower to activate, successful meditation, and a Wits + Occult roll.

Suggested Modifiers: Has an object important to the place (+1), never been there (–3), scrying for a person and not a place (–3), scrying for non-specific location (–4), spent significant time there (+2), touching someone with a strong connection to the place (+1)

Drawback: When choosing this ability, determine how your character is able to scry. It may be through a crystal ball, through a drug-induced trance, with esoteric computer models, or any other method. She cannot scry without that tool or methodology.

Cursed (••)

Effect: Your character has run afoul of fate. Somewhere, somehow, she's been cursed. Most importantly, she's aware of the curse. When taking this Merit, define the limitations of the curse. Usually, it's expressed in the form of a single statement, such as, "On the eve of your twenty-seventh birthday, you will feast upon your doom." It's important to work out the details with the Storyteller. The curse must take effect within the scope of the planned chronicle.

While she knows how she'll die, this is actually a liberating experience. She's confident of the method of her death so nothing else fazes her. Gain a +2 on any Resolve + Composure roll to face fear or self-doubt. Any time she takes lethal damage in her last three health boxes, take an additional Beat.

Medium (•••)

Prerequisite: Empathy ••

Effect: Your character hears the words and moans of the dead. If she takes the time to parse their words, she can interact with them verbally.

Your character has more than just a knack for knowing when ephemeral beings are lurking nearby — she can reach out and make contact with them. By conducting a ritual, meditating, or otherwise preparing to commune with the unseen and succeeding at a Wits + Occult roll, she temporarily increases the relevant Condition one step along the progression from nothing to Anchor, Resonance or Infrastructure, to Open, and finally to Controlled (see p. 346 for more on Conditions as they relate to spirits). The effect lasts until she spends a Willpower point, but if an Influence has been used to progress the Condition further, doing so only reduces it by one step.

Drawback: Speaking with ghosts can be a blessing, but your character cannot turn the sense off, any more than she can turn off her hearing. The character hears the words of the dead any time they're present. Once per game session, usually in a time of extreme stress, the Storyteller may deliver a disturbing message to your character from the other side. You must succeed in a Resolve + Composure roll or gain the Shaken or Spooked Condition.

Mind of a Madman (••)

Prerequisite: Empathy •••

Effect: Your character gets deep into the skin of problems. If she's investigating a crime or other phenomenon, she can put herself in the mind of the culprit. This often helps with the case. However, it takes her to a dark place internally.

Once she's made the choice to sink into the culprit's mindset (which usually involves intense meditation or perusal of the culprit's crimes), she gains 8-again on all rolls to investigate, pursue, and stop the culprit. But once per night, while she sleeps, she dreams about the culprit's crimes and theoretical future crimes. This is intensely traumatic and it drives her further on the hunt. If she spends the day without pursuing the culprit, make a roll to resist degeneration as if she'd committed the crime herself. She can resist the dreams and the degeneration rolls by avoiding sleep, but she's subject to normal deprivation effect. Until the culprit's captured, any of her own rolls to resist degeneration from things she's done suffer a –1 penalty.

Omen Sensitivity (•••)

Effect: Your character sees signs and patterns in everything. From the way the leaves fall to the spray of antifreeze when her radiator pops, to the ratios of circumference on the shell she picked up on the sidewalk: everything has meaning. With some consideration, she can interpret these meanings. This would be far better if she could turn it off. Everything is important. Everything could mean the end of the world, the deaths of her friends, or other tragedies. If she misses an omen, it might be the wrong one.

Once per game session, you can make a Wits + Occult roll for your character to interpret an omen in her surroundings. For every success, ask the Storyteller a yes/no question about your character's life, her surroundings,



a task at hand, or the world at large. The Storyteller must answer these questions truthfully.

Drawback: Her ability becomes an obsession. Each time she reads a portent, she gains the Obsession or Spooked Condition.

Psychokinesis (••• or •••••)

Effect: Your character has a psychic ability to manipulate the forces of the universe. Every type of Psychokinetic is different. For example, your character might have Pyrokinesis, Cryokinesis, or Electrokinesis, the control of fire, cold, or electricity respectively. This is not an exhaustive list. She can intensify, shape, and douse her particular area of ability. With the three-dot version, some of the given force must be present for her to manipulate. With the five-dot version, she can manifest it from nothingness.

Spend a point of Willpower to activate Psychokinesis and roll Resolve + Occult. Each success allows a degree of manipulation: choose one of the following options below. If you intend to cause harm with the roll, subtract the victim's Resolve from the Resolve + Occult roll. If characters should be harmed without a direct attack — if they run through a patch of flame for example — the three-dot version of the Merit causes one lethal damage and the five-dot version causes two. The Storyteller may rule that larger manifestations cause more, if the situation calls for it.

- Increase or decrease the Size of the manifestation by one.
- Move the manifestation a number of yards equal to your character's Willpower dots times 2.
- Shape the force into a specific form. This may require an Intelligence + Crafts roll to form into a detailed or intricate shape.
- Attack a victim with the force. Allocate any number of the rolled successes to cause harm. With the three-dot Merit, Psychokinesis is a weapon causing 1L damage. Psychokinesis is considered a 2L weapon with the five-dot version.
- Use the force creatively. This is up to the situation and the force in question. For example, an Electrokinetic may use her ability to power an electronic device briefly or jump-start a stalled automobile.
- Manifest her force. This only works with the five-dot version. It manifests a Size 1 patch of the force. It may spread or be enlarged with further successes.

Drawback: Whenever your character depletes her last Willpower point, the Storyteller can call on her abilities to manifest spontaneously. Resist this with a Resolve + Composure roll, with a –2 penalty if her chosen force is prominently featured nearby. For example, the penalty applies if a Pyrokinetic is locked in a factory with a hot forge. This tends to happen during wildly inconvenient moments and in ways that tend to cause more trouble than they solve. With these wild manifestations, use of Psychokinesis does not cost Willpower.

Psychometry (• • •)

Effect: Psychometry is the psychic ability to read impressions left on physical objects. Your character can feel the emotional resonance left on an item or can perceive important events tied to a location with this ability. The ability automatically hones in on the most emotionally intense moment tied to the item.

Spend a Willpower point to activate Psychometry. The successes scored on a Wits + Occult roll determine the clarity of the visions. For each success, you may ask a single yes/no question of the Storyteller, or one of the following questions. For questions pertaining to specific characters, if your character hasn't met the persons in question, the Storyteller may simply describe them.

- What's the strongest emotion here?
- Who remembers this moment the most?
- Am I missing something in this scene?
- Where was this object during the event?
- What breaking point caused the event?

Suggested Modifiers: Character has read impressions from this item before (–2), important event happened more than one day ago (–1), more than one week ago (–2), more than one month ago (–3), more than one year ago (–5), item was used in a violent crime (+2), item is only vaguely tied to the event (–2), spirits pertaining to the event are nearby (+3)

Drawback: Once per chapter, the Storyteller can force a Psychometry vision any time an important place is visited or an important item is touched. This doesn't require a roll or Willpower point to activate. The Storyteller can give any information pertaining to the event in question. The Storyteller can also impose one Condition relevant to the event.

Telekinesis (• to • • • • •)

Effect: Your character has a psychic ability to manipulate the physical world with her mind. This means lifting, pushing, and pulling objects. Fine manipulation is beyond the scope of Telekinesis. By spending a Willpower point, she can activate Telekinesis for the scene. Her dots in this Merit determine her mind's effective Strength for the purpose of lifting and otherwise influencing her environment.

A telekinetic can use her abilities to cause harm by lashing out at threats. Each "attack" costs a point of Willpower. The dice pool to attack is Telekinesis + Occult, penalized by the opponent's Stamina. The attack causes bashing damage. Alternatively, it can be used to grapple, with the Merit dots representing the Strength score of the psychic. Any overpowering maneuvers require additional Willpower points.

Drawback: Any time your character suffers injury or intense stimuli, the Storyteller may call for a Resolve + Composure roll to resist activating Telekinesis at an inopportune time. If the Storyteller calls for this roll and it fails, the character activates Telekinesis in a quick, impressive display of the power. That use of Telekinesis is free. The player can choose to automatically fail the Resolve + Composure roll and take a Beat.

Telepathy (• • • or • • • • •)

Effect: Your character can hear surface thoughts and read minds. With the five-dot version of this Merit, she can broadcast simple messages to others' minds. She hears these thoughts as if they were spoken, which means they can sometimes be distracting. She could only hear thoughts at the range she could hear normal conversation, regardless of any ambient noise (so a telepath could hear the thoughts of someone next to her at a loud concert, even though she couldn't actually hear the subject talk, but could not hear the thoughts of someone a football field away under quiet conditions). Spend a point of Willpower to activate Telepathy and roll Wits + Empathy, minus the subject's Resolve if the subject is unwilling. If successful, the subject's player must tell you the foremost thought on the character's mind. Additional successes allow you to ask the subject's player additional questions from the following list. The questions can be asked any time within the same scene. With the five-dot version, every success offers a single phrase the subject hears as if your character said it. As before, these phrases can be communicated at any time during the same scene.

- What does your character want right now?
- What does your character fear most right now?
- What is your character hiding?
- What does your character want mine to do?
- What does your character know about [relevant topic at hand]?
- What turns your character on right now?
- What's something shameful or embarrassing about your character?

Drawback: Sometimes, your character hears things she probably shouldn't. Once per chapter, the Storyteller can give your character a message of terrible things to come. Perhaps she overhears the mad internal ramblings of a cultist in a crowd. Maybe she hears a plot to hijack a plane. Maybe, just maybe, she hears the incoherent thoughts of the God-Machine. These heard thoughts never just occur. They always happen when your character has something else, something important, something pressing going on. When this happens, the Storyteller gives you a Condition such as Spooked or Shaken.

Thief of Fate (• • •)

Effect: Your character is a magnet for fortune and fate. When she's close to someone, she unintentionally steals their good fortune. If she touches someone, this Merit takes effect unless she spends a point of Willpower to curb the effect for a scene. In the same day, any failures the subject makes are considered dramatic failures. If she's used this Merit in a given day, she gains four dice any time she spends Willpower to increase a dice pool.

Drawback: Once a victim of this Merit suffers a dramatic failure, he hears your character's name in the back of his mind. This may inspire scrutiny.

Unseen Sense (••)

Effect: Your character has a "sixth sense" for a type of supernatural creature, chosen when you buy the Merit. For example, you may choose Unseen Sense: Vampires, or Unseen Sense: Fairies. The sense manifests differently for everyone. A character's hair stands on end, she becomes physically ill, or perhaps she has a cold chill. Regardless, she knows that *something isn't right* when she is in the immediate proximity of the appropriate supernatural being. Once per chapter, the player can accept the Spooked Condition (p. 310) in exchange for which the character can pinpoint where the feeling is coming from. If the target is using a power that specifically cloaks its supernatural nature, however, this does not work (though the Condition remains until resolved as usual).

Note: If the character takes "God-Machine" as the focus for this Merit, that character can also see through Concealment Infrastructure (seeing the gears when no one else can, for instance).

Fighting Merits

Some Merits in this section have other Merits as prerequisites. These are refinements of form and additional areas of expertise. For example, Iron Skin requires Martial Arts ••. This means you must have two dots in Martial Arts before buying dots in Iron Skin.

Many Fighting Style Merits require a character to sacrifice their Defense. Defense cannot be sacrificed multiple times in a turn; this prevents certain maneuvers from being used together.

Armed Defense (• to •••••; Style)

Prerequisites: Dexterity •••, Weaponry ••, Defensive Combat: Weaponry

You're able to use a weapon to stop people who are trying to kill you. Often deployed by police officers using riot shields or ASP batons, it's just as effective with a chair leg.

Cover the Angles (•): Whenever you take a Dodge action, reduce the Defense penalties for multiple attackers by 1. You can apply your full Defense against the first two attacks, suffer a –1 penalty against the third, and so on.

Weak Spot (••): You swing against your opponent's arm rather than his own weapon. Use this ability when defending against an armed attacker. If your Defense reduces his attack pool to 0, he's disarmed. If you Dodge, you disarm your opponent if your Defense roll reduces his attack successes to 0.

Aggressive Defense (•••): Anyone dumb enough to come near you is liable to get hurt. When you take a Dodge action, if you score more successes than any attacker, you deal one point of lethal damage to the attacker per extra success. Your weapon bonus doesn't apply to this extra damage.

Drawback: You must spend a point of Willpower and declare that you are using Aggressive Defense at the start of the turn. You cannot combine this maneuver with Press the Advantage or Weak Spot.

Iron Guard (••••): You and your weapon are one. At the start of each turn, you can choose to reduce your weapon bonus (down to a minimum of 0) to increase your Defense by a like amount. If you take a Dodge action, add your full weapon bonus to your Defense after doubling your pool.

Press the Advantage (•••••): You create an opening with a block and lash out with a fist or foot. When you're taking a Dodge action, if your Defense roll reduces the attacker's successes to 0, you can make an unarmed attack against that opponent at a –2 penalty. Your opponent applies Defense as normal.

Drawback: Spend a point of Willpower to make the attack. You can only make one attack per turn in this way.

Cheap Shot (••)

Prerequisites: Street Fighting •••, Subterfuge ••

Effect: Your character is a master at the bait and switch. She can look off in an odd direction and prompt her opponent to do the same, or she might step on someone's toes to distract them. Either way, she fights dirty. Make a Dexterity + Subterfuge roll as a reflexive action. The opponent's player contests with Wits + Composure. If you score more successes, the opponent loses his Defense for the next turn. Each time a character uses this maneuver in a scene, it levies a cumulative –2 penalty to further uses since the opposition gets used to the tricks.

Choke Hold (••)

Prerequisites: Brawl ••

If you can get your hands on someone, it's over. When grappling, you can use the Choke move.

Choke: If you rolled more successes than twice the victim's Stamina, he's unconscious for (six – Stamina) minutes. You must first have succeeded at a Hold move. If you don't score enough successes at first, you can Choke your opponent on future turns and total your successes.

Close Quarters Combat (• to •••••; Style)

Prerequisites: Wits •••, Athletics ••, Brawl •••

You know that hitting someone in the face is an easy way to break the little bones in your hand. To that end, you've perfected the art of using the environment to hurt people.

Firing Lines (•): In some situations, your best option is a tactical retreat — especially if you've inadvertently brought a

knife to a gunfight. You can run for cover as a reaction to a ranged attack instead of dropping prone (see "Going Prone," pp. 164–165 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**). You give up your action for the turn but can get to any cover that's within twice your Speed.

Hard Surfaces (••): Bouncing someone's head off a urinal, computer monitor, or a brick wall is a handy way to increase the amount of hurt inflicted while not breaking the aforementioned hand bones. When you're grappling someone, you can bounce them off a hard surface with a Damage move. You deal lethal damage and immediately end the grapple.

Armored Coffin (•••): The problem with protection is simple: the very things that protect you can be turned against you. That holds true for body armor just as much as anything else. Sure, it blocks bullets and knives, but get in a clinch and you might as well be wearing a straightjacket. When you grapple an opponent, add their general armor rating to your dice pool. When you use a Damage move, ignore your opponent's armor. This technique can't be used in conjunction with Hard Surfaces.

Prep Work (••••): If you've got a second to look around, you could catch someone by surprise almost anywhere. When launching a surprise attack, your Dexterity + Stealth roll becomes a rote action.

Drawback: You can't use this Merit to set up sniper attacks — your ambush must use Brawl or Weaponry.

Turnabout (•••••): If you're caught short in a fight, your opponent's weapon suits you just fine. When you attempt to Disarm your opponent, step the results up one level — on a failure, your opponent drops the weapon. On a success, you take possession of your opponent's weapon. On an exceptional success, you've got the weapon and your opponent takes two points of bashing damage.

Defensive Combat (•)

Prerequisite: Brawl • or Weaponry •; choose one when this Merit is selected

Effect: You are training in avoiding damage in combat. Use your Brawl or Weaponry to calculate Defense rather than Athletics. You can learn both versions of this Merit, allowing you to use any of the three Skills to calculate Defense. However, you cannot use Weaponry to calculate Defense unless you actually have a weapon in hand.

Fighting Finesse (••)

Prerequisites: Dexterity •••, a Specialty in Weaponry or Brawl

Effect: Choose a Specialty in Weaponry or Brawl when you purchase this Merit. Your character's extensive training in that particular weapon or style has allowed them to benefit more from their alacrity and agility than their strength. You may substitute your character's Dexterity for her Strength when making rolls with that Specialty.

This Merit may be purchased multiple times to gain its benefit with multiple Specialties.

Firefight (Style, • to •••)

Prerequisites: Composure •••, Dexterity •••, Athletics ••, Firearms ••

Effect: Your character is comfortable with a gun. She's been trained in stressful situations and knows how to keep herself from being shot while shooting at her opponents. This Style is about moving, strafing, and taking shots when you get them. It's not a series of precision techniques; it's using a gun practically in a real-world situation.

Shoot First (•): In a firefight, the person who gets shot first is usually the loser. Your character has trained herself to fire first in an altercation. If her gun is drawn, add her Firearms score to her Initiative. If she has Quick Draw, she can use Shoot First to draw and fire with increased Initiative in the first turn of combat.

Suppressive Fire (••): Sometimes, the purpose of a shot is to distract, not necessarily to hit. Your character is trained to fire off a handful of rounds with the intent to startle opponents and force impulse reactions. When using the Covering Fire maneuver (p. 323), her opponents cannot benefit from aiming against her. She can apply her Defense against incoming Firearms attacks in addition to any cover bonuses. As well, her training allows her to use Covering Fire with a semi-automatic weapon.

Secondary Target (•••): Sometimes shooting an opponent behind cover is all but impossible. A bullet can knock objects off balance, however, or cause ricochets. By using Secondary Target, your character opts to not hit her target but instead strike them with any collateral objects that might be nearby. She causes bashing damage instead of lethal, but ignores all cover penalties to the roll. The weapon's damage rating does not add to the damage in this case.

Grappling (Style, • to •••••)

Prerequisites: Stamina •••, Strength ••, Athletics ••, Brawl ••

Effect: Your character has trained in wrestling or one of many grappling martial arts.

Sprawl (•): Your character can adjust her weight to defend herself in a grapple. While in a grapple, the character's opponent cannot apply the Drop Prone or Take Cover moves.

Takedown (••): Your character can take an opponent to the ground rapidly. With a normal roll, you may choose to render an opponent prone instead of establishing a grapple. You may also choose to cause bashing damage equal to the successes rolled.

Joint Lock (•••): You use joint locks and immobilizing tactics to limit your opponent's movement. You can use the Joint Lock move in a grapple. Next turn, your opponent suffers

bashing damage equal to your successes. You can use Joint Lock as a lead-in to the Restrain move. In addition, any successful overpowering maneuvers your character uses cause 1L damage in addition to their normal effects.

Heavy Weapons (Style • to •••••)

Prerequisites: Stamina •••, Strength •••, Athletics ••, Weaponry ••

Effect: Your character is trained with heavy weapons that require strength, wide range, and follow-through more than direct speed and accuracy. This Style may be used with two-handed weapons such as a claymore, a chainsaw, a pike, or an uprooted street sign.

Sure Strike (•): Your character doesn't always hit the hardest or the most frequently, but you guarantee a deadly strike when you do hit. You can reflexively remove three dice from any attack dice pool (to a minimum of zero) to add one to your character's weapon damage rating for the turn. These dice must be removed after calculating any penalties from the environment or the opponent's Defense.

Threat Range (••): Your character's weapon is immense and keeps opponents at bay. If you opt not to move or Dodge during your turn, any character moving into your character's proximity suffers 1L damage and a penalty to their Defense equal to your character's weapon damage rating. This penalty only lasts for one turn. This cannot be used in a turn the character is Dodging.

Bring the Pain (•••): Your character's strikes stun and incapacitate as well as causing massive trauma to the body. Sacrifice your character's Defense to use Bring the Pain. Make a standard attack roll. Any damage you score with Bring the Pain counts as a penalty to all actions the victim takes during their next turn. So, if you cause 4L damage, the opponent is at –4 on their next attack.

Warding Stance (••••): Your character holds her weapon in such a way as to make attacks much harder. If her weapon's drawn, spend a point of Willpower reflexively to add her weapon's damage rating as armor for the turn. This will not protect against firearms.

Rending (•••••): Your character's cuts leave crippling, permanent wounds. By spending a Willpower point before making an attack roll, her successful attacks cause one point of aggravated damage in addition to her weapon's damage rating. This Willpower point does not add to the attack roll.

Improvised Weaponry (• to •••; Style)

Prerequisites: Wits •••, Weaponry •

Most people don't walk around armed. While someone pulling a knife or a gun can cool a hostile situation down, it can also cause things to boil over — an argument that wouldn't be more than harsh words suddenly ends up with three people in the morgue. If you're on the receiving end of someone pulling a knife, it helps to have something in your own hand.

You're good at making do with what you've got. Sometimes, you're lucky — if you're in a bar, you've got a lot of glass bottles, maybe a pool cue to play with. But you've got something almost like a sixth sense for weaponry and can find one almost anywhere.

Always Armed (•): You can always get your hands on something dangerous, and you've an instinctive understanding of how to put it to good — and deadly — use. At the start of your turn, make a reflexive Wits + Weaponry roll to grab an object suitable for use as a weapon in pretty much any environment. (The player is encouraged to work with the Storyteller to determine an appropriate item — a large, jagged rock in the wilderness, for example, or a heavy glass ashtray with one sharp, broken edge in a dive bar.) Regardless of what you pick up, the weapon has a +0 weapon modifier, –1 initiative penalty, Size 1, Durability 2, and Structure 4. On an exceptional success, increase the weapon modifier and Size by 1, but the initiative penalty increases to –2. Whatever you grab doesn't suffer the normal –1 penalty for wielding an improvised weapon (see p. 328).

In Harm's Way (••): You've got a knack for putting your weapon in the way of an oncoming attack, no matter how small or inappropriate for blocking it might be. While wielding an improvised weapon acquired with Always Armed, you can treat the Structure of your weapon as general armor against a single Brawl or Weaponry attack. Any damage you take inflicts an equal amount of damage to the improvised weapon, bypassing Durability. You can use the weapon to attack later in the same turn, but can only use this ability when applying your Defense to an attack.

Breaking Point (•••): One sure way to win a fight is to hit the other guy so hard that he doesn't get back up, even if that means losing a weapon in the process. When making an all-out attack with an improvised weapon acquired with Always Armed, you can reduce the weapon's Structure by any amount down to zero. Every two points of Structure spent in this way adds +1 to the weapon modifier for that one single attack. Declare any Structure loss before making the attack; this Structure is reduced even if the attack does no damage. If the weapon is reduced to zero Structure, it is automatically destroyed after the attack.

You can use this technique in conjunction with In Harm's Way, allowing you to parry an attack made on a higher Initiative and then go on the offensive, provided that the weapon wasn't destroyed.

Iron Skin (•• or ••••)

Prerequisites: Martial Arts •• or Street Fighting ••, Stamina •••

Through rigorous conditioning or extensive scarring, your character has grown resistant to harm. She can shrug off shots that would topple bigger fighters. She knows how to take a strike and can even move into a hit from a weapon to minimize harm.

She gains armor against bashing attacks; one point of armor with ••, and two points of armor with ••••. By spending a point of Willpower when hit, she can downgrade lethal damage from a successful attack into bashing. Downgrade one point of lethal damage at ••, two points of lethal with ••••.

Light Weapons (Style • to •••••)

Prerequisites: Wits ••• *or* Fighting Finesse, Dexterity •••, Athletics ••, Weaponry ••

Effect: Your character is trained with small hand-to-hand weapons that favor finesse over raw power. These maneuvers may only be used with one-handed weapons that have a damage rating of 2 or less.

Rapidity (•): Your character moves with swiftness to find just the right spot to strike. You can sacrifice your character's weapon damage rating to add her Weaponry score to her Initiative for the turn. The weapon becomes a 0 damage weapon for the turn.

Thrust (••): Your character knows when to defend herself and when to move in for the kill. At any time, you can sacrifice points of Defense one-for-one to add to attack pools. This cannot happen if you've already used Defense in the same turn. If you use this maneuver, you may not sacrifice your full Defense for any other reason. For example, you cannot use Thrust with an all-out attack.

Feint (•••): With a flourish to one direction, your character can distract an opponent for a cleaner, more effective follow-up strike. Make an attack roll as normal, but the attack causes no damage. The next attack your character makes against the same opponent ignores Defense equal to the damage the attack would have caused, and adds the feint's successes rolled as additional damage if successful.

Flurry (••••): Your character moves quickly enough to stab opponents with numerous pricks and swipes in the blink of an eye. As long as your character has her Defense available to her (it's not been sacrificed for another maneuver or denied from surprise, for example), any character coming into her immediate proximity takes one point of lethal damage. This damage continues once per turn as long as the enemy stays within range and occurs on the enemy's turn. This can affect multiple opponents but cannot be used in a turn where the character is Dodging.

Vital Shot (•••••): Your character can use her smaller weapon to get past an opponent's defenses and hit where it hurts most. Sacrifice your character's Defense for the turn to use this maneuver. If the attack roll succeeds, the attack causes one point of aggravated damage in addition to the damage rating of the weapon.

Marksmanship (Style • to •••)

Prerequisites: Composure •••, Resolve •••, Firearms ••

Effect: When prepared and aimed, a gun is an ideal killing machine. Your character has trained to take advantage of the greatest features of any gun. This Style is often used with rifles, but it can be used with any type of firearm. Because of the discipline and patience required for Marksmanship, your character cannot use her Defense in any turn in which she uses one of these maneuvers. These maneuvers may only be used after aiming for at least one turn.

Through the Crosshairs (•): Your character is a competent sniper, able to sit in position and steel her wits. Usually, the maximum bonus from aiming is three dice. With Through the Crosshairs, it's equal to her Composure + Firearms.

Precision Shot (••): With this level of training, your character knows how to effectively disable a victim instead of focusing on the kill. When attacking a specified target, you may reduce your weapon's damage rating one-for-one to ignore penalties for shooting a specified target (see p. 323).

For example, if you're using a sniper rifle (4 damage weapon), and attacking an arm (–2 to hit), you could choose to use 3 damage reduce that to –1, or 2 damage to eliminate the penalty entirely.

A Shot Rings Out (•••): A master sniper, your character has no worries or lack of confidence. She can fire into a crowd and strike a specific target without penalty. If she misses, it's because her shot goes wide. She will never hit an unintended target.

Ghost (••••): Your character has trained to shoot unseen and vanish without a trace. Her Firearms score acts as a penalty on any roll to notice her vantage point, or any Investigation or Perception roll to investigate the area from which she shot.

Martial Arts (Style • to •••••)

Prerequisites: Resolve •••, Dexterity •••, Athletics ••, Brawl ••

Effect: Your character is trained in one or more formal martial arts styles. This may have come from a personal mentor, a dojo, or a self-defense class. It may have been for exercise, protection, show, or tradition. These maneuvers may only be used unarmed, or with weapons capable of using the Brawl Skill, such as a punch dagger, or a weapon using the Shiv Merit.

Focused Attack (•): Your character has trained extensively in striking specific parts of an opponent's body. Reduce penalties for hitting specific targets by one. Additionally, you may ignore one point of armor on any opponent.

Defensive Strike (••): Your character excels in defending herself while finding the best time to strike. You can add one or two points to your character's Defense. For each Defense point you take, subtract a die from any attacks you make. This can only be used in a turn in which your character intends to attack. It cannot be used with a Dodge.

Whirlwind Strike (•••): When engaged, your character becomes a storm of threatening kicks and punches; nothing close is safe. As long as your character has her Defense available

to her and is not Dodging, any character coming into arm's reach takes 1B damage. This damage continues once per turn as long as the enemy stays within range and occurs on the enemy's turn. If you spend a point of Willpower, this damage becomes 2B until your next turn.

The Hand as Weapon (••••): With this degree of training, your character's limbs are hardened to cause massive trauma. Her unarmed strikes cause lethal damage.

The Touch of Death (•••••): Your character's mastery has brought with it the daunting power of causing lethal injury with a touch. If she chooses, her unarmed strikes count as weapons with 2 damage rating.

Police Tactics (Style • to •••)

Prerequisites: Brawl ••, Weaponry •

Effect: Your character is trained in restraint techniques often used by law enforcement officers. This may reflect formal training or lessons from a skilled practitioner.

Compliance Hold (•): Gain a +2 bonus to overpowering rolls to disarm or immobilize an opponent.

Weapon Retention (••): Opponents attempting to disarm your character or turn her weapon against her must exceed your character's Weaponry score in successes.

Speed Cuff (•••): Against an immobilized opponent, your character may apply handcuffs, cable ties, or similar restraints as a reflexive action.

Shiv (• or ••)

Prerequisites: Street Fighting ••, Weaponry •

Effect: Your character carries small, concealable weapons for use in a tussle. Rolls to detect the concealed weapon suffer your character's Weaponry score as a penalty. With the one-dot version, she can conceal a weapon with a 0 damage rating. The two-dot version can conceal a 1 damage rating weapon. Your character may use the Brawl Skill to use this weapon.

Street Fighting (Style • to •••••)

Prerequisites: Stamina •••, Composure •••, Brawl ••, Streetwise ••

Effect: Your character learned to fight on the mean streets. She may have had some degree of formal training, but the methodology came from the real world in dangerous circumstances. Street Fighting isn't about form and grace. It's about staying alive. These maneuvers may only be used unarmed, with weapons capable of using the Brawl Skill (such as punch daggers), or weapons concealed with the Shiv Merit (above).

Duck and Weave (•): Your character has been beaten all to hell more than a few times. Now she dodges on instinct, not on skill. You can reflexively take a one-die penalty to any actions this turn in order to use the higher of her Wits and Dexterity to calculate Defense. If you've already made a roll without penalty this turn, you cannot use Duck and Weave.

Knocking the Wind Out (••): Shots to the center mass can shake an opponent, and your character knows this well. When your character makes a successful unarmed attack, the opponent suffers a –1 to his next roll.

Kick 'Em While They're Down (•••): The best enemy is one on the ground. Your character topples opponents and keeps them down. Any time your successes on an attack roll exceed an opponent's Stamina, you may choose to apply the Knocked Down Tilt (p. 332). Additionally, any time your character is close enough to strike when an opponent attempts to get up from a prone position, she can reflexively cause 2B damage.

One-Two Punch (••••): Your character hits fast and follows through with every hit. Whenever she makes a successful attack, you can spend a point of Willpower to cause two extra points of bashing damage.

Last-Ditch Effort (•••••): In a street fight, every second could be the one that kills you. A proficient street fighter is a remarkable survivalist. She bites, headbutts, trips: whatever it takes to prevent that last hit. Any time a character with this level of Street Fighting is about to take a hit or an overpowering maneuver when she's already suffering wound penalties, she can reflexively spend a Willpower point and sacrifice her Defense for the turn to make an attack against her would-be assailant. This can occur even if she's already acted in a turn, so long as she's not already spent Willpower. Resolve this attack before the opponent's action.

Unarmed Defense (• to •••••; Style)

Prerequisites: Dexterity •••, Brawl ••, Defensive Combat: Brawl

You're better at stopping people from hurting you than you are at hurting other people. Maybe you practice a martial art that redirects an opponent's blows, or else you're just very good at not being where your opponent wants you to be.

Like a Book (•): You can read your opponents and know where they're likely to strike. When facing an unarmed opponent and not Dodging, increase your Defense by half your Brawl (round down).

Studied Style (••): You focus on reading one opponent, avoiding his attacks, and frustrating him. Attacks from that opponent do not reduce your Defense. If your Defense reduces his attack pool to 0, his further attacks against you lose the 10-again quality.

Redirect (•••): When you're being attacked by multiple opponents, you can direct their blows against one another. When you Dodge, if your Defense roll reduces an attack's successes to 0, your attacker rolls the same attack against another attacker of your choice.

Drawback: You may only redirect one attack in a turn. You cannot redirect an attack against the same attacker.

Joint Strike (• • • •): You wait until the last possible second then lash out at your opponent's elbow or wrist as he attacks, hoping to cripple his limbs. Roll Strength + Brawl instead of Defense. If you score more successes than your attacker, you deal one point of bashing damage per extra success, and inflict either the Arm Wrack or Leg Wrack Tilt (your choice).

Drawback: Spend a point of Willpower to use this maneuver.

Like the Breeze (• • • • •): You step to one side as your opponent attacks and give her enough of a push to send her flying past you. When dodging, if your Defense roll reduces an opponent's attack successes to 0, you can inflict the Knocked Down Tilt.

Drawback: You must declare that you're using this maneuver at the start of the turn before taking any other attacks.

Conditions

Conditions add an additional layer of consequence and reward to certain actions in the World of Darkness. They're not traits a player can buy or choose for her character. They're conditional; the context and the gameplay apply them and they remain only until certain **resolution** criteria are met. These resolutions are determined by the effect that causes the Condition or the terms of the Condition itself. Whenever your character resolves a Condition, take a Beat.

Conditions and Tilts (see p. 328) work similarly, but Conditions primarily play roles outside of combat, whereas Tilts tip the tides of a battle.

A character cannot have multiple instances of a Condition unless they apply to two different and specific things. For example, you may have Connected (Mob) and Connected (Police.)

Conditions replace the Flaws rules in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**.

Sources of Conditions

Various things within the course of a game can cause Conditions. The most common is exceptional successes. Any time a player rolls an exceptional success, the player may choose to bring a Condition into play. This Condition must be relevant to the situation. Some supernatural abilities can also offer Conditions. Ghostly Numina may offer Conditions, as well as vampiric Disciplines or werewolf Gifts.

A Storyteller may add a Condition to a character during any situation where she feels it would heighten the drama of the game.

Lastly, complex behaviors may cause Conditions. For example, a well-planned heist may impose the Overwhelmed Condition on the chief of police, or a detailed bout of research and investigation may offer the Informed Condition.

Resolutions

While we've listed resolutions for each Condition, other things may end its effects. Use your better judgment when determining Condition resolution. The rule of thumb is that anything that would cause the Condition's effects to end can be counted as resolution.

Persistent Conditions

Some Conditions are marked as Persistent. These Conditions are tied inexorably to the character (replacing the Flaws in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**). Persistent Conditions may offer one Beat per game session when they complicate the character's life. With Storyteller permission, players may take Persistent Conditions for their characters at character creation. Persistent Conditions may be resolved permanently only with a specific and impressive effort, along with Storyteller discretion.

Conditions on Storyteller Characters

Storyteller characters don't usually track Experiences the way the players' characters do. Any time a Storyteller character offered experience by a Condition, they simply regain a point of Willpower for use in the same scene.

Condition List

The list below includes common Conditions that can be applied to characters. For Skill-based rolls, an exceptional success allows the noted Condition (unless otherwise stated). It may go to your character or the subject of the roll, as noted.

While we've listed a handful of recommended Skills that afford a given Condition, this list is hardly exhaustive. Give whatever Conditions make sense within the scope of the story. If a Condition has no listed Skills, it's because another circumstance within the rules can cause it and it's not something easily brought upon by regular Skill usage.

Addicted (Persistent)

Your character is addicted to something, whether drugs, gambling or other destructive behaviors. Some addictions are more dangerous than others, but the nature of addiction is that it slowly takes over your life, impeding functionality. If you are addicted, you need to indulge your addiction regularly to keep it under control. A specific addiction should be chosen upon taking this Condition; characters can take this Condition multiple times for different addictions. Being unable to feed your addiction can result in the Deprived Condition (p. 309).

Resolution: Regain a dot of Integrity, lose *another* dot of Integrity, or achieve an exceptional success on a breaking point.

Beat: Your character chooses to get a fix rather than fulfill an obligation.



Amnesia (Persistent)

Your character is missing a portion of her memory. An entire period of her life is just gone. This causes massive difficulties with friends and loved ones.

Resolution: You regain your memory and learn the truth. Depending on the circumstances, this may constitute a breaking point.

Beat: Something problematic arises, such as a forgotten arrest warrant or old enemy.

Blind (Persistent)

Your character cannot see. Any rolls requiring sight may only use a chance die. If another sense can be reasonably substituted, make the roll at –3 instead. In a combat situation, she suffers the drawbacks of the Blinded Tilt (see p. 329). This Condition may be temporary, but that is usually the result of a combat effect, in which case the Blindness Tilt would apply.

Resolution: Your character regains her sight.

Beat: Your character encounters a limitation or difficulty that inconveniences her.

Broken (Persistent)

Whatever you did or saw, something inside you snapped. You can barely muster up the will to do your job anymore, and anything more emotionally intense than a raised voice makes you flinch and back down. Apply a –2 to all Social rolls and rolls involving Resolve and a –5 to all use of the Intimidation Skill.

Resolution: Regain a dot of Integrity, lose *another* dot of Integrity, or achieve an exceptional success on a breaking point.

Beat: You back down from a confrontation or fail a roll due to this Condition.

Bonded

Your character has established an extensive bond with a specific animal. She gains +2 on any rolls to influence or persuade her bonded animal. It may add your Animal Ken to any rolls to resist coercion or fear when in your character's presence. The animal may add your character's Animal Ken to any one die roll.

Resolution: The bonded animal dies or is otherwise parted from the character.

Beat: n/a

Connected (Persistent)

Your character has made inroads with a specified group. While she has this Condition, she gets a +2 to all rolls relating to that group. Alternately, she can shed this Condition to gain a one-time automatic exceptional success on the next roll to influence or otherwise take advantage of the group. Once Connected is resolved, the character is considered to have burned her bridges and is no longer an accepted member. The character may be able to regain Connected with the specified group per Storyteller approval.

Example Skills: Politics, Socialize

Resolution: The character loses her membership or otherwise loses her standing with the group.

Beat: The character is asked to perform a favor for the group that inconveniences her.

Disabled (Persistent)

Your character has limited or no ability to walk. Her Speed trait is effectively 1. She must rely on a wheelchair or other device to travel. A manual wheelchair's Speed is equal to your character's Strength and requires use of her hands. Electric wheelchairs have a Speed of 3, but allow the free use of the character's hands.

An injury can cause this Condition temporarily, in which case it is resolved when the injury heals and the character regains mobility.

Resolution: The character's disability is cured by mundane or supernatural means.

Beat: Your character's limited mobility inconveniences your character and makes her slow to respond.

Deprived

Your character suffers from an addiction. She is unable to get her fix, however, leaving her irritable, anxious, and unable to focus. Remove one from her Stamina, Resolve, and Composure dice pools. This does not influence derived traits; it only influences dice pools that use these Attributes.

Resolution: Your character indulges her addiction.

Beat: n/a

Embarrassing Secret

Your character has a secret from his past that could come back to haunt him. If this secret gets out, he could be ostracized or maybe even arrested. If it becomes known, this Condition is exchanged for Notoriety (p. 310).

Resolution: The character's secret is made public, or the character does whatever is necessary to make sure it never comes to light.

Beat: n/a

Fugue (Persistent)

Something terrible happened. Rather than deal with it or let it break you, your mind shuts it out. You are prone to blackouts and lost time. Whenever circumstances become too similar to the situation that led to your gaining this Condition, the player rolls Resolve + Composure. If you fail the roll, the Storyteller controls your character for the next scene; your character, left to his own devices, will seek to avoid the conflict and get away from the area.

Resolution: Regain a dot of Integrity, lose *another* dot of Integrity, or achieve an exceptional success on a breaking point.

Beat: You enter a fugue state as described above.

Guilty

Your character is experiencing deep-seated feelings of guilt and remorse. This Condition is commonly applied after a successful breaking point roll (p. 115). While the character is under the effects of this Condition, he receives a –2 to any Resolve or Composure rolls to defend against Subterfuge, Empathy or Intimidation rolls.

Resolution: The character confesses his crimes and makes restitution for whatever he did.

Beat: n/a

Informed

Your character has a breadth of research information based on the topic she investigated. When you make a roll relating to the topic, you may choose to resolve this Condition. If you resolve it and the roll failed, it is instead considered to have a single success. If it succeeded, the roll is considered an exceptional success.

The roll that benefits from the Informed Condition can be any relevant Skill roll. For example, a character with Informed (Werewolves) might gain its benefits when using researched information to build a silver bear trap with the Crafts Skill. Combat rolls cannot benefit from this Condition.

Example Skills: Academics, Investigation, Occult, Science

Resolution: Your character uses her research to gain information; the Condition is resolved as described above.

Beat: n/a

Inspired

Your character is deeply inspired. When your character takes an action pertaining to that inspiration, you may resolve this Condition. An exceptional success on that roll requires only three successes instead of five and you gain a point of Willpower.

Example Skills: Crafts, Expression

Resolution: You spend inspiration to spur yourself to greater success, resolving the Condition as described above.

Beat: n/a

Leveraged

Your character has been blackmailed, tricked, convinced, or otherwise leveraged into doing what another character wishes. You may have the Leveraged Condition multiple times for different characters. Any time the specified character requests something of you, you may resolve this Condition if your character does as requested without rolling to resist.

Example Skills: Empathy, Persuasion, Subterfuge

Resolution: Your character may either resolve the Condition by complying with a request as above, or if you apply the Leveraged condition to the specified character.

Beat: n/a

Lost

Your character has no idea where she is or how to reach her target. Characters with the Lost Condition remove one die from their Composure dice pools. This does not influence derived traits; it only influences dice pools that use these Attributes. A Lost character cannot make any headway toward her goal without first navigating and finding her place. This requires a successful Wits + Streetwise action (in the city) or Wits + Survival action (in the wilderness).

Resolution: Your character gives up on reaching her intended destination, or she successfully navigates as described above.

Beat: n/a

Madness (Persistent)

Your character saw or did something that jarred her loose from reality. This isn't a mental illness born of brain chemistry — that, at least, might be treatable. This madness is the product of supernatural tampering or witnessing something that humanity was never meant to comprehend. The Storyteller has a pool of dice equal to 10 – (character's Integrity). Once per chapter, the Storyteller can apply those dice as a negative modifier to any Mental or Social roll made for the character.

Resolution: Regain a dot of Integrity, lose *another* dot of Integrity, or achieve an exceptional success on a breaking point.

Beat: The character fails a roll because of this Condition.

Mute (Persistent)

Your character cannot speak. Any communication must be done through writing, gestures, or hand signs. Illness, injury, or supernatural powers can inflict this Condition on a temporary basis.

Resolution: The character regains her voice through mundane or supernatural means.

Beat: Your character suffers a limitation or communication difficulty that heightens immediate danger.

Notoriety

Whether or not your character actually did something heinous in the past, the wrong people think he did and now he's ostracized by the general public. Your character suffers a –2 on any Social rolls against those who know of his notoriety. If using Social maneuvering (p.314), the character must open one extra Door if his target knows of his notoriety.

Example Skills: Subterfuge, Socialize

Resolution: The story is debunked or the character's name is cleared.

Beat: n/a

Obsession (Persistent)

Something's on your character's mind and she just can't shake it. She gains the 9-again quality on all rolls related to pursuing her obsession. On rolls that are unrelated to her obsession, she loses the 10-again quality. Obsession can be a temporary quality per Storyteller approval.

Resolution: The character sheds or purges her fixation.

Beat: Character fails to fulfill an obligation due to pursuing her obligation.

Shaken

Something has severely frightened your character. Any time your character is taking an action where that fear might hinder her, you may opt to fail the roll and resolve this Condition. This Condition can be imposed by undergoing a breaking point roll.

Example Skills: Brawl, Firearms, Intimidation, Weaponry

Resolution: The character gives into her fear and fails a roll as described above.

Beat: n/a

Spooked

Your character has seen something supernatural — not overt enough to terrify her, but unmistakably otherworldly. How your character responds to this is up to you, but it captivates her and dominates her focus.

Resolution: This Condition is resolved when your character's fear and fascination causes her to do something that hinders the group or complicates things (she goes off alone to investigate a strange noise, stays up all night researching, runs away instead of holding her ground, etc.).

Beat: n/a

Steadfast

Your character is confident and resolved. When you've failed a roll, you may choose resolve this Condition to instead treat the action as if you'd rolled a single success. If the roll is a chance die, you may choose to resolve this Condition and roll a single regular die instead.

Resolution: Your character's confidence carries him through and the worst is avoided; the Condition is resolved as described above.

Beat: n/a

Swooning

Your character is attracted to someone and is vulnerable where they are concerned. He may have the proverbial "butterflies in his stomach" or just be constantly aware of the object of his affection. A character may have multiple instances of this Condition, reflecting affection for multiple characters. He suffers a –2 to any rolls that would adversely affect the specified character, who also gains +2 on any Social rolls against him. If the specified character is attempting Social maneuvering on the Swooning character, the impression level is considered one higher (maximum of perfect; see p. 315).

Example Skills: Persuasion, Subterfuge

Resolution: Your character does something for his love interest that puts him in danger, or he opts to fail a roll to resist a Social action by the specified character.

Beat: n/a

Creating New Conditions

This list of Conditions is by no means intended to be exhaustive. The players and the Storyteller can and should create new Conditions to apply to whatever situations arise in play. When creating a Condition, consider the following two points:

- What game mechanics does the Condition require?
- How can the Condition be resolved?

All Conditions should have some kind of game effect. They can add or subtract dice, restrict certain kinds of rolls, remove 10-again or add 9-again, and interact with sub-systems such as Social maneuvering. A Condition that affects a character's performance in combat is actually a Tilt (see p. 328).

For example, Agent Lundy is investigating a crime scene while a local policeman, Officer Mallory, looks on. Lundy's player rolls an exceptional success on his Investigation roll and finds an amazing amount of detail and information. The Storyteller asks the player if he would like to place a Condition on Mallory, if Mallory's player is amenable. Lundy suggests Awed, since Mallory is feeling pretty intimidated by Lundy's investigatory prowess.

Mallory's player agrees and grabs an index card. He writes "Awed — Lundy" on it. The players could model this on the Swooning or Leveraged Conditions, but Mallory's player decides he'd rather have this manifest as Mallory becoming flustered around Lundy. He asks if he can shed this Condition to fail an Investigation or Social roll while in Lundy's presence (thus resolving the Condition). The Storyteller agrees and Mallory's player holds the card until he wants to use it. When he does, he'll gain a Beat.

Soul Loss

One supernatural trauma tears at the foundation of Integrity, reducing the strongest personalities to shuffling near-catatonia. Certain rare and powerful magic can strike at a victim's soul, removing or destroying it.

The human soul exists in Twilight (see p. 339) but is not made of ephemera, so is insubstantial even to ephemeral beings unless they have Numina or Influences allowing them to manipulate souls. In general, only very high-Rank ghosts, or angels specifically sent to meddle with souls, have such abilities. Some demons and mages also have the knowledge and power necessary to affect the higher self. The soul is so subtle, most people can't even tell that they have one — until it's gone.

At first, the victim feels fine — better than normal, even, energized and ready to take on the world. But it's a false sense of security, caused by her psyche overcompensating for the loss. She feels like she can achieve anything, but the void in her heart drives her to increasingly desperate acts of self-affirmation. A character who loses her soul immediately suffers the Soulless Condition, described below, which represents her Integrity crumbling in her soul's absence. Once she has reached Integrity 1, she gains the Enervated Condition as her attempts to reassure herself fail and her Willpower decays. Once her permanent Willpower is reduced to 0, she gains the Thrall Condition. Unless she gets her soul back somehow, she will live the rest of her life in a miserable, barely conscious half-state, unable to care for herself or muster any defense.

Soulless (Persistent)

The character is in the first stage of soul loss. Without a soul, she can't attempt abjuration, warding, or binding (see p. 353). She is also more susceptible to possession — any dice pools to resist being taken over or possessed by another entity are at a -2 dice penalty. The effects on Integrity and Willpower, though, are more severe. For as long as she has this Condition, she does not regain Willpower through surrender or rest, and her use of Virtue and Vice is reversed. She may regain one Willpower point per scene by fulfilling her Virtue without having to risk herself, and regains full Willpower once per chapter by fulfilling her Vice in a way that poses a threat to herself. Regaining Willpower through

Vice, though, is now a breaking point with a -5 penalty unless the character has reached Integrity 1.

Resolution: Gain a beat whenever the character loses Integrity because she indulged her Vice. This Condition is only removed if the character regains her soul.

Enervated (Persistent)

The character is in the second stage of soul loss. Her instinctive efforts to shore up her Willpower by giving into her urges have failed, her Integrity has gone and her Willpower is now fading. In addition to the effects of Soulless, she can no longer regain Willpower through her Virtue, only her Vice. Indulging herself brings diminishing returns — whenever she does so, her permanent Willpower drops by one dot before she regains Willpower points to the new maximum.

Resolution: Gain a beat whenever the character loses a dot of Willpower. This Condition is only removed if the character regains her soul.

Thrall (Persistent)

The character has fully succumbed to the effects of soullessness. She may not spend Willpower points for any reason, may not use her Defense in combat, may not spend Experiences, and suffers all the effects of the Broken Condition (see p. 308) as well. The player should only continue playing a character with this Condition if she stands a chance of regaining the Soul.

Resolution: Gain a beat whenever the character is victimized as a result of her Condition. This Condition is only removed if the character regains her soul.

Regaining the Soul

What magic takes away, magic can return. If a character suffering from soul loss regains a soul (usually, but not necessarily, her own), the Conditions brought on by the soul's absence rapidly reverse themselves. She immediately sheds the Soulless, Enervated, and Thrall Conditions. If she'd dropped to Willpower 0 she immediately gains Willpower 1.

Willpower comes back first—every time she regains a point of Willpower through rest or fulfilling her Virtue, her permanent Willpower increases by one until it returns to the rating she had before losing her soul. Once Willpower has returned to normal, one Integrity dot lost to the Soulless Condition returns every time she regains Willpower through rest. Conditions caused by the breaking points directly resulting from soullessness are removed when the Integrity dot they are associated with returns. Integrity dots lost to breaking points suffered while Integrity was decaying for other reasons don't come back. For example, if a soulless character is reduced to Integrity 3 and commits murder, losing another dot to a breaking point, she will stabilize with one less dot than she originally had if her soul is returned.

Extended Actions: Digging in Deeper

Extended actions represent efforts to complete complex tasks. There's a process, a progression, then the task is complete. These rules replace the extended action rules in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**.

Each roll in an extended action reflects a step in the process. Something changes. Either your character progresses or she faces a setback.

Determine the Dice Pool

As with any action, first determine the dice pool as Attribute + Skill + Equipment. Situational modifiers apply and may change from roll to roll as the story unfolds. The unmodified Attribute + Skill + Specialty (if any) determines the maximum number of dice rolls allowed before the action fails. Players may roll the number of dice in their pool up to the number of dice rolls allowed as they attempt to succeed.

Example: Sammy's car has broken down out on a lonely road, but Sammy manages to get it to limp to a service station before it dies completely. No one is around, but the place seems to be pretty well maintained. Figuring the local mechanic is just out, Sammy waits ... but no one comes. As night begins to fall, Sammy figures he'd better just fix the damn thing himself so he can stay ahead of the *things* chasing him.

The Storyteller sets the repair roll as Wits + Crafts. Sammy has Wits 2, Crafts 4 and a Specialty in Auto Repair, which applies. Altogether, the player has seven dice in the unmodified pool, so she can roll seven times.

Determine Target Successes and Time

Next, the Storyteller determines the required successes and the time between rolls.

Most actions require between five and twenty successes for completion. Five successes reflects a reasonable action that most competent characters can complete given the right tools and knowledge (replacing the brakes on a car, for example). Ten represents a difficult action, but one realistic for a professional in the field (writing a robust and popular academic thesis). Twenty successes represents a very difficult action that requires a strong showing even for a very skilled character (preparing a violin solo worthy of a world-class performance). With creative endeavors, players may choose their own target successes, to reflect different degrees of effort and accomplishment.

When determining the time between rolls, a Storyteller should rely on common sense and logic. Would something take weeks? Consider one roll per week. Could a person realistically accomplish the task in a day? An hour per roll makes for a solid timeframe.

Characters must be dedicated to the task during this time. Unless there's a good reason (brain surgery, for example), characters may take breaks or handle other minor tasks in the meantime. With most tasks, it's possible to step aside and continue progress later. Any rolls requiring a day or more assume the character sleeps normally.

Example: The Storyteller decides that each roll requires a half hour; Sammy's player needs to accumulate seven successes. Normally this wouldn't be a big problem given Sammy's dice pool, but sunset is in two hours and Sammy wants to be gone by then. The player really only has four rolls.

Roll Results

Success

Each successful roll adds to the running total, bringing the task closer to completion. Consider what changes, and what steps the character has made toward the accomplishment. Make each roll palpable.

Example: Sammy's player makes the first roll and generates one success. That's better than nothing, but it does make the player a little nervous. The Storyteller describes Sammy digging around under the hood to diagnose the problem and then turning around to the unfamiliar garage, looking for the right parts as the shadows lengthen.

Failed Rolls

When you fail a roll, the Storyteller presents a choice: either take a Condition (of her choice) or abandon the action. The player can offer up a different suggestion as to what the Condition should be or how it should affect the character (see Conditions, p. 307), but the choice after a failed roll in an extended action is always accept the Condition and continue, or refuse the Condition and lose all accumulated successes.

Example: Sammy's player rolls again and this time fails. The Storyteller suggests that Sammy is Frustrated by this outcome. The player can either agree that Sammy is Frustrated (taking Frustrated as a Condition and working with the Storyteller to quickly determine what this Condition means in game terms), or refuse and start over. The player, wanting to get a Beat out of the Condition (see Beats, p. 286), agrees that Sammy is Frustrated and continues. The player has one success toward the required seven.

Exceptional Success

If you roll an exceptional success at any point during the process, you have three options: You can subtract the dots your character has in the relevant Skill from the total required (which might mean you accomplish the goal right then and there), you can reduce the time on each roll by one quarter, or you can apply the "exceptional success" result when your character does complete the goal (many of the "Roll Results" descriptions in various World of Darkness books describe an extra bonus for finishing an extended action with an exceptional success; this option allows the player to choose to apply it if appropriate).

Example: On the third roll, Sammy's player rolls five successes. This is an exceptional success, so the player has three choices: She can subtract Sammy's Crafts rating from the required total, she can reduce the time for each roll by 25%, or she can apply a special bonus to the action if she completes it in time.

The player considers her options. The time reduction isn't really that helpful in this situation. It would reduce each roll from 30 minutes to 22.5 minutes, not really saving a great deal of time. If she chooses to reduce the total number of successes, it falls from 7 to 3 (7 – Crafts rating (4) = 3), which would mean that the work is done and Sammy can leave (as the player has accumulated six successes with the five successes from this turn). The Storyteller suggests that a bonus might be to apply the Souped Up Condition to the car, giving it a bonus on Speed that Sammy can activate when necessary. Given how the chronicle has gone so far, and that the player still has one more roll to make before the sun sets, she takes that option. Sammy still has a little more work to do (one more success).

Dramatic Failures

Dramatic failures go a step further than normal failures; your character fails the action and receives a Condition. As well, the first roll on a further attempt suffers a –2 penalty.

Example: Sammy's player has one more roll until sunset (note: the player *could* actually make four more rolls, for a total of seven, equal to the dice pool, but this situation has extenuating circumstances). The player rolls...and fails. Since Sammy will be stuck here past sunset no matter what the player does, she opts to have this failure count as a dramatic failure (see p. 287), gain a Beat for her trouble, and hope that the other characters arrive before whatever is chasing Sammy does. If Sammy tries to fix this car again, the player will suffer a –2 on the first roll.

Near Misses

So what happens if a character accumulates *most* of the successes required for the extended action but has to stop due to running out of time or reaching the maximum number of rolls? All of the work the character did doesn't just vanish, after all.

That's true, insofar as it goes. Once the character has reached the maximum allowable rolls for a given extended action, however, he has exhausted the limits of his talent in the area. He can come back to it once his dice pool changes — if the player buys up the relevant Skill or Attribute or buys a new Specialty, the character can pick up where he left off (but he only gets one more roll unless the player changes the dice pool by more than one die).

If the character had to abandon the project before the maximum number of rolls was reached, however, he can come back to it and continue making the rolls until he reaches that

limit, provided that it's the kind of project that will "keep." A character could continue working on a novel for years, but making a soufflé is probably a one-attempt project.

If the player has accumulated *less than 25% of the total required successes* (round down), the successes are lost. The character just didn't get a good enough start on the project.

If the player accumulated *at least 50% of the total required successes* (round down), the player can add a +2 bonus to the first roll of the extended action if the character attempts it again within the same chapter.

If the player accumulated *75% or more of the total required successes* (round down), the player can add a +4 bonus to the first roll of the extended action, if the character attempts it again within the same story.

If the player rolled an exceptional success during the process and opted for the "end bonus" option, that option remains even if the character comes back to the action later.

Example: Sammy ultimately failed the action, but he did so with six out of seven successes. If he tries to fix that car again any time during this story, he'll receive a net bonus of +2 on the first roll (+4 for the progress he made, –2 for the dramatic failure at the end). Also, if he completes it, he'll keep the Souped Up Condition on the car. Since he only made four rolls on the initial project, he can make three more to finish this project. He only needs one more success — that should be plenty.

Social Maneuvering

These rules replace the standard rules for Social actions in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**. They assume your character making effort toward getting another character or a group of characters to do what she wants. Social actions within this system may be direct or subtle, complex or simple. For example, your character may shout at another and demand he gets out of the way, or your character may subtly offer clues suggesting someone needs to vote for her.

It is not always possible to get someone to do what you want. For instance, no amount of Social maneuvering is going to convince the chief of police in a large city to hold a press conference and admit to murder, even if the player has a dice pool impressive enough to make it happen. This system is designed to allow characters to manipulate or convince other characters to perform favors or undertake actions, but it does raise the question: Is one character dictating another's actions, and how much of that should be allowed in a role-playing game? Or, put a different way, can one character seduce another with this system?

Under a strict read of the rules, yes. The goal is "get that character to sleep with my character," the number of Doors is decided as explained below, and impressions and other factors play into the final result. This is not too different from how seduction and other, less carnal, forms of persuasion actually work — the persuader tries to make the offer as enticing as possible.

But because it's the persuader's player making the rolls, the target is left without a way to say "no." As such, it's our recommendation that this system be used by player-controlled characters on Storyteller characters rather than on other players' characters. If one player's character wants to seduce, persuade, convince, or intimidate another, leave it up to roleplaying and let players make their own decisions about what their characters do.

Goals

When using a Social action with this system, the first step is to declare your character's intended goal. This is as simple as stating what you want the subject to do and how your character is going about making it happen. You need only announce the initial stages, as the effort will likely occur over multiple rolls, reflecting different actions.

At this point, the Storyteller determines whether the goal is reasonable. A character might, with time and proper tactics, convince a rich person to give him a large sum of money. He probably isn't going to convince the wealthy individual to abandon *all* of his wealth to the character (though it might be possible to get him to name the character as heir, at which point the character can set about speeding up the inheritance process).

Doors

Once you've declared your character's goal, the next step is to determine the scope of the challenge. We represent this with "Doors," which reflect a character's resistance to coercion: her social walls, his skepticism, mistrust, or just a hesitance toward intimacy. It's abstract and means different things in every given case.

The base number of Doors is equal to the lower of the character's Resolve or Composure. If the goal would be a breaking point for the character, add two Doors. If accomplishing the goal would prevent a character from resolving an Aspiration, add a Door. Acting in opposition to a Virtue also adds a Door. Doors may increase as the effort continues and the circumstances change. For example, if the goal seems mundane at first but the situation makes it reprehensible, it may increase the number of Doors required. If your character gives up on the goal and shifts to another, any Doors currently open remain so, but assess Aspirations, Virtues, and Integrity in case of a potential increase.

Doors must be opened one by one. Each successful roll — *not* each success — opens one. Exceptional successes open two. Also, Doors are specifically a one-way relationship between two characters. They may each have Doors to one another or Doors to other characters.

First Impressions

First (and later) impressions determine the time required between rolls. The Storyteller sets the first impression based on any past history between the characters, the circumstances of their meeting, the nature of the favor being asked (if the acting character

is asking right up front — sometimes it's a better idea not to lead off with what you want!) and any other relevant factors.

"Average impressions" call for weekly rolls, which makes the process very slow. Through play, your character may influence the interaction for a "good impression." This may mean meeting in a pleasant environment, wearing appealing clothing, playing appropriate music, or otherwise making the situation more comfortable. This should not require a roll during a first impression but requires one if attempted later. An excellent impression requires a roll to influence the situation.

For example, you may use a Wits + Socialize to find the right people to invite to a party. Perfect impressions require further factors. It may involve leverage or playing to a character's Vice (see below).

Hostile impressions come from tense first impressions or threatening pitches. These interactions require you manipulate the impression or to force the Doors (see below).

Vices

If your character knows her subject's Vice, she can use it to influence the interaction. With an offer that tempts that Vice, move the interaction one step up on the chart. As a rule of thumb, if by agreeing to the temptation the target were to gain Willpower, it's a valid temptation.

Soft Leverage (Gifts and Bribes)

Soft Leverage represents offers of services or payments in order to lubricate social interaction. Make the offer. If the recipient agrees, move the impression up once on the chart.

Mechanically, this can be represented in certain Merit dots. For example, a bribe may be represented by a Resources 3 offer, or an offer for service may be reflected by Retainer 3. By default, these bribes give the recipient use of the Merit for a designated amount of time.

Impression	Time per Roll
Perfect	1 Turn
Excellent	1 Hour
Good	1 Day
Average	1 Week
Hostile	Cannot roll

Opening Doors

At each interval, you may make a roll to open Doors and move closer to your character's goal. The roll might be different each time, depending on the character's tactics. Some of the rolls might not even be Social. For example, if your character is trying to win someone's favor, fixing his computer with an Intelligence + Computer roll could open a Door.

As Storyteller, be creative in selecting dice pools. Change them up with each step to keep the interactions dynamic. Similarly, consider contested and resisted rolls. Most resisted actions or contested rolls use either Resolve or Composure or a combination of the two. But don't let that stand as a limit. Contested rolls don't require a resistance trait. For example, Wits might be used to notice a lie, Strength to help a character stand up to threats, or Presence to protect and maintain one's reputation at a soiree.

Failed rolls impose a cumulative –1 on further rolls. These penalties do not go away with successful rolls. When the player fails a roll, the Storyteller may choose to worsen the impression level by one. If she does so, the player takes a Beat. If this takes the impression level to hostile, the attempt cannot move forward until it improves.

Aspirations

Aspirations are quick routes to influence. Find a character's goals, wants, and needs, and they can help move interactions forward. If your character presents a clear path and reasoning for how they'll help a character achieve an Aspiration, remove a Door.

This doesn't require follow-through but it does require a certain amount of assurance. If the opportunity presents itself and your character pulls out of an offer, two Doors close.

Failure

A Social maneuvering attempt can fail utterly under the following circumstances:

- The player rolls a dramatic failure on an attempt to open a Door (the player takes a Beat as usual).
- The target realizes that he is being lied to or manipulated. This does *not* apply if the target is aware that the character is trying to talk him into something, only if the target feels betrayed or conned.
- The impression level reaches "hostile" and remains so for a week of game time. The character can try again during the next story.

Resolution

Once your character opens the final Door, the subject must act. Storyteller characters abide by the intended goal and follow through as stated.

If you allow players' characters to be the targets of Social maneuvering, resolve this stage as a negotiation with two possible outcomes. The subject chooses to abide by the desired goal or offer a beneficial alternative.

Go With the Flow

If the character does as requested and abides by the intended goal, his player takes a Beat (see p. 286).

Offer an Alternative

If the subject's player chooses, he may offer a beneficial alternative and the initiator's player can impose a Condition

(see p. 307) on his character. This offer exists between players; it does not need to occur within the fiction of the game (though it can). The alternative must be beneficial and not a twist of intent. The Storyteller adjudicates.

The initiator's player chooses a Condition to impose on the subject. It must make sense within the context of the scenario.

Example of Social Maneuvering

Stacy wants Professor Erikson to loan her a book from his private library (she intends to use the book's contents to summon a demon, but Erickson doesn't know that). Erickson is protective of his books but he'd be willing to loan one out under the right circumstances. Erickson has Resolve 3, Composure 4, so the base number of Doors Stacy needs to open is 3 (the lower of the two). Loaning out a book wouldn't be a breaking point, nor does it prevent him from achieving an Aspiration, but it does work against his Virtue (Cautious), so the total number of Doors Stacy needs to open to get the book is 4.

The Storyteller decides that the first impression is average; the two know one another (Stacy is a former student of Erickson's), but they aren't close. Stacy arranges to find Erickson at a conference and impresses him with her knowledge of esoteric funerary rites (this requires an Intelligence + Occult roll, plus whatever effort Stacy had to put forth to get into the conference), and this changes the impression level to "good." Now, Stacy can make one attempt to open Doors per day. At the conference, Stacy's player rolls Manipulation + Persuasion and succeeds; one Door opens. Stacy mentions the book to Erickson and lets him know she'd like to borrow it. He's not immediately receptive to that idea, but Stacy's in a good place to continue.

The next day, Stacy emails the professor about a related work (Manipulation + Academics), but fails. Future rolls will have a –1 penalty. The Storyteller decides that the impression level slips to average.

Stacy still has to overcome three Doors. She spends the next week doing research into Erickson and discovers that he wants to *become a respected academic*. She tells Erickson that she has a colleague who can help break the cipher in which the book is written. This removes one Door without a roll. Now she must overcome two more before he'll agree. (Note that even if Stacy has no intention of helping Erickson in his quest toward academic glory, as long as he reasonably believes that lending her the book will help him achieve his Aspiration, it opens the Door.)

During her research into the professor's personality, she also learns that his Vice is Vanity; he likes to see himself as the hero. Stacy goes to his office in tears, saying that she is in danger of being accused of plagiarism for copying a paper, and asks if he can help authenticate her work. Doing this allows him to come to her rescue, which in turn lets him soak up some praise; this would allow him to regain Willpower through his Vice and as such is enough of a temptation to raise the impression level back to good. Stacy's player rolls Manipulation + Expression for Stacy to compose a letter of thanks to him and achieves an exceptional success. The last two Doors open, and Erickson offers to let Stacy borrow the book for a weekend. He probably even thinks it was his idea.

On the other hand, if Erickson is a player-controlled character, his player might decide he really doesn't want to let that book out of his sight. He might offer an alternative — he'll bring the book to Stacy and let her use it for an afternoon. That, of course, might complicate her intended demon summoning, but she does get to put the Flattered Condition on Erickson.

Forcing Doors

Sometimes, waiting and subtlety just aren't warranted, desired, or possible. In these cases, your character can attempt to force a character's Doors. This method is high-risk, high-reward. Forcing Doors often leads to burnt bridges and missed opportunities.

When forcing Doors, state your character's goal and her approach and then roll immediately. The current number of Doors applies as a penalty to the dice roll. If successful, proceed to resolution as normal. If the roll fails, the subject is immune to further efforts at Social maneuvering from your character.

Hard Leverage

Hard Leverage represents threats, drugging, intimidation, blackmail, kidnapping, or other heavy-handed forms of coercion. It drives home the urgency required to force open a character's Doors.

Hard Leverage that requires the character to suffer a breaking point removes one Door (if the modifier to the roll — not considering the character's breaking points — is greater than –2) or two Doors (if the modifier is –3 or less).

Example

In the example above, assume Stacy really needs that book *now*. She goes to Erickson and threatens him at gunpoint to give up the book. Doing this is definitely a breaking point for Stacy (see p. 113 for more on breaking points). She applies a modifier for her Integrity and then a modifier based on the severity of the action and the harm it does to her self-image and psyche. She's not in the habit of committing violent acts and Erickson is obviously terrified, so the Storyteller assigns a –2 modifier to the breaking point roll. This being the case, one Door is removed. If she'd shot him the leg to let him know she was serious, the breaking point modifier would have been at least –3, which would have removed two Doors. In either case, her player rolls Presence + Intimidation plus any bonus for the gun, minus the appropriate penalty.

Influencing Groups

Influencing a group works in the same way using the same system. This generally means that influencing a group requires

at least an excellent level impression or forcing his Doors, unless the group meets regularly. The Storyteller determines Doors using the highest Resolve and Composure scores in the group. She also determines three Aspirations, a Virtue, a Vice, and a relative Integrity score for the group. When resolving the influence, most members will abide by the stated goal. Individual members may depart and do as they will, but a clear majority does as your player suggests.

Successive Efforts

After opening all Doors and resolving the action's goal, your character may wish to influence the same person or group again. If successful, subsequent influence attempts begin with one fewer Door. If the attempt failed or if Hard Leverage was employed, successive influence attempts begin with two more Doors. These modifiers are cumulative. No matter what, a character will always have at least one Door at the outset.

Combat

These rules supersede some of the combat rules presented in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, providing a lethal focus to fighting along with a unified system of conditions and reasons for characters to stop fighting before the other guy's only fit for the morgue.

Down and Dirty Combat

The combat system in the **World of Darkness Rulebook** and expanded in this section provides a reasonably comprehensive system to use when two or more people attempt to kill one another. Some fights don't deserve that much focus. When a fight has as much impact on the story as climbing a fence or breaking down a door, this simple system abstracts a fight to a single roll.

This system works particularly well when violence is a means to an end. To begin, the attacker declares his intent. As long as that intent is something that the Storyteller is comfortable with the character accomplishing in one roll, go ahead and apply this system. Since the nature of this combat reduces what would otherwise be a brutal act of violence to a single roll, the Storyteller may reserve it for characters who happen to be particularly capable combatants — or for facing enemies who are little more than chaff. If your arms deal has gone south and you have to get out of the country, the two mooks waiting for you in the hotel bathroom aren't a serious threat. The guys outside with a sedan and a range of fully-automatic weapons? They're a different story.

A player can call for a Down and Dirty Combat if he feels it's appropriate. If the Storyteller is fine with the character dispatching his opposition with a single roll, then it happens. As a rough guide, if a character has a combat pool of at least five dice, she's internalized the mechanics of violence to a degree that it is second nature and can use this system.

Note that Storyteller characters cannot use this option. Rather, it's possible for a character to suffer some damage during this kind of combat, but Storyteller-controlled characters cannot initiate.

Action: Instant and contested

Dice Pool: Combat pool (Dexterity + Firearms, Strength + Brawl, or Strength + Weaponry) versus either the opponent's combat pool (as above) *or* an attempt to escape (Strength or Dexterity + Athletics). Ignore Defense on this roll.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character's opponent gets the upper hand. This usually includes the opposite of the character's intent — if she wanted to disable the guards so she could escape, she is stunned instead.

Failure: The opponent wins the contest. If the opponent used a combat pool, deal damage equal to the difference in successes plus weapon modifier. Also, the opponent escapes unless he wants to press the combat.

Success: The character wins the contest. She deals damage equal to the difference in successes plus her weapon modifier and achieves her intent—if her intent includes killing her opponents, then she does so.

Exceptional Success: As a success, and the character also gains a point of Willpower from the rush of inflicting violence on an inferior opponent.

Going For Blood

A lot of the time, violence is an end to itself. Vinnie's run out on your sister, so you hammer some nails into a baseball bat and go teach him a lesson. Doc's going to set fire to your house with your family inside and dedicate their deaths to some forgotten god if you don't put a bullet in his brainpan. That *thing* has been slithering out of the barn at the edge of town for a month now, and if no one else is going to put it on a spike, it's up to you.

Other times — most times — violence is a means to an end. You don't want to punch this guy in the face, but you do need the book he's holding and he won't give it up. Donnie's holding the coke in one hand and a pistol in the other, talking himself up like a big man. Unless they're sociopaths or have a serious blood feud going on, nobody wants to get into a situation where they're going to kill someone. When this is the case, the Storyteller should make sure that the players know that the fight's about more than people trying to kill other people.

Optional Rule: Beaten Down & Surrender

As an optional rule, any character that takes more than his Stamina in bashing damage or any amount of lethal damage has had the fight knocked out of him. He has the Beaten Down Tilt (see p. 328; a Tilt, remember, is just a Condition that primarily affects combat). He must spend a point of Willpower every time he wants



to take a violent action until the end of the fight. He can still apply Defense against incoming attacks, can Dodge, and can run like hell, but it takes a point of Willpower to swing or shoot back.

On the other hand, he can give in. Give the lunatic with the butcher's knife what she wants, whether that's a bus ticket, an apology, a bag of crack, or a promise to stay out of the New Town after midnight. If you give in, you gain a point of Willpower and take a Beat, but you take no more part in the fight. If the other side wants to attack you, they've got to spend a point of Willpower to do so and probably suffer a breaking point. If some gangbangers want your truck and your two buddies have surrendered for that sweet combination of Willpower and not getting hurt, that does mean that they're all coming for you. You could fight them off, but it's three against one. Or you could do the sensible thing and remember that you get a lot of trucks in this life but only one pine box. Once everyone on one side has surrendered, the fight's over.

These rules only apply to humans and human-like creatures — anything that would incur a breaking point for committing (or attempting) "murder." Creatures that don't have a problem killing people in general can ignore surrender without penalty and don't have the fight beaten out of them like normal folks.

Intent

It's important to know what people want out of a violent encounter. Before any violent encounter, the Storyteller should pause the action long enough to get a statement of intent from both sides. This intent describes what the *character* wants to see as the outcome of a violent encounter. It also can't involve outcomes that fall outside the current scene: "I want to become President of the United States" isn't a valid intent for a man with a gun, even one on the White House lawn, and the Secret Service will soon disabuse him of that notion. Some examples include:

- I want to throw Amado out of the window to get him away from me.
- I want Sheena to give me the statue.
- I want to get away from this gun-toting psycho.
- I want to steal Larry's wallet in the fray.
- I want to get to my truck to get the fuck out of Dodge.

Every statement of intent starts with the words "I want." That's the clearest way to phrase it. Once you've got the Intent sorted out for both sides, you know what it means for a character to surrender: Her opponent gets what he wants, and in exchange, she gets a point of Willpower and isn't the target of any more violence.

The basic rule of intent is that it's something that the character is willing to hurt — or kill — other people to get. Sometimes you don't know that you're willing to kill for what you want until you actually kill someone. If your intent has nothing to do with hurting people and you end up killing someone (not just beating them into unconsciousness), you lose a point of Willpower.

Sometimes, a character's intent puts limits on the combat. "I want to kill Tran for sleeping with my daughter" is fine as a statement of intent, but it does mean that the character's opponent isn't about to surrender: sure, Tran would gain a point of Willpower, but he'd have to die first. Even "I want to hurt Danny to teach him a lesson" is problematic: what can Danny gain from surrendering?

If one party's intent is violence for its own sake, their intended victims don't acquire the Beaten Down Tilt no matter how much damage they take, and (obviously) gain no benefit from surrendering. When someone actually wants to kill you, the only thing you can do is to stop her by any means necessary, whether that's running or shooting back.

Storyteller Characters

Most conflict happens between characters under the players' control and Storyteller characters. The difference between the two is negligible in most combats — one character with a gun or a knife is much like any other, regardless of who is in control of the character. That said, Storyteller characters do have easier access to one resource: Willpower.

A player has to monitor her character's Willpower throughout the whole story, deciding when and where to spend points and when to hold back, balancing those concerns against the chance of regaining points through indulging her Vice in a scene — or going all-out and hoping to trigger her Virtue for the chapter.

A Storyteller character has none of those concerns. He's not going to be present in most of the scenes, so it doesn't matter if he blows more Willpower — he can regain it when off-screen, and even if he doesn't, it's not like he's going to spend it. This is especially noticeable in combat, when Storyteller characters can spend Willpower to hurt characters who have surrendered, enhance their attacks, and defend with greater ability than the players' characters.

If a Storyteller character spends a lot of time around the other characters and has enough spotlight time to both spend and recover Willpower over a similar timespan to the other characters, that's fine. Otherwise, Storyteller characters should reduce their available Willpower to reflect their "one shot" nature. Gangbangers, thugs, and similar characters who don't have a name don't have any Willpower available to spend. Minor named characters — the kind who recur but aren't the main antagonists of a story — have one point of Willpower available. Recurring antagonists and major Storyteller characters who don't spend a lot of time around the characters can spend up to half their total Willpower in a scene.

Storyteller characters with reduced Willpower totals can still regain spent points through the normal means for regaining Willpower, but can't go above their modified Willpower total for a scene. Note, though, that their Resolve + Composure values are unaffected (in case the Storyteller needs to have them roll this dice pool), and supernatural powers that drain Willpower work normally.

Initiative

Determine Initiative at the start of a combat as normal. Many weapons now include an Initiative modifier. When your character is using that weapon, her Initiative is penalized by that amount — even if she's kicking out at a close attacker, she's got to account for the shotgun in her hands.

The only way to avoid an Initiative penalty from a weapon you're using is to stop wielding it — either sling it or drop it. You can drop a weapon as a reflexive action in order to return to your unarmed Initiative. Slinging or holstering a weapon is an instant action. When you change what weapon you're using, you act on your new Initiative at the start of the next turn. If a character is wielding two weapons — showing off with a pair of pistols, or carrying a baton and a riot shield — take the highest Initiative penalty and increase it by one. An Initiative penalty can never reduce a character's Initiative below 0.

Example: Riots sweep through the city streets and Cass joins her comrades on the police lines. She's got a baton in one hand, and a large riot shield in the other. The baton has a –2 initiative modifier; the riot shield has a –4 modifier. Her total Initiative modifier is –5.

Surprise

When your character runs into an ambush or is otherwise the victim of a surprise attack, she has a chance of reacting in time to defend herself. Roll Wits + Composure, contested by the ambusher's Dexterity + Stealth. If you lose, you cannot take an action in the first turn of combat and do not get to apply Defense against incoming attacks. Roll Initiative in the second turn as normal.

Attack

The following changes apply to the rules to attack in combat.

Attack Dice Pools

Characters do not add a weapon's rating to their attack dice pool. Calculate dice pools for attacks as follows:

Unarmed Combat: Strength + Brawl; Defense applies

Melee Combat: Strength + Weaponry; Defense applies

Ranged Combat: Dexterity + Firearms

Thrown Weapons: Dexterity + Athletics; Defense applies

If your character has a scope or similar that affects how likely he is to hit his target, add the equipment bonus of the scope to the attack pool. These modifiers are listed separately to the weapon's base damage. Weapons that use system permutations — such as 9-again, 8-again, or similar — apply those effects to the attack roll.

Damage

The harm inflicted by an attack is determined by the number of successes on the attack roll, plus any weapon bonus. If you

COMBAT SUMMARY CHART

This chart supersedes the one on p.154 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**.

STAGE ONE: INTENT

- The players and the Storyteller describe what their characters want out of the fight.
- Decide whether characters can surrender and can become Beaten Down.

STAGE TWO: INITIATIVE

- If the attacker springs an ambush or otherwise strikes when the defender isn't able to counter, the defender rolls Wits + Composure contested by the attacker's Dexterity + Stealth. If the defender fails, she doesn't act on the first turn of combat and cannot apply Defense against attacks.
- Everyone rolls Initiative: the result of a die roll + Dexterity + Composure. If the character has a weapon readied, apply its Initiative Modifier.

STAGE THREE: ATTACK

- **Unarmed Combat:** Strength + Brawl vs. Defense
- **Melee Combat:** Strength + Weaponry vs. Defense
- **Ranged Combat:** Dexterity + Firearms
- **Thrown Weapons:** Dexterity + Athletics vs. Defense

A character's Defense is normally subtracted from any attack dice pools where it applies. If she chooses to Dodge, the defender rolls her Defense as a dice pool against each attack. Each success reduces the attacker's successes by one. If the attacker is reduced to zero successes, the attack does nothing. If the attacker has successes remaining, add any weapon modifier to the number of successes to determine how many points of Health the target loses. All weapons deal lethal damage.

STAGE FOUR: THE STORYTELLER DESCRIBES THE ATTACK AND WOUND IN NARRATIVE TERMS.

Possible Modifiers

- Aiming: +1 per turn to a +3 maximum
- All-Out Attack: +2 with Brawl or Weaponry attack; lose Defense
- Armor Piercing: Ignores amount of target's armor equal to item's rating
- Autofire Long Burst: 20 or so bullets, no target limit pending Storyteller approval. A +3 bonus is applied to each attack roll; –1 per roll for each target after the first
- Autofire Medium Burst: 10 or so bullets at one to three targets, with a +2 bonus to each attack roll; –1 per roll for each target after the first
- Autofire Short Burst: Three bullets at a single target with a +1 bonus to the roll
- Concealment: Barely –1; partially –2; substantially –3; fully, see "Cover"
- Cover: Subtract Durability from damage; if Durability is greater than weapon modifier, attack has no effect
- Dodge: Double Defense, roll as a dice pool with each success subtracting one from the attacker's successes
- Drawing a Weapon: Requires instant action without a Merit and could negate Defense
- Firing from Concealment: Shooter's own concealment quality (–1, –2 or –3) reduced by one as a penalty to fire back (so, no modifier, –1 or –2)
- Offhand Attack: –2 penalty
- Prone Target: –2 penalty to hit in ranged combat; +2 bonus to hit when attacker is within close-combat distance

COMBAT SUMMARY CHART (CONTINUED)

- Range: –2 at medium range, –4 at long range
- Shooting into Close Combat: –2 per combatant avoided in a single shot (not applicable to autofire); –4 if grappling
- Specified Target: Torso –1, leg or arm –2, head –3, hand –4, eye –5
- Surprised or Immobilized Target: Defense doesn't apply
- Touching a Target: Dexterity + Brawl or Dexterity + Weaponry; armor may or may not apply, but Defense does apply
- Willpower: Add three dice or +2 to a Resistance trait (Stamina, Resolve, or Composure) in one roll or instance

get no successes on your attack roll after applying Defense, you deal no damage — your victim doesn't have to defend against your weapon's bonus successes.

Attacks with fists and feet deal bashing damage. If you use a weapon, the damage is always lethal. Cricket bats and brass knuckles can shatter bones and crush skulls with far less effort than kicking someone to death. Some weapons have modifiers of +0. They don't add any bonus successes, but the attack still deals lethal damage. If you don't want to kill someone by accident, drop your weapon.

Close Combat

The following changes apply to the close-combat rules in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**

Defense

A character's Defense is equal to the lower of her Dexterity or Wits, plus her Athletics Skill. Some Merits can allow a character to use a Skill other than Athletics. Defense is subtracted from all unarmed, thrown, or weaponry attacks that the character is aware of. Spending Willpower on Defense increases it by two, but this bonus only lasts for one attack. Every time your character applies his Defense against an attack, reduce his Defense by one until the start of the next turn.

You can choose not to apply your character's Defense against incoming attacks. Sometimes a character might be attacked by weaker foes who act ahead of a stronger enemy, and thus you'd want to save the bulk of your Defense. On other occasions, you have to give up your Defense for an entire turn to use a combat maneuver, such as an all-out attack.

Dodge

If your character is in over his head, he can forsake his action to Dodge. When Dodging, double your character's Defense pool but do not subtract it from attack rolls. Instead, the defender's player rolls the character's Defense as a dice pool and subtracts any successes from the attacker's successes. This is an exception to the normal rules for contested actions. If the defender rolls at least as many successes as the attacker, the attack misses. Subtract successes for Defense *before* adding the weapon bonus.

As Dodging is a roll like any other, the player can spend Willpower to enhance it (getting +3 dice as normal). Merits and supernatural powers may allow additional dice pool effects such as allowing the Defense roll to be 8-again, or even a rote action.

Reduce Defense by one for each attack as normal when Dodging, *before* doubling the pool. If this reduces his Defense to 0, the defender is reduced to a chance die. On a dramatic failure, the character is left off-balance and out of position; reduce his Defense by 1 for his next turn.

Example

Julia has Dexterity •• and Athletics • for a Defense of three. When she Dodges, she has a pool of six dice to roll. She is attacked by a man with what looks like a radio antenna coming out of his neck and tries to Dodge his wild swing.

The Storyteller rolls seven dice for the man's attack (Strength + Brawl); Julia's player doubles her Defense and rolls six dice to Dodge. If the Storyteller rolls three successes and Julia's player rolls two, the man gets in with 1 success and inflicts 1 point of bashing damage. If the man had been using a knife doing 1L damage, he would have inflicted two points of damage: one for the success and one from the weapon.

On the other hand, assume Julia is accosted by a whole group of these radial-men. If four of them attack and Julia applies her Defense against each one, she has Defense 3 against the first attacker, 2 against the second, 1 against the third and 0 against the last one. If she chooses to Dodge the third attacker, she would roll two dice, because she applies the reduction to Defense *before* doubling it for Dodge. Likewise, if she were to Dodge the final attacker, she'd be rolling a chance die since her Defense was reduced to zero.

Pulling Blows

Sometimes you want to beat the fight out of someone without killing him. To that end you can choose to pull your blow, not putting full force behind an attack. You nominate a maximum amount of damage for the blow that can't be greater than the higher trait in your attack pool — for example, if you've got Strength •• and Brawl ••••, you can deal between 1 and 4 points as your maximum damage. If you would ordinarily do more damage, any extra is ignored. Because you're holding back, it's easier for your opponent to ward off your blows: the defender gains a +1 bonus to Defense.

At the Storyteller's discretion, you can reflexively spend a point of Willpower when pulling your blow with a weapon to deal bashing damage. Otherwise, the only way to avoid dealing lethal damage is to stop using a lump of metal or wood to inflict trauma.

Unarmed Combat

In addition to punching and kicking people, characters can use the following options when brawling.

Bite

Mostly used by animals, bites damage depends on the size and lethality of the creature's jaws. A human's teeth do –1 damage; like other unarmed attacks, the damage is bashing. Animals have a weapon bonus depending on the kind of creature: a large dog would get +0, a wolf applies +1, and a great white shark gets +4.

Humans and similar creatures that do not have protruding jaws can only bite when using a Damage move as part of a grapple.

Disarm

You attempt to snatch an opponent's weapon away. Roll Strength + Brawl contested by your opponent's Strength + Athletics. If you succeed, your opponent drops his weapon. If you get an exceptional success, you take possession of your opponent's weapon. On a dramatic failure, you take damage equal to the weapon's bonus — if you're struggling over a gun, you take damage equal to its damage rating (the gun goes off).

Grapple

To grab your opponent, roll Strength + Brawl – Defense. On a success, both of you are grappling. If you've got a length of rope, a chain, or a whip, you can add its weapon bonus to your Strength when grappling. If you score an exceptional success on this first roll, pick a move from the list below.

When grappling, each party makes a contested Strength + Brawl versus Strength + Brawl action on the higher of the two characters' Initiative. The winner picks a move from the list below, or two moves on an exceptional success.

- **Break Free** from the grapple. You throw off your opponent; you're both no longer grappling. Succeeding at this move is a reflexive action, you can take another action immediately afterwards.
- **Control Weapon**, either by drawing a weapon that you have holstered or turning your opponent's weapon against him. You keep control until your opponent makes a Control Weapon move.
- **Damage** your opponent by dealing bashing damage equal to your rolled successes. If you previously succeeded at a Control Weapon action, add the weapon bonus to your successes.
- **Disarm** your opponent, removing a weapon from the grapple entirely. You must first have succeeded at a Control Weapon move.
- **Drop Prone**, throwing both of you to the ground (see "Going Prone"). You must Break Free before rising.
- **Hold** your opponent in place. Neither of you can apply Defense against incoming attacks.
- **Restrain** your opponent with duct tape, zip ties, or a painful joint lock. Your opponent suffers the Immobilized Tilt. You can only use this move if you've already succeeded in a Hold move. If you use equipment to Restrain your opponent, you can leave the grapple.
- **Take Cover** using your opponent's body. Any ranged attacks made until the end of the turn automatically hit him (see "Human Shields," below).

If more than one person tries to grapple the same victim, count the attempt as a teamwork action (**World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 134). On the team side, both primary and secondary actors roll Strength + Brawl – Defense to engage, but the victim's Defense is unaffected by how many people are involved — even if five people try to grab him, he treats it as one attack. In the grapple, both primary and secondary actors roll Strength + Brawl in a contested action with the victim. If the defender wins, any chosen moves only affect the primary actor.

Ranged Combat

The following changes apply to the ranged combat rules in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**.

Autofire

The extra dice gained for using automatic fire (and penalties for shooting at multiple people) apply to the gunman's dice pool. Any successful hits deal successes + weapon modifier damage. This is one of the few instances where wielding a weapon grants dice bonuses to attack as well as bonus damage.

Example: Weston's packing a submachine gun when the gang boss's three henchmen draw pistols. He pulls the trigger for a medium burst and sprays bullets at all three punks. Weston's Dexterity is 2, his Firearms is 4, and he gains a +2 bonus for a medium burst, giving him a total of eight dice. As he's shooting at three people, he suffers a -3 penalty. Weston's player rolls five dice three

times, once for each henchman. As he's using a large SMG, he adds two successes to any successful roll to determine damage.

Covering Fire

Characters can use automatic weapons to provide covering fire — firing on full-auto to dissuade the character's enemies from coming out into the open. Covering fire is only possible with a weapon capable of fully automatic fire.

Roll Dexterity + Firearms. If successful, opponents within range must make a choice on their next turns; they can seek cover or drop prone (accepting normal penalties to any attacks made) or, if they take aggressive actions without seeking cover or going prone, they suffer a shot as if the successes on Covering Fire were scored against them.

The character states the general area he's firing at, and rolls Dexterity + Firearms. If the roll succeeds, characters in the affected area must make a choice on their next turns. They can avoid the attack, either running to any cover that's within their Speed or dropping prone (see "Going Prone," pp. 164–165 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**). Or, they can take an action as normal but suffer damage based on the covering fire successes + weapon modifier. Covering fire takes 10 bullets, the same as firing a medium burst.

Example: The Santos Militia has military-spec hardware and they're on to Danny. One of the militia opens up with an assault rifle and the Storyteller informs Danny's player that he's using covering fire. The Storyteller rolls the militiaman's Dexterity + Firearms and gets two successes. Danny can either get out of the way by going prone or ducking behind one of the Santos' Hummers, or take a shot at the guy with the gun and take five points of lethal damage.

Firearms and Close Combat

Any firearm larger than Size 1 is too big to use to accurately shoot someone when fists and crowbars are the order of the day. In close combat, the target's Defense against firearms attacks is increased by the gun's (Size – 1). If using a gun larger than a pistol to bludgeon your opponent, treat it as an improvised crowbar (see below for weapon traits).

Cover

When shooting at a target in cover, subtract the cover's Durability from the damage dealt. Any remaining damage affects both the object providing cover and anyone hiding behind it equally. If the object's Durability is higher than the attacker's weapon modifier, the bullets cannot penetrate cover. Durability for a range of objects is provided on p. 136 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**. Remember that cover only applies when the intended victim is entirely hidden — a chain-link fence or steel lamppost isn't large enough for a person to hide behind.

If you can see your target through cover — glass, for example — subtract *half* the cover's Durability from incoming attacks (round down). This does not apply if the object's Durability is higher than your weapon modifier.

Example: Cross hides completely behind a wooden door. Drake shoots at the door in the hopes of hitting Cross beyond. The door's Durability is 1. Drake's attack roll nets three successes and he's using a heavy revolver, for a total of five damage. The shot passes through the door, dealing four damage to the door's Structure and to Cross. Today's lesson: in the roshambo of life, bullets beat a cheap wooden door.

Human Shields

When the shit hits the fan and the SWAT team hits the botched bank job, the only available cover may be a terrified member of the public. Unfortunately, the human body is nowhere as effective at blocking bullets as television and movies would have us believe.

If your character is in the morally dubious position of using another human being as cover, any shots directed his way do damage to his victim first. Reduce the damage dealt by the victim's Stamina and any armor. Any remaining damage blows right through to your character. If the person you want to use to save your ass is already part of the fight, you need to use the Take Cover grapple move.

Using a human shield is almost certainly a breaking point with a pretty severe modifier (–3 or more) if the victim dies. Someone else might have pulled the trigger, but you forced your victim to take the bullet.

Example: Drake only wanted to jack the pale lady's car. Now, he's facing down three dudes with hand cannons. In desperation, he grabs a guy off the sidewalk who's about to learn the meaning of "wrong place, wrong time." One of the lady's minions pulls the trigger. He's a practiced marksman (Dexterity 2, Firearms 2) so the Storyteller rolls four dice. He gets two successes and adds the gun's weapon modifier of 2. The human shield takes four points of lethal damage. Drake's player subtracts his human shield's Stamina of 2 from the damage and marks off two points of lethal damage himself.

General Combat Factors

The following changes apply to the general combat rules in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**.

Specified Targets

Attacking specific body parts has its benefits. In addition to ignoring armor (see "Armor," p. 328), strikes to limbs and the head can have added effects.

- Arm (–2): A damaging hit can inflict the Arm Wrack Tilt if it deals more damage than the target's Stamina
- Leg (–2): A damaging hit can inflict the Leg Wrack Tilt if it deals more damage than the target's Stamina
- Head (–3): A damaging attack can stun the victim (see the Stunned Tilt, p. 333)



- Heart (–3): If the attacker does at least five points of damage, the weapon pierces the opponent's heart, with special effects for some monstrous targets
- Hand (–4): On a damaging hit, the victim suffers the Arm Wrack Tilt
- Eye (–5): On a damaging hit, the victim is blinded (see the Blinded Tilt, p. 329)

Killing Blow

When performing a killing blow, you deal damage equal to your full dice pool plus your weapon modifier. You've time enough to line up your attack so it avoids your victim's armor.

While people who kill in combat can justify their actions based on the heat of the moment, performing a killing blow is a premeditated attempt to end a human life without the target having a chance to do anything about it. Going through with a killing blow is breaking point whether the victim survives or not.

Weapons and Armor

Weapons are one of the fastest ways to turn a fight into a murder. Sometimes, that's a good thing: pulling a gun can cool down a knife fight before it starts. To that end, this section updates the weapons presented in the **World of Darkness Rulebook** to work with the altered combat system presented here.

A weapon's damage rating doesn't add to an attacker's dice pool. Instead, it adds bonus successes to a successful attack roll. When using weapons from other books, subtract one from the listed damage rating — every successful attack does at least one point of damage.

Also, every weapon deals lethal damage. A baseball bat, club, or mace does just as much serious trauma to the human body as an edged weapon or a bullet — though some supernatural creatures don't take lethal damage from weapons. Melee weapons also have a Strength requirement divorced from their Size. This works exactly the same as the Strength requirement for firearms.

Melee Weapons

The melee weapons detailed in the weapons table reflect the kind of large, frequently sharp objects that characters can use to fuck one another up. If you're playing a game set in a historical era, or your character is in a museum or old house with a display of archaic weapons, you can use the following guidelines to see which weapon profile is most appropriate. The night you fought off a mugger with your combat knife is one thing; the night you fought off a shadowy monster by grabbing a mace from a museum display is quite another.

RANGED WEAPONS CHART

Type	Damage	Ranges	Clip	Initiative	Strength	Size	Example
Revolver, lt	1	20/40/80	6	0	2	1	SW M640 (.38 Special)
Revolver, hvy	2	35/70/140	6	−2	3	1	SW M29 (.44 Magnum)
Pistol, lt	1	20/40/80	17+1	0	2	1	Glock 17 (9mm)
Pistol, hvy	2	30/60/120	7+1	−2	3	1	Colt M1911A1 (.45 ACP)
SMG, small*	1	25/50/100	30+1	−2	2	1	Ingram Mac-10 (9mm)
SMG, large*	2	50/100/200	30+1	−3	3	2	HK MP-5 (9mm)
Rifle	4	200/400/800	5+1	−5	2	3	Remington M-700 (30.06)
Assault Rifle*	3	150/300/600	42+1	−3	3	3	Stery-Aug (5.56mm)
Shotgun**	3	20/40/80	5+1	−4	3	2	Remington M870 (12-gauge)
Crossbow***	2	40/80/160	1	−5	3	3	

Damage: Indicates the number of bonus successes added to a successful attack. Firearms deal lethal damage against ordinary people. The type of damage may vary against supernatural opponents.

Ranges: The listed numbers a short/medium/long ranges in yards. Attacks at medium range suffer a −1 penalty. Attacks at long range suffer a −2 penalty.

Clip: The number of rounds a gun can hold. A "+1" indicates that a bullet can be held in the chamber, ready to fire.

Initiative: The penalty taken to Initiative when wielding the gun.

Strength: The minimum Strength needed to use a weapon effectively. A wielder with a lower Strength suffers a −1 penalty on attack rolls.

Size: 1 = Can be fired one-handed; 2 = Must be fired two-handed and can be hidden in a coat; 3 = Can be fired two-handed but not hidden on one's person

Availability: The cost in Resources dots or level of Social Merit needed to acquire the weapon.

* The weapon is capable of autofire, including short bursts, medium bursts, and long bursts.

** Attack rolls gain the 9-again quality

*** Crossbows take three turns to reload between shots. A crossbow can be used to deliver a stake through the heart (–3 penalty to attack rolls; must deal at least 5 damage in one attack)

- **Sap:** One of a number of weapons (including the blackjack and cosh) used by law enforcement and criminals alike in an attempt to knock victims out rather than kill them. Unfortunately for users, it turns out that hitting people in the head with a heavy object is more lethal than most law enforcement agencies are comfortable with. This can also represent any small fast weapon that inflicts blunt trauma, including a sock full of billiard balls.
- **Brass Knuckles:** Brass knuckles slip over the wearer's fingers to give more force to a punch. This weapon uses Brawl for the attack roll but deals lethal damage. The profile can represent a range of fist-loads, including the ever-popular roll of quarters; without a metal guard for the knuckles, however, the user takes one point of bashing damage on a successful hit. It can also apply to steel-toed boots.
- **Baton:** Covering a wide range of lightweight blunt instruments, the baton includes the collapsible (asp) baton, police truncheon, and side-handled baton in use by various police forces. This category of weapon includes the 2x4 and other lengths of wood used to hurt people.

MELEE WEAPONS CHART

Type	Damage	Initiative	Strength	Size	Availability	Special
Sap	0	−1	1	1	•	Stun
Brass Knuckles	0	0	1	1	•	Uses Brawl to attack
Baton	1	−1	2	2	n/a	
Crowbar	2	−2	2	2	•	
Tire Iron	1	−3	2	2	••	+1 Defense
Chain	1	−3	2	2	•	Grapple
Shield (small)	0	−2	2	2	••	Concealed
Shield (large)	2	−4	3	3	••	Concealed
Knife	0	−1	1	1	•	
Rapier	1	−2	1	2	••	Armor piercing 1
Machete	2	−2	2	2	••	
Hatchet	1	−2	1	1	•	
Fire Ax	3	−4	3	3	••	9-again, two-handed
Chainsaw	5	−6	4	3	•••	9-again, two-handed
Stake*	0	−4	1	1	n/a	
Spear**	2	−2	2	4	•	+1 Defense, two-handed

Type: A weapon's type is a general classification that can apply to anything your character picks up. A metal club might be an antique mace, a metal baseball bat, or a hammer, while a hatchet might be a meat cleaver or an antique hand-ax.

Damage: Indicates the number of bonus successes added to a successful attack. Weapons always deal lethal damage.

Initiative: The penalty taken to Initiative when wielding the weapon. If using more than one weapon, take the higher penalty and increase by 1.

Strength: The minimum Strength needed to use a weapon effectively. A wielder with a lower Strength suffers a −1 penalty on attack rolls.

Size: 1 = Can be hidden in a hand; 2 = Can be hidden in a coat; 3+ = Cannot be hidden.

Availability: The cost in Resources dots or level of Social Merit needed to acquire the weapon.

Concealed: A character who wields a shield but doesn't use it to attack can add its Size to his Defense, and uses its Size as a concealment modifier against ranged attacks.

Grapple: Add the chain's weapon bonus to your dice pool when grappling.

Stun: Double the weapon bonus for purposes of the Stunned Tilt (p. 333).

Two-handed: This weapon requires two hands. It can be used one-handed, but doing so increases the Strength requirement by 1.

* A stake must target the heart (–3 penalty to attack rolls) and must deal at least 5 damage in one attack.

** The reach of a spear gives a +1 Defense bonus against opponents who are unarmed or wield weapons of Size 1.

ARMOR CHART

Type	Rating	Strength	Defense	Speed	Availability	Coverage
			MODERN			
Reinforced clothing*	1/0	1	0	0	•	Torso, arms, legs
Kevlar vest*	1/3	1	0	0	•	Torso
Flak Jacket	2/4	1	−1	0	• •	Torso, arms
Full Riot Gear	3/5	2	−2	−1	• • •	Torso, arms, legs
			ARCHAIC			
Leather (hard)	2/0	2	−1	0	•	Torso, arms
Chainmail	3/1	3	−2	−2	• •	Torso, arms
Plate	4/2	3	−2	−3	• • • •	Torso, arms, legs

Rating: Armor provides protection against normal attacks and Firearms attacks. The number before the slash is for general armor, while the number after the slash is for ballistic armor.

Strength: If your character's Strength is lower than that required for her armor, reduce her Brawl and Weaponry dice pools by 1.

Defense: The penalty imposed on your character's Defense when wearing the armor.

Speed: The penalty to your character's Speed for the armor worn.

Availability: The cost in Resources dots or level of Social Merit needed to acquire the armor.

Coverage: The areas of a character protected by the armor. Unless an attacker targets a specific unarmored location ("Specified Targets", above), the armor's protection applies. Wearing a helmet increases the armor's coverage to include a character's head.

* This armor is concealed, either as normal clothing (e.g. biker leathers) or being worn under a jacket or baggy shirt. Attackers have no idea the target is wearing armor until after they land a successful hit.

- **Crowbar:** In addition to crowbars and wrecking bars, this category includes metal pipes, lengths of scaffold, and bigger and heavier sporting implements such as baseball and cricket bats. This category can also include archaic clubs and maces.
- **Tire Iron:** An X-shaped piece of metal used to loosen car wheels. The cross shape makes it harder to maneuver than a crowbar but it also makes it easier to catch an attacker's arm or weapon. Using a tire iron or a similar weapon (such as a metal tonfa) gives an attacker +1 Defense.
- **Chain:** A length of chain or knotted rope isn't just a handy way to beat the shit out of someone. It's also the weapon of choice for grapplers looking for an edge to hold their opponent.
- **Shield:** A modern riot shield made of transparent polycarbonate or light metal with a viewing slit. A character carrying a shield can use it to strike and bludgeon opponents or ward off blows. If you don't use the shield to attack, add its Size to Defense against Brawl and Melee attacks. Against ranged attacks, the shield provides a concealment modifier equal to its Size. Small shields are roughly two feet in diameter and could represent a metal trash can lid, or an archaic buckler or target shield. A large shield is at least three feet tall and can represent archaic kite or tower shields.
- **Knife:** One of a range of weapons designed for stabbing and slashing, usually with a blade less than a foot long. Some characters may wield combat knives, while others grab a large kitchen knife or butcher's knife.
- **Rapier:** A long, thin sword normally found in fencing clubs, rapiers are used to stab rather than slash. This weapon's profile can also apply to sword-canes. A rapier can punch through light armor.
- **Machete:** A long weapon used to cut through plants. This weapon's profile can apply to any number of one-handed bladed weapons, including katana and other swords from around the world.
- **Hatchet:** A small, one-handed ax, hatchets can cut through bone just as easily as wood. This weapon's statistics can also cover large cleavers and heavy-bladed butcher's knives, as well as one-handed axes throughout history.

- **Fire Ax:** One of the most common axes for characters to encounter, fire axes are designed to cut through wooden doors. This weapon's profile can include larger two-handed axes used for chopping wood and archaic battle-axes.
- **Chainsaw:** This weapon profile reflects the chainsaw as it appears in modern media rather than trying to model reality. It can also apply to any two-handed weapon that's large, sharp, and very heavy, such as an executioner's ax.
- **Stake:** Using a stake in combat is usually a bad idea since it's a roughly sharpened wooden spike that doesn't penetrate skin very well, but sometimes it's the only weapon that can do anything to a supernatural opponent.
- **Spear:** Most people don't ever see a spear or staff used in anger — or at all. The long reach of such a weapon gives a user +1 Defense against opponents who are unarmed or wielding weapons of Size 1. This weapon profile can also apply to long (more than five and a half feet) lengths of scaffold or pipe, sometimes with a sharpened metal end.

Improvised Weapons

The examples of weapons above can only go so far. What about an old-fashioned corded telephone, a thrown brick, or a shard of sharp metal? Characters who grab an improvised weapon still stand a chance of doing serious damage, but it's not as likely compared to someone who's brought a tool specifically for killing.

If you can make an argument (and the Storyteller accepts it) that your improvised weapon is close enough to one of the weapons above, use the associated weapon profile. Otherwise, an improvised weapon does (Durability – 1) damage, with an initiative penalty and Strength requirement equal to the weapon's Size.

Using an improvised weapon reduces your attack dice pool by 1. On a successful attack, the weapon takes the same amount of damage as it inflicts; though Durability reduces this damage as normal. Once the weapon's Structure is reduced to 0, the object is too wrecked to inflict any real damage.

Armor

With the changes to Defense and weapon damage, a character wearing armor no longer adds its rating to his Defense. The two armor ratings work differently to compensate.

- Ballistic armor applies to incoming firearms attacks. Each point of ballistic armor downgrades one point of damage from lethal to bashing.
- General armor applies to all attacks. Each point of general armor reduces the total damage taken by one point, starting with the most severe type of damage.

If armor has both ballistic and general ratings, apply the ballistic armor first.

When applying armor to an attack dealing lethal damage, you're always going to feel some pain. Even if your armor would reduce the attack to 0 damage, you still take one point of bashing damage.

Characters can only benefit from one source of armor at once — wearing a Kevlar vest under full riot gear is hot and uncomfortable and offers no appreciable extra protection. If a character insists on "layering" armor, it's up to the player to decide which single source applies to all incoming attacks. That decision's final, until the character chills out and remembers that most people don't walk down the street in full riot gear just to buy a quart of milk.

Characters with supernatural armor, such as a mage's warding spells or a werewolf's tough hide can benefit from such protection in addition to mundane armor; add the ratings together to determine a character's final protection.

Example: Detective Black knew something was off, but he didn't know what until he heard the crack of a handgun. The shooter got two successes, plus two for a heavy pistol, for four points of lethal damage. Black's wearing a Kevlar vest (armor 1/3) which converts three of the four points of damage to bashing, then subtracts one point of lethal damage. He takes three points of bashing damage and runs for cover.

Armor Piercing

A weapon that's listed as having the armor piercing quality has a rating between 1 and 3. When attacking someone wearing armor, subtract the piercing quality from the target's ballistic armor first, then general armor.

If you're shooting at an object or a person in cover, subtract the piercing quality from the cover's Durability. Once the shot's passed through cover, any armor-piercing quality is lost.

Example: *The gunman shooting at Detective Black sees the cop stagger but keep moving and switches to his backup piece: a light revolver packing armor-piercing rounds. The Storyteller rolls three successes and adds one for the pistol. The rounds are armor piercing 2, which reduces the vest's ballistic armor to 1. Detective Black's vest converts one point of damage to bashing and reduces the lethal damage by one, so he takes a further two points of lethal and one point of bashing damage.*

Tilts

Tilts were introduced in **The Danse Macabre** for **Vampire: The Requiem** as a unified way of applying circumstances to both characters and scenes. Tilts are mechanically similar to Conditions, but they affect characters and scenes in combat. Out of combat, use Conditions instead.

Tilts replace the existing combat rules for Fighting Blind, Immobilized, Knockdown, Knockout, and Stun effects. They also provide a new way of handling drugs, poisons, sickness, and environmental and weather effects, but *only as they apply to combat*. Out of combat, use the normal rules for these effects.

Tilts do not give characters Beats when they end, but the effects of a Tilt can very easily cause a Condition. For instance, a character in a fight gets a handful of road salt flung in his eyes

and receives the Blinded Tilt. When combat ends, this shifts to the Blind Condition. Resolving this Condition will give the character a Beat. If the character enters combat again before the Condition is resolved, the Blinded Tilt applies again.

Tilts come in two forms: Personal and Environmental. Personal Tilts only apply to one character and include ways in which that character can overcome the effect. Environmental Tilts affect the whole scene, and offer ways for individual characters to mitigate their effects.

Arm Wrack

Your arm burns with pain and then goes numb. It could be dislocated, sprained, or broken: whatever's wrong with it, you can't move your limb.

Effect: If your arm's broken or otherwise busted, you drop whatever you're holding in that arm and can't use it to attack opponents — unless you've got the Ambidextrous Merit, you suffer off-hand penalties for any rolls that require manual dexterity. If this effect spreads to both limbs, you're down to a chance die on any rolls that require manual dexterity, and –3 to all other Physical actions.

Causing the Tilt: Some supernatural powers can cripple a victim's limbs or break bones with a touch. A character can have his arm knocked out by a targeted blow to the arm (–2 penalty) that deals more damage than the character's Stamina. A targeted blow to the hand inflicts this Tilt if it does any damage.

Ending the Tilt: If the Tilt is inflicted as a result of an attack, mark an 'x' under the leftmost Health box inflicted in that attack; the Tilt ends when the damage that caused it has healed. If aggravated damage inflicts this Tilt, the character loses the use of his arm (or straight up loses his arm) permanently.

Beaten Down

The character has had the fight knocked out of him.

Effect: The character cannot take active part in the fight without extra effort. The player must spend a point of Willpower *each time* he wants the character to take a violent action in the fight. He can still run, Dodge, and apply Defense. If he wishes to take another action, the Storyteller should judge whether the action is aggressive enough to require the expenditure.`

Causing the Tilt: The character suffers bashing damage in excess of his Stamina *or* any amount of lethal damage.

Ending the Tilt: The character surrenders and gives the aggressor what he wants. At this point, the character regains a point of Willpower and takes a Beat, but can take no further action in the fight. If the aggressor's intent is to kill or injure the character, obviously surrender isn't a good option.

Blinded

The character's eyes are damaged or removed, or the character is placed in a situation where eyesight is eliminated (a pitch-black room or a supernatural effect).

Tracking Tilts

A quick-reference chart of Tilts is available at the end of this chapter, which summarizes the effects of each one. To keep track of who is affected by what Tilt, sticky notes or index cards come in very helpful. Environmental Tilts should sit somewhere that everyone can see them, while Personal Tilts should be close to hand for the player of the affected character. When a Storyteller character is hit with a Tilt, jot the character's name down on the card as well.

Effect: The character suffers a –3 penalty to any rolls that rely on vision — including attack rolls — and halves his Defense if one eye is blinded. That penalty increases to –5 and losing all Defense if both eyes are affected.

Causing the Tilt: The most common means of inflicting the tilt is to severely impair the target's eyesight (using a blindfold, etc). An attacker can inflict temporary blindness by slashing at her opponent's brow, throwing sand into his eyes, or kicking up dirt. This requires an attack roll of Dexterity + Athletics with a –3 penalty; the victim's Defense applies to this attack. If it succeeds, the target is Blinded for the next turn.

Blindness can also be inflicted by dealing damage to the target's eyes — a specified attack with a –5 penalty (see Specified Targets, above). A successful attack normally damages one eye. It takes an exceptional success to totally blind an attacker.

Ending the Tilt: If an attack against the character's eye does any points of damage, mark an 'x' under the leftmost Health box inflicted in that attack. If the damage inflicted is aggravated the character loses vision in that eye permanently. Otherwise, the condition ends when the damage that caused the Tilt is healed.

Blizzard (Environmental)

Heavy snowfall carpets the ground and just keeps falling, whipped up by howling winds into a barrage of whirling white.

Effect: Blizzards make it very hard to see for any real distance. Rolls to see things close to the character's person, out to arm's length away, suffer a –1 penalty. Each additional ten yards inflicts an additional –1 penalty (cumulative) on all visual Perception rolls. This penalty also applies to ranged attack rolls. Moving through snow is difficult. Every four inches of snow applies a –1 penalty to appropriate Physical rolls, including combat rolls, Athletics, and so forth. The Blizzard Tilt rarely applies by itself — the Storyteller may also inflict any or all of the Extreme Cold, Heavy Winds, or Ice Tilts (all found below).

Causing the Tilt: For the most part, the weather is out of the characters' control — the Storyteller should telegraph an incoming

blizzard before it hits, but it's ultimately up to her. Some supernatural powers might grant a character the power to create a blizzard.

Ending the Tilt: Without supernatural powers, characters can't "end" a blizzard. The best they can manage is to escape the weather or wait for it to stop. Proper equipment (such as goggles and snow boots) can add +1 to +3 to a roll, offsetting some of the penalties. If someone is causing this Tilt through a supernatural power, it's possible that the characters could disrupt his concentration.

Deafened

The character can't hear. Maybe he's suffering intense tinnitus or can only hear the roaring of blood in his ears, or he just plain can't hear.

Effect: If the character is deaf in one ear, he suffers a –3 penalty to hearing-based Perception rolls. A character who is struck deaf in both ears only gets a chance die on hearing-based Perception rolls, and suffers a –2 penalty to all combat-related dice rolls — suddenly losing the ability to hear the people around you is tremendously disorienting.

Causing the Tilt: A particularly loud noise within 10 feet of the character may cause temporary hearing loss as though the character were deaf in both ears. Alternatively, a targeted attack on the ear — at a –4 penalty — can deafen a character. Supernatural creatures with heightened senses can be deafened by loud noises at greater distances.

Ending the Tilt: Deafness from loud noises fades after 10 – (victim's Stamina + Resolve) turns. If an attack against the character's ear does any points of damage, mark an 'x' under the leftmost Health box inflicted in that attack. If the damage inflicted is aggravated, the character loses hearing in the ear permanently. Otherwise, the condition ends when the damage that caused the Tilt is healed.

Drugged

The character's mind is addled by mind-altering substances, such as drink or drugs.

Effect: The effects of specific drugs are detailed in the on p.177 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**. A generic narcotic can be represented with one set of modifiers: the character suffers a –2 modifier to Speed (and static Defense, if used) and a –3 penalty to all rolls in combat, including Defense and Perception. The character also ignores wound penalties.

Causing the Tilt: If the character has chosen to take drugs, then he suffers the effects. To administer drugs to another character is a Dexterity + Weaponry attack, suffering a –1 modifier for the improvised weapon. If the drug has to go in to a specific body part (such as an arm or mouth), it requires an attack against a specified target.

Ending the Tilt: Each drug in the **World of Darkness Rulebook** explains how long a high lasts. A generic narcotic lasts for 10 – (victim's Stamina + Resolve) hours. This time is halved by medical help, such as pumping the victim's stomach or flushing his system.

Earthquake (Environmental)

Everything shudders and shakes; huge rents and holes tear the ground wide open.

Effect: Earthquakes don't last long, but they don't have to. When the quake's actually occurring, all Dexterity-based dice pools (and Defense) suffer a –1 to –5 penalty depending on the quake's severity. Characters take between one and three points of lethal damage per turn of the quake's duration, though a reflexive Stamina + Athletics roll can downgrade that damage to bashing — or cancel it entirely on an exceptional success.

Causing the Tilt: Without tremendous supernatural power, it's almost impossible to cause an earthquake. A character who detonates a powerful explosive underground might simulate the effects over a city-block for a few seconds.

Ending the Tilt: Earthquakes are fortunately very quick events. It's very rare for one to last more than a minute (20 turns), so waiting them out is the best course of action.

Extreme Cold (Environmental)

Bone-chilling winds bite through the character, or trudging through knee-deep snow takes all of the sensation from his limbs. Any time the temperature gets down below zero degrees Celsius (32 degrees Fahrenheit), a character can suffer from the cold's effects. This Tilt can sometimes be personal, either as a result of a medical condition such as hypothermia or a supernatural power.

Effect: When the temperature is below freezing, characters can't heal bashing damage — the extreme temperature deals damage at the same rate normal characters heal it (a cut might turn to frostbite, for instance). Supernatural beings and characters who heal faster than normal instead halve their normal healing rate. For every hour that a character is continuously affected by this Tilt, he accrues a –1 penalty to all rolls. When that penalty hits –5 dice, he instead suffers 1 point of lethal damage per hour.

Causing the Tilt: A character can suffer this Tilt from being in a frozen environment — whether he's outside in the Arctic tundra or in a walk-in freezer. Inflicting the Tilt is reasonably straightforward: throw the victim into a freezing lake or lock him in a freezer for long enough and he'll develop hypothermia.

Ending the Tilt: The best way to escape the freezing cold is to find a source of warmth — either a building with working heating, or warm bundled clothing. A character who has hypothermia requires medical attention.

Extreme Heat (Environmental)

The character might be stumbling through the desert with the sun beating down on him, or running through the steam-tunnels surrounding an old boiler room. This Tilt can also be personal, the result of a debilitating fever that spikes his temperature far above the norm. Extreme heat is normally anything above 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit)

— this includes both environmental temperature and internal body temperature due to fever.

Effect: When the temperature is far above normal, characters can't heal bashing damage — the extreme temperature deals damage at the same rate normal characters heal it (a cut might heal, but it's replaced by sunburn or sunstroke). Supernatural beings and characters who heal faster than normal instead halve their normal healing rate. For every hour that a character is continuously affected by this Tilt, he accrues a –1 penalty to all rolls. When that penalty hits –5 dice, he instead suffers a point of lethal damage per hour.

Causing the Tilt: This Tilt is usually caused by environmental factors — being out at noon in the desert or spending too long in a sauna or forge. Even a fever is the result of an infection, rather than something that an opponent can force on a character. It's possible to create this Tilt on a given character: securing someone to a chair right next to an old, inefficient boiler, or stranding them in the desert far from any shade.

Ending the Tilt: The key to ending this Tilt is simple: get out of the heat. In a desert or similar environment, finding shade is paramount. Elsewhere, the character needs to escape whatever is causing the abnormal temperatures.

Flooded (Environmental)

Some liquid — brackish water, mud, gore, or raw sewage — is high enough to impede the character's progress.

Effect: Each foot of liquid inflicts a –2 penalty to all Physical dice pools. If the water goes up over her head, a character has to swim (Dexterity + Athletics) with a penalty appropriate for the speed of flooding. Alternatively, she can try to hold her breath ("Holding Breath," p. 49 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**) if she cannot get her head above the rising waters.

Causing the Tilt: Normally, this Tilt is the result of heavy rain, sudden snowmelt, or a broken water main. Characters can cause this Tilt by smashing up a water heater or blowing up a small dam. Some supernatural creatures may be able to call floods down onto a region.

Ending the Tilt: Characters can escape flooding by getting to high ground, which is enough to mitigate this Tilt. A long-term fix would require draining the floodwaters, but each flood requires its own solution.

Heavy Rain (Environmental)

Torrential rain lashes down in knives, bouncing high off the sidewalk. The sound of rain on the ground is a constant hammering rumble that goes on without end, like dropping ball bearings on a tin roof. Thick gray curtains of water obscure vision.

Effect: Heavy rains — approaching tropical storm levels or worse — cause a Perception penalty of –3 dice to both vision and hearing. Rain's hard to see through, but it's also *loud*. If the rains carry on for an hour or more, the Flooded Tilt will soon follow. This Tilt is often accompanied by Heavy Winds; a character trapped out in Heavy Rains might come under the effects of Extreme Cold.

Causing the Tilt: Short of supernatural power or a fleet of cloud-seeding aircraft, Heavy Rain is the result of natural weather patterns.

Ending the Tilt: The best way out of the rain is to get indoors. Unless it's the start of some sodden apocalypse, the characters can wait for the weather to ease.

Heavy Winds (Environmental)

Howling winds buffet at the characters, whipping street furniture into the air, tearing the roofs from buildings. Powerful winds can toss cars around like toys. Anyone out in the winds feels like they're taking a beating just for walking down the street.

Effect: Heavy winds are loud, so characters suffer a –3 modifier to aural Perception rolls. Also the wind inflicts a penalty to all Physical rolls when out in the winds — including Drive rolls. Grade the wind from one to five — one is tropical storm level (around 40 MPH), three is hurricane level (around 80 MPH), and five is tornado level (150+ MPH). This is the penalty applied to Physical dice rolls. Characters outside in the maelstrom take damage from flying debris, taking bashing damage each turn equal to the wind's rating. Characters can make a reflexive Dexterity + Athletics roll to avoid damage.

Causing the Tilt: Heavy winds are a fact of life, from siroccos in the desert to tornados in the Midwest to wind shears everywhere.

Ending the Tilt: Getting out of the wind is the best way to end this Tilt. Sometimes that's as easy as sheltering in an automobile — as long as nobody tries to drive. Buildings provide more permanent shelter.

Ice (Environmental)

The ground's covered in a mirror-smooth layer of ice that sends wheels spinning and people's feet flying out from under them. The ice could be so thin as to be nearly invisible or a thick layer that's the only thing keeping the characters from sinking into a frozen lake.

Effect: When a character can't trust her footing, divide her Speed in half and all Physical rolls (and Defense) suffer a –2 penalty. Attempting to move at full Speed increases the Physical penalty to –4. Any dramatic failure on a Physical roll inflicts the Knocked Down Tilt. Driving on ice is a real pain — halve Acceleration and characters suffer a –5 penalty to Drive rolls.

Causing the Tilt: This Tilt doesn't just apply to icy conditions, but to any surface that's slick and slippery, including a spill of industrial lubricant or just a really well polished wooden or linoleum floor. Characters can use a Dexterity + Crafts roll to cover an area in industrial cleaner or mix up cleaning chemicals into a lubricant. If the Extreme Cold Tilt is in effect, even covering the area with water would do the trick.

Ending the Tilt: "Get off the ice" is good advice, but that can take work. Characters can use heat or fire to melt ice, or throw down copious quantities of salt or grit to increase traction.

Immobilized

Something holds the character fast, preventing him from moving. This could be a grappling opponent, a straightjacket wrapped with heavy chains, or a coffin secured on the outside with a padlock.

Effect: The character can't do anything but wriggle helplessly. He can't apply Defense against incoming attacks and can't take combat-related actions. If someone's holding him down, he can spend a point of Willpower to deliver a head-butt or similar attack, but even that might not free him.

Causing the Tilt: The usual way to inflict this Tilt is through the Restrain grappling move. This often uses material means to prevent the victim from moving, such as binding limbs with duct tape or zip-ties, tossing the victim into a car trunk or similar tight space, or applying painful holds and joint locks.

Ending the Tilt: An Immobilized target can break free by escaping from a grapple or snapping whatever binds her. If grappled, the character can struggle as normal but can only select the Break Free move on a success. If held by an item, the character must make a Strength + Athletics roll penalized by the item's Durability. If a character's arms and legs are both bound, he suffers a –2 penalty; this increases to –4 if he's hog-tied. On a success, he snaps the bindings or breaks free. Each roll, successful or not, deals a point of bashing damage.

Insane

The character suffers from a panic attack, sudden imbalance, or a full-on psychotic break. Her pulse races and her mind cannot focus. The world's an unstable place, and she's unable to keep her balance.

Effect: Someone suffering a psychotic break isn't the sort of person to go down without a fight. Her stated intent might be irrational or just plain impossible, and she might have fewer ethical problems with using extreme violence to get what she wants. The character gains a +1 bonus to all combat rolls, but takes actions after everyone else (if two characters suffer from the Insane Tilt, both act after everyone else but compare Initiative as normal). A character suffering from this Tilt may spend Willpower, but the cost is 2 dots instead of 1 for the same effect.

Causing the Tilt: Faced with extraordinary circumstances, any character with an appropriate Condition may gain the Insane Tilt. The Storyteller can call for a Resolve + Composure roll to resist a general anxiety that gnaws at the character's mind; if the character fails, he gains the Tilt. If the character witnesses something truly horrific — a daughter watches her father walk to the end of the garden and shoot himself in the head, smiling all the while; a man stumbles into the wrong office at work and sees his co-workers feasting on the intern's organs; a solder sees her unit gunned down by a sniper while she can do nothing — the Storyteller can rule that the Tilt is unavoidable.

The Insane Tilt can also be triggered by a breaking point. If a character fails a breaking point role during combat, the Storyteller may apply the Insane Tilt then as well.

A character can work to *inspire* another character's madness in order to cause this Tilt. She could orchestrate events that she hopes will provoke a psychotic break, but that's amateur hour. A professional swaps out her victim's meds, giving stimulants just as his bipolar cycle ticks into mania, or dosing a paranoid or schizophrenic with hallucinogenic drugs.

Some supernatural creatures possess mind-affecting powers that can apply this Tilt, even to characters who do not have an appropriate Condition.

Ending the Tilt: The specific effects of this Tilt don't normally last beyond the end of the scene. A character can try to force her mind to a state of balance, but it's not easy. She must sit and focus on blocking out the craziness. She rolls Resolve + Composure as an instant action contested by a dice pool of (10 – her Willpower). She can't take any other actions that turn and doesn't apply Defense against any attacks.

Insensate

The character shuts down, either due to extreme fear or sudden pleasure. He may huddle in a corner, cringe away from sudden noises, or stare into space as waves of pleasure lap over him.

Effect: The character can't take any actions until the Tilt is resolved. He can apply Defense to incoming attacks, and if he takes any damage from an attack, he's knocked free of whatever fogged his brain.

Causing the Tilt: Several supernatural powers can leave their victim in a trance-like state of heightened emotion, whether it's a vampire's mind-affecting tricks or the pants-shitting terror of witnessing a werewolf take on an inhuman form. A truly heroic amount of alcohol or a hallucinogenic drug might have similar effects; administering such a drug is a Dexterity + Weaponry attack, suffering a –1 modifier for the improvised weapon.

Ending the Tilt: The Tilt wears off at the end of the scene. The victim can spend a point of Willpower before then to act normally for one turn. A successful attack will also end the Tilt. If a character has been knocked insensible by drugs, this Tilt is replaced with the Drugged Tilt when it ends.

Knocked Down

Something knocks the character to the floor, either toppling her with a powerful blow to the chest or taking one of her legs out from under her.

Effect: The character is knocked off her feet. If she hasn't already acted this turn, she loses her action. Once she's on the ground, a character is considered prone (see "Going Prone," pp. 164–165 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**). The character can still apply Defense against incoming attacks, and can attempt to attack from the ground at a –2 penalty.

Causing the Tilt: Some weapons list "Knockdown" as a special effect of a damaging hit. Otherwise, a melee weapon with a damage modifier of +2 or greater, or a firearm with a damage modifier of +3 or more can be used to knock a character down with the force of the blow. Alternatively, a melee weapon or unarmed attack can knock an opponent down with a targeted attack against the legs (–2 modifier). The attacker declares that he wants to knock his opponent down and halves the total damage done (rounding down). On a successful attack, the target is knocked down.

Ending the Tilt: The easiest way to end this Tilt is to stand up, which takes an action. A character affected by this Tilt who hasn't yet acted can make a Dexterity + Athletics roll, minus any weapon modifier, instead of her normal action. If successful, she avoids the effects of this Tilt altogether. On a failure, she falls over and the Tilt applies as normal.

Leg Wrack

Your leg feels like it's going to snap clean off whenever you move; when you stop moving, you feel a burning numbness that encourages you to avoid moving.

Effect: If your leg is broken, sprained, or dislocated, halve your Speed and suffer a –2 penalty on Physical rolls that require movement (and Defense). If both of your legs are wracked, you fall over — taking the Knocked Down Tilt — and cannot get up. Your Speed is reduced to 1; if you want to move at all, you cannot take any other action. Physical rolls that require movement are reduced to a chance die.

Causing the Tilt: Some supernatural powers can cripple a victim's limbs or break bone with a touch. A character can have his leg knocked out by a targeted blow to the leg (–2 penalty) that deals more damage than the character's Stamina.

Ending the Tilt: If the Tilt is inflicted as a result of an attack, mark an 'x' under the leftmost Health box inflicted in that attack. The Tilt ends when that damage that caused it has healed. If the damage that inflicts this Tilt is aggravated, the character loses use of his leg permanently.

Poisoned

You've got poison inside you. It's tearing you apart from the inside; burning like acid in your gut and making your head swim.

Effect: This Tilt applies a general sense of being poisoned to a character without worrying about Toxicity during combat. For the purposes of this Tilt, a poison is either "moderate" or "grave" — a moderate poison causes 1 point of bashing damage per turn of combat, while a grave poison ups that to 1 point of lethal damage per turn. If the Storyteller cares to continue the effects of the poison outside of combat, he can apply the standard rules for handling poisons and toxins when combat is complete.

Causing the Tilt: It's possible for a character to not know that he's been poisoned. It could be as innocuous as switching drinks with a pretty girl who is the target of a mob hit, or as simple as walking into a house with a carbon monoxide leak. That said, the main time poison comes up in combat is when one combatant inflicts it on another. Injecting your opponent with a syringe full of drain cleaner or snake venom is a Dexterity + Weaponry attack, suffering a –1 modifier for the improvised weapon.

Ending the Tilt: Short of immediate medical attention — and how many fights take place in an emergency room? — all a victim can do is struggle on. Roll Stamina + Resolve as a reflexive action each turn that your character is poisoned. If your character intends to act (meaning, takes a non-reflexive action), the roll suffers a –3 penalty. Success counteracts the damage for one turn only.

Sick

Your stomach churns. You retch and heave but only succeed in bringing up bile. Sweat beads on your brow as you spike a fever. Your muscles ache with every movement. You're wracked with hot and cold flushes as a sickness gnaws away at your insides.

Effect: This Tilt applies a general sickness to a character without worrying about the specific illness. For the purposes of this Tilt, a sickness is either "moderate" or "grave." A moderate sickness, such as a cold, asthma, the flu, or just a bad hangover, causes a –1 penalty to all actions during combat. That penalty increases by one every two turns (the first two turns, the character suffers a –1 penalty, the next two turns the penalty is –2, and so on up to a maximum of –5 dice on turn 9). A grave sickness, such as pneumonia, heavy metal poisoning, or aggressive cancer, inflicts the same dice pool penalties as a mild sickness. In addition, however, the physical stress of fighting or even defending oneself from an attacker while gravely ill inflicts 1 point of bashing damage per turn of combat.

Causing the Tilt: It's not easy to deliberately make someone sick. Sure, if you can get your hands on a vial of smallpox or deliberately use a disease you've got to make someone sick (a breaking point, especially in the case of grave diseases like AIDS), then you've got a reasonable chance. Some supernatural creatures have abilities that can inflict diseases on others. Aside from that, you've just got to expose your opponent to the sickness long before you fight and hope for the best.

Ending the Tilt: This Tilt reflects the effects of sickness as it specifically applies to combat. Outside of combat, use the existing system for diseases (**World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 176). The penalties inflicted by this Tilt fade at a rate of one point per turn once the character has a chance to rest, but any damage inflicted remains until the character can heal.

Stunned

Your character is dazed and unable to think straight. Maybe her vision blurs. If she's stunned as a result of a blow to the head, she's probably got a concussion.

Effect: A character with the Stunned Tilt loses her next action, and halves her Defense until she can next act.

TILT REFERENCE

This quick-reference can help players and Storytellers alike remember the effects of each Tilt detailed above.

PERSONAL TILTS

Tilt	Effects
Arm Wrack	One arm: Drop anything held, suffer off-hand penalties for most rolls. Both arms: Chance die on rolls requiring manual dexterity, -3 to other Physical actions.
Beaten Down	Cannot take violent action in combat without spending Willpower.
Blinded	One eye: -3 to vision-related rolls. Both eyes: -5 to vision-related rolls, lose all Defense.
Deafened	One ear: -3 Perception rolls. Both ears: Chance die on Perception rolls, -2 to combat rolls.
Drugged	-2 Speed, -3 to combat rolls (including Defense and Perception). Ignore wound penalties.
Immobilized	No combat actions. Can't move or apply Defense.
Insane	+1 to combat rolls, act after everyone else, -3 to Social rolls, can't spend Willpower.
Insensate	No combat actions. Can move and apply Defense. Taking damage ends the Tilt.
Knocked Down	Lose action this turn (if still to take), knocked prone. Can apply Defense, attack from ground at -2.
Leg Wrack	One leg: half Speed, -2 penalty on Physical rolls for movement. Both legs: Knocked Down, give up action to move at Speed 1, movement-based Physical rolls reduced to chance die.
Poisoned	Moderate: 1 point of bashing damage per turn. Grave: 1 point of lethal damage per turn.
Sick	Moderate: -1 to all actions. Penalty increases by 1 for every two turns. Grave: As moderate, but also inflicts 1 point of bashing damage per turn.
Stunned	Lose next action. Half Defense until you next act.

ENVIRONMENTAL TILTS

Tilt	Effects
Blizzard	-1 penalty to visual Perception and ranged attack rolls, increased by 1 per 10 yards. -1 penalty to Physical rolls per 4 inches of snow.
Earthquake	Penalty to Dexterity rolls depending on severity. Take 1 to 3 lethal damage per turn, Stamina + Athletics downgrades to bashing.
Extreme Cold	Bashing damage doesn't heal. -1 penalty to all rolls, increasing by 1 per hour. At -5, further hours deal one point of lethal damage.
Extreme Heat	Bashing damage doesn't heal. -1 penalty to all rolls, increasing by 1 per hour. At -5, further hours deal one point of lethal damage.
Flooded	-2 to Physical dice pools per foot of flooding. Once water is over head, character must swim or hold breath.
Heavy Rain	-3 to aural and visual Perception rolls.
Heavy Winds	-3 modifier to aural Perception rolls. Winds rated between 1 and 5, severity acts as penalty to Physical rolls and deals that much bashing damage per turn, Dexterity + Athletics to avoid.
Ice	-2 Speed, -2 to Physical actions. Can move at normal speed but -4 Physical actions. Dramatic Failure causes Knocked Down; Drive rolls are at -5 and half Acceleration.

Causing the Tilt: A character can be stunned by any attack that does at least as much damage as her Size in a single hit. Some weapons have a "stun" special ability. These double the weapon modifier only for the purposes of determining whether the attacker inflicts the Stunned Tilt. Attacks against the target's head (see "Specified Targets," p. 323) count the character's Size as one lower for the purposes of this Tilt. The Storyteller might determine that additional effects cause this Tilt, like being caught in the blast area of an explosion (**World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 178).

Ending the Tilt: The effects of this Tilt normally only last for a single turn. The character can end the Tilt during her own action by reflexively spending a point of Willpower to gather her wits, though she suffers a –3 modifier to any actions she takes that turn.

Sources of Harm

Some of the sources of harm in the **World of Darkness Rulebook** have updated rules, presented here.

Car Wrecks

The new systems for combat and weapons make lethal damage the standard for being hit with a heavy object, and cars are no different. If you hit someone — or something — when driving a car, the roll is still Dexterity + Drive + Handling and an aware opponent can apply Defense.

Roll the vehicle's Size to determine damage and add one additional success per 20 miles per hour (28 yards per turn) — the vehicle's speed acts as a weapon modifier. A moving car always deals lethal damage. If a car rams a human-sized creature, the victim suffers the Knocked Down Tilt.

This change of rolling Size and adding one point of damage per 20 miles per hour extends to ramming other cars as well; victims inside cars take lethal damage from car crashes unless wearing a seat-belt, which reduces the damage to bashing.

Disease

Outside of combat, a character who suffers from a disease suffers damage over a period of time. Resisting the damage inflicted by a disease requires a reflexive Stamina + Resolve roll. This roll is not contested but it is modified by the severity of the disease. Only one success is necessary to avoid damage each time.

Some diseases are the kind that people don't heal from. A character's cancer could go into remission, or he can hold his HIV back with medication, but time alone won't cure them. The Storyteller should set a benchmark of how many rolls the character has to succeed at in a row for the disease to go into remission. Medical treatment can offset any penalties to the Stamina + Resolve roll applied by the disease — but might inflict penalties on other rolls, as sometimes the cure is almost as bad as the disease.

Drugs

A character who has taken drugs, willingly or not, must fight off the effects of the drug. Resisting the effects requires a reflexive Stamina + Resolve roll. This roll is not contested but it is modified by the potency of the drug ingested. Only one success is necessary for a character to regain her senses. In the case of some drugs, this roll must be made once per hour, once per scene — or even once per turn, in the case of strong hallucinogens or narcotics.

Overdose

Characters who overdose on drugs treat the drug like a poison, with a Toxicity somewhere between 3 and 7. The overdose deals damage once per hour until the drug has run its course — if a character's spent 8 hours drinking, then the poison takes another 8 hours to fade, with Toxicity between 3 (beer or wine) to 5 (rubbing alcohol). A character who injects stronger heroin than expected takes damage for (8 – Stamina) hours, with Toxicity 7.

Extreme Environments

The human body is not conditioned to withstand extreme heat, cold, air pressure, and other weather. These harsh conditions hinder and endanger unprepared characters. When exposed to a harsh environment, the Storyteller assigns a level to the environment, using the chart below as a guideline. Survival gear can reduce the effective environment level.

While characters are exposed to these conditions, they suffer the level of the environment as a penalty to all actions. After a number of hours equal to the character's Stamina, he takes bashing damage equal to the environment's level once per hour. In the case of a Level 3 exposure, the damage is lethal instead of bashing. Fourth level environments cause lethal damage each *turn* after a number of turns equal to the character's Stamina.

Any damage caused by levels 2-4 exposure leaves lasting marks, scars, and tissue damage. Damage caused by extreme

Environment Levels

Level	Example Environs
0	Safe environment
1	Light snow, heavy storms; too cold to sleep safely; air pressure causes shortness of breath; sweltering sun can cause first-degree burns
2	Heavy snow; cold causes physical pain and potential hypothermia; sun quickly causes first degree burns, can cause second degree burns with time; minor radiation poisoning
3	Desert exposure; heat rapidly causing second-degree burns; moderate radiation exposure
4	Desert sandstorm, severe hurricane, tornado, tsunami

environments cannot be healed until the character is back in a safe environment.

Poison

Outside of combat, a character who is the victim of a poison or toxin suffers lethal damage over a period of time equal to the poison's Toxicity. Some substances deal this damage only once. Others deal this damage once per turn or once per hour until purged — or until the poison has run its course. To resist the damage, make a reflexive Stamina + Resolve – Toxicity roll. Each success reduces the damage taken by 1. This roll must be made every time the poison deals damage unless the character stops fighting and gives in.

Ephemeral Beings: Ghosts, Spirits, and Angels

Humanity isn't alone. It shares the World of Darkness with innumerable entities, lurking invisible and intangible in a Twilight state, waiting for the right conditions to arise. When an area becomes tainted by the touch of death; when the wall between the world and the terrible, hungry Shadow of animist spirits grows thin; when people begin to see the gears of the God-Machine: these are the times when the ghosts, spirits and angels around us can manifest, interact, and further their alien goals. All of them want something from humanity — memories, obedience, emotion ... even their bodies. Sometimes, humanity fights back.

This section replaces and updates the rules for ghosts in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, and the rules for spirits found in the **Book of Spirits** and other World of Darkness games. It unifies the two systems into one that uses Conditions for Manifestation and Influence and is also used for angels of the God-Machine.

Invisible Incursions

The physical World of Darkness borders on multiple realms, each with its own peculiar laws. The inhabitants of those realms aren't material beings and although many are intelligent and self-aware, their thoughts are alien to humans. Mortal investigators almost never see the worlds these beings come from with their own eyes, for which they should be grateful. Everything occultists have been able to learn about the animistic Shadow World and the chthonian deep of the Underworld paints both realms as deadly and teeming with "natives." The enigmatic servant-angels of the God-Machine might come from such a realm, or might be created within the world by the processes and Infrastructure they serve. No one knows for sure.

Whether the beings are fleeing the dangers of their home realm, avoiding banishment to it, summoned from their home by mortal occultists, sent as agents by more powerful members of their own kind, or forced to cross over to complete a mission by the God-Machine, most encounters between characters and ephemeral beings in a God-Machine chronicle take place in the physical world where characters have the home ground advantage.

Manifestation and Possession

Instead of bodies formed of flesh and bone, ephemeral beings are made up of spiritual matter called ephemera, which comes in several varieties. These substances are both invisible and intangible to anything not comprised of the same sort of ephemera — ghosts can see and touch one another, but are invisible to most living people and don't interact with solid objects or even other ephemeral beings that aren't ghosts. Spirits happily float through walls and pass through ghosts without even noticing them, but are incapable of interacting with people without help.

Almost every ephemeral being has the ability to *Manifest* — to make its presence known and to affect the physical world, ranging from remaining invisible but using powers, appearing as insubstantial but visible images, or even possessing a victim, sending his soul into hibernation and warping the commandeered body to suit their own uses. Some are more skilled at it than others (those so weak they can't Manifest at all are essentially impotent in the physical world and don't interact with humans), but all require certain appropriate conditions before they can use these powers.

An ephemeral being that wants to shift into physical form or to inhabit an object, animal or person requires the specified area, item or character to be prepared for it to successfully Manifest. Ghosts require Anchors — places, objects and people that are linked to their living days and reinforce their failing identities. Angels can only appear in the world when enough Infrastructure has been laid out by the God-Machine. Spirits need the emotional resonance of the area or victim-host to match their own.

The more powerful the Manifestation, the stronger the Condition needed is. The most powerful physical forms and tightly-held victims are the result of careful husbandry by the Manifesting being, slowly building up the necessary Condition by leveraging whatever Manifestation they can produce at first. Unless Conditions are very strong or the possessing entity extremely powerful, a human being falling victim to a possession is first urged to follow the entity's wishes instead of his own, then later forced to do it's bidding, and only then physically mutated into a bizarre amalgamation of nature and supernatural power.

Summoning or exorcising entities from locations or Possession, then, is a matter of creating or destroying the appropriate setting

for the creature, preferably near to a place it can cross over from or to its native realm. Most entities waste away as though starving outside of the needed Conditions, so breaking those Conditions is a sure-fire way of forcing the being to abandon its attempt at Manifestation and send it fleeing toward either a way "home" or another appropriate vessel. Cultists wanting to summon entities attempt to ritually create appropriate Conditions near to a crossing-point, or offer up a suitable vessel in the hope that the right sort of ephemeral being will accept the gift. In the case of angels, most participants in a "summoning" never realize the significance of their actions — Infrastructure is gradually built as the God-Machine moves pawns and machinery around like game pieces until an angel is brought forth.



Ghosts

Echoes of the Dead

When human beings die, especially in a sudden or traumatic fashion, they sometimes leave parts of themselves behind. Ranging from broken, animated after-images unable to do anything but re-enact their death to intelligent, malevolent once-human spirits with power over whatever kind of calamity killed them, the World of Darkness teems with vast numbers of the restless dead. More ghosts exist than any other supernatural creature, but the truly powerful independent specters of legend are rare.

The majority of ghosts are poor at influencing the world, trapped in their insubstantial state and unable to even Manifest; they are noticed only as a strange chill or eerie vibe, if the living sense them at all. Ghosts are drawn to places and people that they had emotional connections to in life — these things anchor the ghost in the world and allow those with enough power to Manifest, whereupon they carry out whatever mad urges they still feel and attempt to further the goals they left undone in life.

Ghosts feed on Essence, a spiritual energy created by memory and emotion that builds up in their Anchors and is fed directly to them when they are remembered by the living. Ghosts that lose their Anchors and can't transfer their attachment fade from the world, passing over to a dread realm filled with all the orphaned Ghosts that have gone before. This realm has many names in occult writings; Tartarus, the Great Below, the Land of the Dead, the Dominions, or simply the Underworld.

The living seldom visit the Underworld, though mediums and death-obsessed mystery cults all over the world teach that gateways leading there are more common than supposed. Its doors exist in the same Twilight state as ghosts themselves, invisible and unnoticed by the living. Tales of living occultists who learned the right places and the proper ceremonies to open the gates of death describe the Underworld as a chthonian hell of passageways, tunnels and caverns, filled with desperate ghosts that lost their grip on the world.

The Underworld sustains the dead, allowing them more freedom to move and act than the living world, but also

imprisons them. Once there, ghosts may increase in power and influence, evolving beyond the image of the person they were into twisted rulers of dead kingdoms or sponsors and advocates of particular forms of death. If summoned back to the physical world or allowed to escape the Underworld by chance conditions, a ghost that has spent centuries growing stronger can wreak havoc until exorcised.

Spirits

Warped Reflections

Animist religions describe the world as being full of spirits, every object, animal and place hiding a spirit within it. They're partly right; everything in the world apart from humans *does* cast a spiritual reflection, even transitory events and strong emotions, but all spirits apart from the cunning or a powerful few are confined to a world of their own. Spirits war on each other for survival everywhere. Separated from the physical world by a barrier known to knowledgeable occultists as the Gauntlet, the spirit — or *Shadow* — world is a murky reflection of the physical. Its geography is (mostly) the same as the World of Darkness, but places appear twisted to reflect their inner truth rather than looking exactly the same.

Spirits come into being alongside the thing they're a reflection of, but are dormant, barely-living, tiny lumps of ephemera at first. As well as creating new spirits, actions in the physical world and any emotions associated with them create Essence in the physical world, some of which crosses over into the Shadow. If enough Essence is created around an embryonic spirit, it becomes roused into activity. By absorbing Essence, the spirit remains active. By consuming other spirits, it merges those spirits into itself and grows larger and more powerful.

As spirits become more powerful, they become less pure as reflections of their origins and more thematic in nature. For example, the spirit of a single owl grows by consuming other owl-spirits. As it consumes spirits of night, hunting, the prey its owl eats, and other owl-spirits, the spirit subtly changes. By the time it becomes an independent, thinking being that no longer follows around the physical creature that created it, it has warped into an exaggerated spirit of silent nocturnal hunting. The Essence it consumes also has an effect — an owl-spirit evolving in an urban area feeds on different Essence to one in the countryside, and its appearance is colored by its diet.

When mortal characters encounter spirits, something has gone wrong. Some spirits are capable of using their powers through the Gauntlet and, as their self-awareness grows with power, decide to create food sources for themselves by influencing what sort of spirits and Essence will be created around them. The true culprit behind an unusual pattern of domestic murders, for example, might be a murder-spirit using its abilities to heighten arguments to homicide.

The spirits that mortal investigators encounter in the physical world are refugees and escapees: those that cross the Gauntlet to flee the constant risk of being killed and absorbed by larger spirits. They constantly strive to maintain their Essence, desperate to avoid returning to their own world. Without an easy source of Essence, spirits must anchor themselves like ghosts by finding an object or person that reflects their nature and tying their ephemeral bodies to them. The spirit remains intangible — and is often actually "inside" the host — but is safe from starvation as long as the host generates enough Essence to feed it. By influencing the host, or humans interacting with a material host, to more closely reflect its nature, the spirit gets a ready supply of Essence and may move on to more permanent forms of possession. Many items thought of as having "wills of their own" or as being cursed actually house spirits.

Angels

Functions of the God-Machine

Unlike ghosts, who feed from being remembered and struggle to maintain their grip on the world, and spirits who flee their own Darwinian hell to carve a foothold in material reality, angels are both temporary visitors to the mortal realm and its only true "natives" among ephemeral beings. The God-Machine isn't some far-off thing lurking in a distant dimension; it's here, in the material world, built from mechanisms hidden from sight by guile and magic. When cultists summon a spirit, it journeys from the Shadow. When an angel is needed, the God-Machine is as likely to build the angel right there as to direct an existing one to journey to the site. When angels *are* reused, they spend the downtime "resting," dormant, in storage facilities hidden by the very deepest Infrastructure. Sometimes, cultists and prying outsiders who witness the gears catch glimpses of these facilities — cavernous chambers folded neatly into impossible spaces, filled with hydraulics, gears, and the hissing of machines surrounding the angels while keeping them fed with Essence. They're always guarded.

Being essentially tools designed by an intelligent if unknowable creator to fulfill specific functions, angels are far more specialized than spirits or ghosts. They're also usually more subtle and able to go unnoticed even when Manifested, but are extremely single-minded, aiming to complete the task they've been sent for and then vanish. The God-Machine sends angels to make adjustments to Infrastructure and its plans when something has gone wrong and the gears can't self-correct. Angels hunt down individuals who have failed to die at the proper time, acquire replacements for lynchpins that have unexpectedly failed and make corrections to the flow of causality, carefully setting up minor events (the closing of a door, the drop of a pen, a sudden distracting sound at *just* the right time) that have increasingly large repercussions. The Conditions needed to bring an angel into the world, though, are much more complicated than a ghost's anchors or a spirit's essence, requiring layers of Infrastructure, precise timing and occult maneuvers that are barely understood. Occult literature is filled with angel-summoning rites, but they're mostly useless — if mortal cultists participate in calling an angel to a mission, it will be because they are themselves part of the Infrastructure it needs.

Game Systems

Ghosts, spirits and angels share a broad set of rules with minor variations to cover situations such as spirits reaching across the Gauntlet.

The State of Twilight

Unless they Manifest or use a power to appear, ephemeral beings remain in their insubstantial state when in the material world. This state is described as "Twilight." To beings in Twilight, physical objects appear pale and semi-transparent, light sources are dimmed and sounds are distorted as though underwater. Twilight isn't a place, though; it's more of a description of how ephemera interacts — or fails to interact — with material reality.

When in Twilight, only items, creatures, and phenomena that are also in Twilight and comprised of the same kind of ephemera can touch an ephemeral being. Attacks simply pass through the Twilight being; solid concrete and steel are no more hindrance than fog.

The exception to this rule is ghost structures. Destroyed objects — everything from a pen to a building — appear as afterimages in Twilight, formed of the same ephemera as ghosts. These spiritual structures and items fade away on a timescale depending on how strongly they're remembered. Famous structures, or even obscure ones that are loved and thought about frequently after they're destroyed, can last decades, solid and substantial only to ghosts.

If no ghostly structures get in the way, ephemeral beings in Twilight can move at walking pace in any direction. Gravity has no sway, though Twilight beings can only truly "fly" if it's appropriate for their form — most hug the material terrain. A ghost could walk up the side of a tower block, for example, but couldn't then float through mid-air to the next tower.

Some occultists and supernatural creatures practice Astral Projection, which allows a character to leave her body behind and explore the world in invisible form. These projected selves are technically in Twilight, but lack ephemeral bodies and so aren't solid even to one another.

Other Entities

The ghosts, spirits, and angels presented here aren't the only ephemeral entities to exist. The various World of Darkness games have used the spirit rules this section updates to represent many different beings, from the inhabitants of an astral world visited by mages to demonic owls made of smoke with a strange connection to vampires.

Just as ghosts, spirits, and angels are slightly different, adapting these beings to use the rules here involves setting out both where they follow these rules and where they don't. Future chronicle books may detail ephemeral entities particular to those chronicles.

Ephemeral Traits

Ephemeral beings aren't alive the way humans are alive. They aren't biological creatures and don't have the divides between body, soul, and mind that mortals and once-mortal supernatural beings possess. In game terms, ephemeral beings are represented by simplified game traits.

Rank

All ephemeral beings have dots in an Advantage called Rank, which notes how self-aware and powerful the entity is. Rank technically ranges from 1 to 10 dots, but entities with more than Rank ••••• are so alien they can't support

Rank

Rank*	Trait Limits **	Attribute Dots	Maximum Essence	Numina
•	5 dots	5–8	10	1–3
••	7 dots	9–14	15	3–5
•••	9 dots	15–25	20	5–7
••••	12 dots	26–35	25	7–9
•••••	15 dots	36–45	50	9–11

* Each Rank levies a –1 modifier on attempts to forcibly bind that entity and acts as a Supernatural Tolerance trait.

** These represent permanent dots, not temporarily boosted ones.

SUPERNATURAL TOLERANCE

Just as ephemeral beings possess Rank, many supernatural creatures in the World of Darkness have "power level" traits of their own, ranging from one to ten dots. They all have slightly different rules, described in the appropriate rulebooks, but all share one quality; they are added to Resistance Attributes when levying Resistance-based penalties to the dice pools of many supernatural powers. The various supernatural traits, including Rank, are interchangeable for this purpose. When a Numen in this chapter calls for "Supernatural Tolerance" to be added to resistance, that's what it means.

Example: A vampire attempting to quell an angry Manifest Angel attempts to use a hypnotic gaze. The power's description in **Vampire: The Requiem** calls for the activation dice pool to be penalized by "Resolve + Blood Potency," Blood Potency being the vampiric Supernatural Tolerance trait. The vampire's dice pool is penalized by the Spirit's Resistance + Rank instead.

Example: A ghost attempts to use the Awe Numen (p. 350) on the first of two interlopers in the now-abandoned house it owned in life. The Numen is contested by Presence + Composure + Supernatural Tolerance, but the intruder is a mortal and doesn't have a Supernatural Tolerance trait, so just rolls the two Attributes. When the ghost attempts to use the power on the second intruder the next turn, though, it discovers that she is actually a mage; she adds Gnosis (the mage Tolerance trait) to her contesting dice pool.

themselves in the Conditions lesser beings use. They can only be brought into the world by story- and chronicle-defining maneuvers, conjunctions, and events. The Lords of the Dead, Gods of Shadow, and the mighty arch-angels are out of the scope of the Storytelling system. If they appear at all, they do so as plot devices.

Rank is used to determine the maximum ratings in other game traits an ephemeral being can have, as described in a table below, along with how many dots of Attributes the entity can have. All ephemeral beings have the ability to sense the relative Rank of other entities, and may attempt to conceal their own Rank by succeeding in a contested Finesse roll. Success means that the entity appears to be the same Rank as the being sensing the relative Rank.

Ghosts can't increase Rank outside of the Underworld and come into existence as either Rank 1 or 2 depending on how much self-awareness they have. Nonsapient "recording" type ghosts are Rank 1, while those that retain most of their living memories are Rank 2. Ghosts summoned back from the Underworld, however, may be of any Rank.

Spirits and **Angels** run the full range of Ranks, depending on how old and successful a spirit is or how much importance the God-Machine places upon an angel.

Essence

Combination food, oxygen, and wealth, Essence fuels ephemeral entities' powers, sustains their insubstantial bodies, and allows them to continue existing. As a game trait, Essence resembles Willpower in that each entity has a permanent maximum Essence rating and an equal number of Essence points it can spend to achieve effects. Maximum Essence is determined by Rank.

Entities can use Essence in the following ways:

- Ephemeral beings must spend a point of Essence per day to remain active. If they have run out of Essence, they fall into hibernation until something happens to let them regain at least one point, which can then be spent on returning to activity. Such dormancy is dangerous — the entity remains in Twilight and can be destroyed if it loses all Corpus and Essence at the same time (see p. 343). When spirits enter hibernation, they are pushed back across the Gauntlet into the Shadow. Ghosts that don't have any anchors remaining are similarly forced into the Underworld. Angels remain dormant wherever they were.
- Ephemeral beings outside of a suitable Condition bleed one point of Essence per *hour*. The Influence and Manifestation Conditions starting on p. 346 state whether they protect from Essence bleed for different types of ephemeral being. Entities that run out of Essence due to bleed suffer a single point of lethal damage and enter hibernation.
- Ephemeral beings can spend Essence to boost their traits for a single scene on a point per dot basis. They can't boost a single trait by more than Rank + 2 dots; boosting takes a turn and they can only boost a single Attribute in a turn.

Entities can sense sources of Essence appropriate for their needs from up to a mile away. Spirits can use this sense through the Gauntlet. The "Seek" Numen (p. 351) increases this range.

- Ephemeral beings regain one point of Essence per day they are in proximity to any Condition relating to them — ghosts are sustained by staying near their anchors, spirits in the Shadow eke out an existence by feeding across the Gauntlet, and angels are fed by Infrastructure.
- Ephemeral beings can attempt to steal Essence from beings of the same type — ghosts from ghosts, spirits from spirits

and so on. The attacking entity rolls Power + Finesse, contested by the victim's Power + Resistance. If the attacker succeeds, it steals up to the successes in Essence, as long as the victimized entity has Essence remaining to lose.

- Ghosts regain a point of Essence whenever someone remembers the living person they once were. Visiting their grave, simply sitting and remembering them, or recognizing their Manifested form as the person they used to be all qualify.
- Spirits may attempt to gorge themselves on a source of appropriate Essence. Once per day, when in proximity (even if it's on the other side of the Gauntlet) to a suitable Condition, a spirit can roll Power + Finesse, regaining successes in Essence. If the spirit is still in the Shadow, the dice pool is penalized according to Gauntlet strength.
- Angels are mechanisms in the God-Machine, and like any machine they are sustained by fuel. God-Machine cultists sacrificing precious resources (metaphorical or literal), animals, or even humans to the angel in its presence allow it to regain the Resources value of the item or animal, or the current Integrity of a human sacrifice, as Essence.

Attributes and Skills

Ephemeral beings don't have the nine Attributes familiar in material characters, but use a simplified set of the Power, Finesse, and Resistance categories mortal Attributes fall into. When creating an ephemeral being, look at the Rank chart earlier in this section to determine how many dots are available and what the trait maximum is. Ghosts usually use the average rating in each category from when they were alive — for example, a man with Strength 3, Intelligence 2, and Presence 2 would become a ghost with Power 2.

Power describes the raw ability of the entity to impose itself on other ephemeral beings and the world at large. It is used in all rolls that call for Strength, Intelligence, or Presence.

Finesse describes how deft the entity is at imposing its desires with fine control. It is used for all rolls that call for Dexterity, Wits, or Manipulation.

Resistance describes how well the entity can avoid imposition from its peers and how easily it is damaged. It is used for all rolls that call for Stamina, Resolve, or Composure.

Ephemeral beings don't possess skills, but don't suffer unskilled penalties as long as the action they're attempting is appropriate to their former self, nature, or mission. They roll the appropriate Attribute + Rank for actions relating directly to their concept, or Attribute + Attribute for actions like surprise and perception.

Advantages

Ephemeral beings differ in how they treat Integrity, Virtue, and Vice. When they possess these traits, the descriptions used are often unusual and the specifics change according to the entity's origin.

Gauntlet Strength

The strength of the wall between the World of Darkness and its Shadow depends mostly on how many people are present in the area. The paradox of why human activity pushes the Shadow away when it also creates vast quantities of emotionally-resonant Essence is a mystery. If the spirits know, they aren't telling, but the Gauntlet breaks away more easily from civilization.

Whenever a spirit attempts to cross between the material world and the Shadow, uses Influence or Manifestation to reach across, feeds from the material world's Essence while still being in the Shadow, or uses a Reaching Manifestation (see p. 347), the dice pool is penalized by a number of dice according to the following chart.

Location	Modifier
Dense urban areas	–3
City suburbs, towns	–2
Small towns, villages	–1
Wilderness, countryside	0
Locus	+2

A Locus is a location in which the Shadow world is especially close. Spirits don't need the Reaching Manifestation Effect to use their powers across the Gauntlet at a locus, attempts to cross over are at +2 dice, and spirits whose nature matches the Locus' Resonant Condition heal at twice the normal rate.

Ghosts retain their Virtue and Vice from life, but they are reversed in effect — ghosts regain all spent Willpower by fulfilling their Vice, but can only do so once per chapter, and regain up to one Willpower point a scene by fulfilling their Virtue. Alone among ephemeral beings, ghosts also possess Integrity, set at the level they had before death. Their Integrity scores don't change, however, as ghosts do not suffer breaking points. Their self-image is fixed unless something happens to push them back to the level of cognizance and self-awareness they had in life. If this should happen somehow, they can suffer breaking points the same way living people can.

Spirits don't have an Integrity trait or a Virtue or Vice. Instead, they regain one point of spent Willpower per three points of Essence they consume by gorging or stealing as described above.

Angels lack Integrity — they simply obey the God-Machine in all things. They do have Virtues and Vices, though, built into them as operating guidelines and preset responses. Angelic Virtues and Vices don't have to be anything a human would describe as virtuous or wicked. Examples include "Silent," "Hidden," "Obedient," "Curious," "Punctual," "Wrathful," and "Precise," all as either Virtue or Vice depending on the angel in question.

Other Traits

Because they have simplified traits, ephemeral entities calculate derived traits a little differently to mortal characters.

Corpus: Ephemeral beings don't have Health, but measure how intact their Twilight form is using Corpus. Permanent Corpus is equal to Resistance + Size and grants Corpus boxes that act like Health boxes, filling when the entity suffers injury. Corpus boxes don't have wound penalties associated with them.

Willpower: Entities have Willpower dots equal to Resistance + Finesse, with a maximum of 10 dots for entities with the Ranks presented in this book. As well as the Willpower gaining methods described above, all ephemeral beings regain one spent Willpower per day.

Initiative: Initiative is equal to Finesse + Resistance.

Defense: Defense is equal to Power or Finesse, whichever is lower, except for Rank 1 spirits which use the higher of the two Attributes. The more an entity is driven by raw instinct, the more animal defense it displays in combat.

Speed: Speed is equal to Power + Finesse + a "species" factor. Spirits of inanimate objects usually have a species factor of 0.

Size: Ephemeral beings can be of any size. Ghosts are usually Size 5, while spirits often use Rank as Size, growing larger as they become more powerful. Angels designed to blend in are sized as humans or animals, but some angelic entities are very large, up to Size 10 or more.

Language: Rank 1 ghosts can't communicate verbally; they don't have enough of their sense of self left to employ language. Rank 2 and higher ghosts know whatever languages they knew in life. Spirits all speak the native tongue of the shadow-world, a strange, sibilant language that resembles Ancient Sumerian, but often learn the human languages common around their Essence-feeding grounds. Angels speak all human languages simultaneously, and more — they sometimes "speak" in strange glossalia or sounds more like electronic noise than a language and appear to understand each other when doing so. When an angel wishes to be understood, everyone present hears it speak fluently in their native languages.

Bans

All ephemeral beings suffer from a mystical compulsion known as the ban, a behavior that the entity must or must not perform under certain conditions. They can be as simplistic as "the angel cannot cross railway lines," moderately complex like "the ghost must come if you call her name into a mirror three times within her anchor," or as difficult as, "the angel must receive a tribute of a printing press that has used blood as ink once a month or lose a Rank."

Bans increase in both complexity and consequences with Rank.

Rank 1 entities have mild bans that are easily triggered but don't endanger the entity. A spirit of bliss can't resist an offering of opiates. The ghost of a nun has to immediately use an offered rosary. A weak angel must stop still and parrot hexadecimal numbers when they're spoken to.

Rank 2 and 3 entities have moderate bans that curtail the creature's activities in a more serious way than mere distraction. A ghost must immediately dematerialize when it hears the sound of a cat. The murderous spirit of a car that has run down multiple people loses all Willpower if it doesn't kill one person a month. The angel of the records answers any question about the family, background or true identity of a subject if the questioner accurately tells the angel her time (to the minute) and place of birth.

Rank 4 and 5 entities have complicated bans that put an end to whatever the creature is trying to do — often in an explosive fashion. They have consequences in game traits or long-term actions, but esoteric requirements. The Smiling Corpse, a ghost summoned back from the Underworld by a mystery cult, is immediately banished back to the Great Below if anyone should sing a particular nursery rhyme in his presence. The spirit of Mount Iliamna, a volcano in Alaska, will use its Numina to kill a victim named by anyone who makes it an offering of platinum that was mined from its foothills. The angel Uriminel, four-faced enforcer of destiny, has Defense 0 against individuals who have suffered lethal or aggravated damage within the last lunar month.

Banes

Ephemeral entities are not of the material world and react strangely to some elements of it. The interaction between their ephemeral Twilight form and physical substance always contains a flaw — a *bane* — that damages the entity's Corpus through symbolic or mystical interference. The bane is a physical substance or energy that the entity can't abide.

- Ephemeral beings voluntarily attempting to come into contact with the bane must spend a Willpower point and succeed on a Resolve + Composure roll with a dice penalty equal to their Rank.
- Banes are solid to entities, even when they are in Twilight. They do not, however, affect spirits on the other side of the Gauntlet.
- Simply touching the bane — even voluntarily — causes 1 level of aggravated damage per turn if the entity is Materialized, and causes the relevant Condition to end unless the entity succeeds in a roll of Rank in dice. The roll must be repeated every turn if contact holds.
- If the item or person to which a Fettered entity is linked comes into contact with the bane, the entity suffers 1 level of Lethal damage per turn as long as contact holds. The entity must use the Unfetter Manifestation Effect to escape.

- Touching the bane while in Twilight causes 1 point of lethal damage per turn to non-Manifest entities.
- If the bane has been used as a weapon against the entity, the wounds suffered are aggravated for Manifest entities and lethal for entities still in Twilight.

Banes are increasingly esoteric and obscure for entities of increasing Rank.

Rank 1 entities have common substances and phenomena as banes. Ghosts burn at the touch of salt. The spirit of a forest is poisoned by the fumes of burning plastic. A low-ranking angel can't touch gold.

Rank 2 and 3 entities have difficult to obtain but still "natural" banes. Powerful ghosts are repelled by holy water. A spirit must be killed by a sharpened stake made of pine. A mid-rank angel can be killed by a weapon dusted with the ground-up remains of a meteorite.

Rank 4 and 5 entities have highly-specific banes that require great effort to acquire. The lord of an Underworld realm now walking the Earth and served by a cult of worshippers can be killed by an obsidian blade marked with the names of thirteen Gods of Death. The spirit of the US Treasury (the building) can be killed by a silver bullet made from a melted-down original dollar. A high Rank angel can't willingly touch the sigils of a certain incantation in Sumerian and dies if the signs are carved into the flesh of its host.

The hierarchical nature of ephemeral beings also plays a part — Rank isn't a social convention for them but a fundamental part of their nature. Ephemeral entities of 2 Ranks or more higher than an opponent of the same type (a Rank 5 spirit attacking a Rank 3 spirit, for example) count as their opponent's bane when using unarmed attacks, claws, or teeth.

Combat

As noted earlier, ephemeral beings use the lower of Finesse or Resistance for Defense unless they are Rank 1, in which case they use the higher. They apply Defense against *all* attacks, even firearms.

Ephemeral beings roll Power + Finesse to attack. Their attacks inflict bashing damage unless the nature of the entity (a spirit with metal fists, for example) indicates that it should inflict lethal wounds instead. Some entities use weapons, in which case roll Power + Finesse and then apply weapon damage on a successful attack.

Entities in Twilight can only attack or be attacked by other ephemeral beings of the same type, unless the attack utilizes the entity's bane.

Physical attacks on a manifest entity that normally cause lethal damage only cause bashing damage unless the attack utilizes the entity's bane. Despite appearing to the naked eye and being solid, a manifest spirit, ghost, or angel doesn't have any internal organs to injure.

Ephemeral beings record and heal from wounds the same way as material characters, but in addition lose one point of Essence for every aggravated wound they suffer.

Honorary Rank

Some supernatural creatures that are closely related to a form of ephemeral being have "honorary" Rank in the appropriate otherworldly hierarchy; Sin-Eaters are all Bound to a ghost, for example, and werewolves are treated with respect by spirits according to their Renown.

Technicalities count, in this case, but only *against* the ephemeral entity. A werewolf who "outranks" a minor spirit will deal devastating wounds to it with his claws, but a high-Rank spirit can't burn that werewolf by touching him. There are other ways to assert dominance; high-Rank entities are quite capable of showing the half-fleshed who's boss.

Ephemeral entities that lose all Corpus from lethal or aggravated wounds explode into a burst of ephemera stylized to their nature. A forest-spirit dies in a hail of rapidly-vanishing pine needles, while ghosts crumble, screaming, into the ground. The entity isn't actually dead, though, unless it has also run out of Essence. If it has even a single Essence point remaining, it reforms in a safe place (a Conditioned location, usually), hibernating. Once it has regained Essence points equal to Corpus dots, it spends an Essence point and reawakens. As the entity can't act while hibernating, this means waiting for the one Essence a day for being in a suitable area to slowly build up to Corpus, and that more powerful entities take longer to recover from being "killed."

Influence

All ephemeral beings have a degree of Influence over the world that they can leverage to control and shape the basis of their existence. Ghosts have power over their own anchors, spirits can control and encourage the phenomena they were born from, and the God-Machine grants angels broad authority over things relating to their mission.

Entities begin with dots in Influence equal to their Rank. Although a being's Rank is also the maximum rating for an Influence, ephemeral beings can split their dots to have more than one Influence. A Rank 4 spirit of dogs, for example, might have Influence: Dogs • • • and Influence: Loyalty •.

Entities may reduce their number of Numina granted by Rank to increase Influence dots at a cost of one Numen per dot.

Spirits and angels have Influences that relate to their natures, but that may be used in multiple circumstances — the dog spirit, for example, has Influence: Dogs, not Influence over a *particular* dog. Ghosts always have Influence: Anchors, though may have other Influences as well as they increase in Rank.

Influence is measured in both scale and duration. To use an Influence, compare the entity's Influence rating to the total

INFLUENCE EFFECTS

Level	Effect
• Strengthen	The entity can enhance its sphere of influence; it can add to the Defense of a loved one, make an emotion stronger, an animal or plant healthier, or an object more robust, gaining the entity's Rank in Health or Structure. This Influence can shift the Anchor, Resonant or Infrastructure Condition to Open for its duration. The cost is one Essence.
• • Manipulate	The entity can make minor changes within its sphere of influence, such as slightly changing the nature or target of an emotion, or making minor changes to an animal's actions, a plant's growth or an object's functioning. The cost is two Essence.
• • • Control	The entity can make dramatic changes within its sphere of influence, twisting emotions entirely or dictating an animal's actions, a plant's growth or an object's functioning. This Influence can shift the Open Condition to Controlled for its duration. The cost is three Essence.
• • • • Create	The entity can create a new example of its sphere of influence; creating a new anchor, instilling an emotion, creating a new sapling or young plant, creating a young animal or brand new object. The entity can cause a temporary Anchor, Infrastructure, or Resonant Condition in a subject for the duration of the Influence. The cost is four Essence.
• • • • • Mass Create	The entity can create multiple examples of its sphere of influence; triggering emotions in multiple people; creating new copses of trees, small groups of animals, or multiple identical items. The cost is five Essence. The number of examples of the Influence created is equal to Rank. Alternatively, the entity may create one instance of its sphere of influence – including creating the base Condition for its type – permanently, although an ephemeral entity can't permanently alter the mind of a sentient being.

dots of the intended effect and how long it is to last. The total must be equal to or less than the entity's Influence rating in order for the Influence to be attempted.

The entity pays the listed cost in Essence and rolls Power + Finesse, with success creating the desired effect. If the Influence is altering the thoughts or emotions of a sentient being, the roll is contested by Resolve or Composure (whichever is higher) + Supernatural Tolerance.

Manifestation

Ephemeral beings can interact with the mortal world in many different ways, from lurking in Shadow and reaching across the Gauntlet to physically Manifesting or merging into a human soul. Just as Influence traits determine what level of control the creature has over their environment, Manifestation traits note which forms of Manifestation are possible for a particular entity.

INFLUENCE DURATIONS

Level	Duration	Cost
0	One minute per success	No additional Essence cost
•	Ten minutes per success	No additional Essence cost
• •	One hour per success	1 additional Essence
• • •	One day per success	2 additional Essence
• • • •	Permanent	2 additional Essence

MANIFESTATION EFFECTS

Manifestation	Effect
Twilight Form	If the entity enters the material world, it does so in Twilight (see p. 348). The Effect has no cost.
Discorporate	In emergencies, the entity can voluntarily Discorporate as though it had lost all Corpus to lethal injury — a painful way to escape a greater entity threatening to permanently kill it. The Effect has no cost.
Reaching	(Spirit only) By spending one Essence, the spirit applies the Reaching Condition to itself. The activation roll is penalized by the local Gauntlet Strength.
Gauntlet Breach	(Spirit only — requires Resonant Condition) By spending three Essence, the spirit forces itself through the Gauntlet — returning to Shadow from the World of Darkness, or appearing in Twilight Form by entering the material world. The activation roll is penalized by the local Gauntlet Strength.
Avernian Gateway	(Ghost, angel or death-related spirit only — Requires Open Condition) By spending three Essence, the entity opens a nearby gateway to the Underworld, and applies the Underworld Gate Condition to the location.
Shadow Gateway	(Rank 3+ spirit or angel only — Requires Open Condition) By spending Essence equal to Gauntlet Strength, the entity opens a portal to the Shadow that it and other entities may use, applying the Shadow Gate Condition to the location. The activation roll is penalized by the local Gauntlet Strength.
Image	(Requires Anchor, Resonant or Infrastructure Condition) By spending one Essence, the entity may make its Twilight form visible to material beings for a scene.
Materialize	(Requires Open Condition) By spending three Essence, the entity may shift from Twilight form into the Materialized Condition.
Fetter	(Requires Open Condition) By spending two Essence, the entity adds the Fettered Condition to itself. Living beings targeted by this Effect contest the roll with Resolve + Composure + Supernatural Tolerance. If the Effect is successful, living targets gain the Urged Condition.
Unfetter	(Requires Fettered Condition) By spending one point of Essence, the entity temporarily suppresses the Fetter Condition for a Scene, allowing it to use other Manifestation Effects or roam in Twilight. When the Scene ends, any Manifestation Effects used during it immediately end. If the entity isn't back within range of its Fetter (see p. 348) when Unfetter ends, it immediately goes dormant.
Possess	(Requires Open Condition) By spending three Essence, the entity gains temporary control over an object, corpse, or creature, applying the Possessed Condition to the subject. Living subjects contest the roll with Resolve + Composure + Supernatural Tolerance.
Claim	(Requires Controlled Condition) By spending five Essence, the entity gains permanent control over an object, creature or corpse, applying the Claimed Condition to the subject. Living subjects contest the roll with Resolve + Composure + Supernatural Tolerance. An entity must be capable of both the Fetter and Possess Manifestations to buy Claim.

Entities begin with the Twilight Form Manifestation and a number of Manifestation Effects from the list below equal to Rank. Some effects are only available to certain kinds of entity. Entities may increase their capabilities by reducing the number of Numina they are granted by Rank, at the cost of one Numen per Manifestation Effect.

Most Manifestation Effects have prerequisite Influence or Manifestation Conditions — a spirit can only Fetter to something with an Open Condition, for example.

All Manifestation Effects require a Power + Finesse roll to use. Most have an associated cost in Essence, and some are contested or resisted.

Ephemeral Influence and Manifestation Conditions

If something falls into an ephemeral being's sphere of influence, this is handled mechanically by declaring an Influence Condition. Influence Conditions resemble Tilts and character Conditions.

The different forms of Manifestation Effect are also Conditions applied to the location, object, or character the entity is Manifesting into or, in cases like Reaching, to the entity itself.

Unlike many Conditions, Influence and Manifestation Conditions are tiered and interrelated; Manifestation Conditions have Influence Conditions as prerequisites and vice-versa. The lower tiers are naturally occurring, while the later ones must be created by entities using Influences and Manifestations.

In the most advanced forms of Influence and Manifestation, entities may attempt to create a long-lasting Condition that has a prerequisite of a very temporary one. When one Condition is advanced into another, the remaining duration of the prerequisite Conditions is "frozen."

If a prerequisite Condition is removed from a character (for example, a Possessed character's Open Condition is removed by exorcism) any Conditions relying on it, any relying on them, and so on are immediately removed. The most advanced remaining Condition then resumes its duration.

Anchor

The subject of this Condition — usually a location or object, though it can be a person in rare cases — is within the sphere of influence of a ghost. Ghosts in or within Rank x3 yards of their Anchors do not suffer Essence bleed.

Causing the Condition: This Condition is immediately created when a new ghost is formed, based on whatever subject anchors the ghost's identity. Summoning rituals intended to release ghosts from the Underworld or call them from elsewhere temporarily create this Condition in their target. Finally, a high-Rank ghost can use a Create Influence to mark a target as an Anchor.

Ending the Condition: The easiest way to end an Anchor condition is to destroy the subject. Some ghosts cling to Anchors that represent unfinished business, in which case resolving those issues can remove the Condition. Abjuration temporarily suppresses the Condition as described on p. 353, forcing the ghost to retreat to another Anchor if it has one. Ghosts without Anchors bleed Essence until they fall into dormancy, at which point the Underworld Gate Condition is created and the ghost is banished to the Great Below.

Resonant

The subject of this Condition is within the sphere of influence of a spirit.

Causing the Condition: This Condition is common and naturally-occurring — if an object, phenomenon, person, or place matches the spirit's purview in some way, it has this Condition. Anything matching the description of one of a spirit's Influences counts as having this Condition tagged to the spirit. Summoning rituals intended to entice a particular spirit to a location work by instilling the qualities that result in this Condition. Finally, a high-Rank spirit can use a Create Influence to cause the prerequisites for the Condition itself.

Ending the Condition: The Condition ends if the phenomenon creating it ends. A forest stops being Resonant for a tree spirit when all the trees are logged, a grief spirit can't Influence someone who has healed and let go of his pain, and a fire spirit must move on when the fire is extinguished. Abjuration and Exorcism may temporarily suppress the Condition or be the cause of it "naturally" ending if the ritualists remove the causal phenomenon as part of the ritual.

Infrastructure

The subject of this Condition is within the sphere of influence of an angel.

Causing the Condition: The Infrastructure Condition, unlike Anchor and Resonant Conditions, is never naturally-occurring. The God-Machine requires effort to prepare the way for its angels: extended actions by cultists, unwitting pawns, or even other angels to create Infrastructure. High-Rank angels can use the Create Influence to instill this Condition on behalf of themselves or a subordinate angel. In addition, characters with the Destiny Merit are always subject to this Condition.

Ending the Condition: Infrastructure's intricate nature makes it much more difficult to remove. Multiple extended actions taking place over whole stories are necessary to dismantle the Condition, opposed by the Angel itself.

Open

The place, object, animal, or person covered by a previous Condition has now been conditioned to accept the entity. That entity can now attempt to Fetter itself to the subject of the Condition, or, if the Condition is on a location, Manifest.

Prerequisites: The Anchor, Resonant, or Infrastructure Condition for the same phenomenon to which this Condition is tagged.

Causing the Condition: This Condition is usually the result of fine-tuning the prerequisite Condition as part of an extended

action, involving the subject and entity acting in concert for a number of scenes equal to Rank or a living subject's Resolve, whichever is higher. Using a Control Influence allows an entity to temporarily create the Open Condition as an instant action.

Ending the Condition: The Condition ends if the prerequisite Condition is removed. Exorcism rituals work by removing this Condition, reverting it to the prerequisite.

Controlled

The object, creature, or person covered by an Open Condition has now been so conditioned that the entity may attempt to Claim it, permanently merging with it.

Prerequisites: The intended subject of this Condition must have the Open Condition, tagged to the entity attempting to cause it.

Causing the Condition: This Condition is the result of repeated use of the Possess Manifestation effect by the causing entity. It must have succeeded in possessing the subject on a number of separate occasions equal to the Willpower of entity or subject (whichever is higher). If any Possessed Condition is removed before its duration ends, progress is lost on building to the required number of possessions.

Ending the Condition: Successfully ending the Claimed Condition against the entity's will, whether by Exorcism or by forcing the Claimed subject into contact with the entity's bane, removes this Condition and reverts the subject to Open.

Reaching

The spirit has opened a conduit through the Gauntlet, allowing it to use Influences and Numina to affect the other side. Numina with ⓡ after their name can be used with this Condition. Characters capable of perceiving spirits in Twilight can sense the conduit's presence with a successful Wits + Composure roll.

Causing the Condition: This Condition is the result of the Reaching Manifestation Effect and lasts for one Scene.

Ending the Condition: At the end of the scene, the Condition fades. Mortals may attempt an Abjuration with a 3 dice penalty to close the conduit and end the Condition early.

Underworld Gate

The location has an open gateway to the Underworld. All ghosts regain one Essence per scene that they are in the gateway's presence. Ghosts without anchors may use it to reenter the world.

Causing the Condition: This Condition can be created by using the Avernian Gateway Manifestation Effect on an Open Condition. Some supernatural beings with ties to death are also able to open Avernian Gateways. Even mortals can open a



AVERNIAN GATEWAYS

Doorways to the Underworld, also called *Avernian gates*, exist all over the world but are invisible to all but a handful of psychics. The gateways are in Twilight, made of ghostly ephemera, and appear in places with the Resonant Condition tagged as "Death" — anywhere that people die in large numbers or that has a feel of Death about it can house a gate. They remain closed unless they are the nearest gate to a ghost who loses his last Anchor, in which case they open for a turn as his Corpus passes on.

gate if one is present and they know the proper means. Mortals who conduct rituals to first Open a Death-Resonant location that houses a gate can unlock it, causing this Condition, but require the *key* to do so. Every Gateway has a key — an item or action that will open it. Keys can be physical objects, but are also sometimes actions or emotions or are tied to times and events: a Gate might open for a murder at midnight, when touched with a certain doll, or when a woman betrayed in love turns her back on it three times. Researching a proper key is a difficult Intelligence + Occult roll, with a –3 to –5 dice modifier.

Ending the Condition: At the end of the scene, the Condition fades. An Exorcism directed at the gate can end the Condition early.

Shadow Gate

The location has a hole punched through the Gauntlet. Spirits — and even incautious people — can cross through it without the use of any powers. The Shadow Gate is visible even to material beings, as the Shadow world and material worlds mix.

Causing the Condition: This Condition can be created by using the Shadow Gateway Manifestation Effect on an Open Condition. Very rare summoning rituals can also create this Condition, allowing the spirit being called to access the material world.

Ending the Condition: At the end of the scene, the Condition fades. An exorcism directed at the gate can end the Condition early.

Materialized

The entity has shifted from ephemeral to material substance, manifesting in physical form. All the rules for ephemeral entity's traits still apply except for the effects of being in Twilight. This Condition protects the entity from Essence Bleed for its duration.

Causing the Condition: This Condition is created by an entity using the Materialize Manifestation Effect on an Open Condition. If the Open Condition used is on an object or person, the entity must materialize within its Rank in yards.

Ending the Condition: Materialization lasts for one hour per success on the activating roll. When the duration ends, the entity fades back into Twilight. Physical contact with a Bane or removal of a prerequisite condition can cause the Condition to end early.

Fettered

The entity has secured itself to an object or creature. As long as it remains Fettered, the entity is safe from Essence Bleed. The entity remains in Twilight and must stay within five yards of the Fetter. Most entities Fettering themselves literally hide inside their Fetters if they are small enough.

The entity pays one less Essence for using Influences on the Fetter, but may not use them or Numina on another target as long as the Fetter lasts.

Prerequisites: The intended subject of this Condition must have the Open Condition, tagged to the entity attempting to cause it.

Causing the Condition: This Condition is created by an entity using the Fetter Manifestation Effect.

Ending the Condition: Fetters are permanent unless the prerequisite Conditions are ended, or if the subject of the Fetter is destroyed or killed (if a living being). The entity can voluntarily end the Condition by using the Unfetter Manifestation Effect. A successful Exorcism removes this Condition.

Urged

This animal or human host has been used as a Fetter by an ephemeral being. The entity may read the subject's thoughts with a successful Power + Finesse roll, contested by Resolve + Supernatural Tolerance. Success reveals surface thoughts. The entity may urge the host to take a specified action with a successful Power + Finesse roll contested by Resolve + Composure with an extra die. If the entity wins, the urge is created. Following it rewards the host with a Beat.

Causing the Condition: This Condition is created by an entity using the Fetter Manifestation Effect.

Ending the Condition: The Urged Condition ends whenever the linked Fetter ends.

Possessed

This object, corpse, or living being is temporarily controlled by an ephemeral entity. Living hosts are put into a coma-like state while being possessed — they experience the possession as missing time, except for flashbacks that might come out in dreams or times of stress such as losing Integrity. The entity

may not use Numina or Influences while controlling the host, but is safe from Essence Bleed as long as the possession lasts.

The entity may pay one Essence per turn to heal one lethal or bashing wound or a point of structure lost to damage. Corpses that died through damage begin Possession incapacitated and must be "healed" with Essence

Entities possessing inanimate objects or corpses have a great deal of control over their host. An entity controlling an object can't make it do anything it couldn't do while being operated, but it can turn switches on and off, operate machinery, use keyboards, and turn dials. Use the entity's Finesse if dice rolls are necessary.

Corpses and other articulated hosts capable of movement, such as shop mannequins or industrial robots, use their own Physical Attributes but the entity's Attributes in Social or Mental rolls. By spending a point of Essence, the entity can use its own Attributes instead of the host's for Physical tasks for a turn, but doing so causes one point of lethal damage or structure loss to the host.

Living hosts require more time for the entity to gain full control and always use their own Attributes. The entity may read the host's mind with a Finesse Roll at a –4 die penalty, use the host's Physical Skills at a –3 penalty, and the host's Social and Mental Skills at –4. These penalties are all reduced by one die per day that the entity has been Fettered to the host. Most possessing entities Fetter themselves to their intended hosts and use the Possess Manifestation Effect to take full control only in emergencies.

To possess a host, the entity must remain in Twilight, superimposed over the host. This means that if the host touches the entity's bane or is injured by a weapon made of the bane, the entity will suffer wounds to its Corpus.

Causing the Condition: This Condition is created by an entity using the Possess Manifestation Effect. The object or victim must be under the Open Condition, tagged to the entity.

Ending the Condition: The possession lasts for a single scene, unless the entity abandons it early or the host is killed or destroyed. Abjurations, Exorcisms and forced contact with banes and bans can all motivate an entity to release a host.

Claimed

A Claimed object, corpse, creature, or person has been permanently possessed and merges with the entity involved. Unlike Possess, living Claimed aren't put into a fugue state, but remain mentally active while their soul and the Claiming entity merge together over the course of several days. During the period of fusion, the subject is under all the effects of the Urged Condition, described above. Once per day, starting with the moment the Claimed Condition is created, add one dot of the entity's Attributes to the host's, permanently raising them. Power may be assigned to Strength, Intelligence, or Presence, Finesse to Wits, Dexterity, or Manipulation, and Resistance to Stamina, Composure, or Resolve. The host's physical form begins to mutate, taking on an appearance influenced by the original host and the entity.

Claimed corpses add points to Attributes as above, but start with all Mental and Social Attributes at 0. Inanimate objects use the statistics appropriate for their type (Adding Resistance to Structure and Durability, Power to Acceleration and Finesse to Handling) instead of Physical Attributes, and also start the claiming process with all Mental and Social Attributes at 0. Corpses and inanimate hosts don't spend the claiming period under the Urged Condition, having no minds of their own to warp.

Claimed may use the entity's Influences, but not Numina or Manifestation Effects. They may develop supernatural powers as Merits. From the moment the Claimed Condition is laid, the entity is safe from Essence Bleed. The hybrid being that results has the entity's Essence trait, Virtue, Vice, Ban, and Bane, but is a material being. Claimed that were once spirits may cross the Gauntlet at a Locus with a successful Intelligence + Presence roll. Claimed that were inanimate objects are fully animate, fusions of spiritual power, metal and plastic.

Causing the Condition: This Condition is created by an entity using the Claim Manifestation Effect.

Ending the Condition: Claim is permanent in living hosts unless the entity decides to detach itself, rolling its original Power + Finesse penalized by Rank in dice and contested by the Claimed hybrid's Resolve + Composure, including any dots gained from being Claimed. If the entity succeeds, the entity and host are separated. Former hosts are physically and mentally scarred — the physical appearance changes back at the same rate it mutated and the extra Attribute dots fade at a rate of two per day. The Essence trait and any supernatural powers the Claimed developed immediately vanish. Former Claimed, however, retain the Virtue and Vice of the entity that took them over.

In nonliving hosts, Claim is only temporary – once the Claim has fully formed, the host loses one dot of a Physical Attribute (or equivalent for formerly inanimate objects) per three days. When any of these Attributes reaches 0, the host disintegrates and the entity is released into Twilight.

Numina

In addition to Influence and Manifestation, all ephemeral entities have a number of discrete magical powers called Numina. Each Numen is a single ability linked to the entity's nature — activated by a successful Power + Finesse roll unless stated otherwise.

The Numina described here are deliberately generic. Individual ephemeral beings display their Numen in ways reflecting their type, theme and biases — a ghost's Blast is a empty, freezing cold in the bones of its victim, while an angel's Awe manifests as a terrible holy aura.

Numina with R next to their name are usable in conjunction with the Reaching Condition.

Aggressive Meme

The entity speaks to a person (it must be in a Condition capable of doing so) and plants an idea in their mind. When that person tells someone else the idea, it takes hold in their mind, too. And whoever *they* tell, and so on. The Numen costs seven Essence to activate and is contested by Resolve + Composure + Supernatural Tolerance.

Awe

The entity causes terror in anyone who can see it. The Numen costs three Essence and activation is contested individually with Presence + Composure + Supernatural Tolerance by anyone looking at the entity. Anyone gaining fewer successes than the entity is unable to move or speak for a turn. If the entity gains an exceptional success, the effect lasts three turns.

Blast

The entity may wound opponents at a distance. Range is equal to 10 yards per dot of Power and the entity does not suffer range penalties. If the activation roll succeeds, the Blast wounds as a +0L weapon. The entity may increase the lethality of its Blast by paying Essence — every two Essence spent increases the "weapon" by +1L. The maximum weapon bonus is equal to the entity's Rank.

Dement R

The entity may torture its victims mind via psychic assault. This Numen costs one Essence. The activation roll is contested by the victim's Intelligence + Supernatural Tolerance. If the entity succeeds, the victim suffers the Insane Tilt (p. 332) for the rest of the Scene.

Drain

The entity can steal Essence or Willpower (chosen at activation) from a material being. The activation roll is contested by Stamina + Resolve + Supernatural Tolerance. Whichever character — entity *or* target — gains the most successes receives points of Willpower or Essence equal to the number of successes, while the other party loses the same number.

Emotional Aura R

The entity sends out a wave of powerful — and distracting — emotion. This Numen costs one Essence and lasts for a scene or until the entity uses another Numina. The activation roll is made once but anyone coming within 5 yards of the entity must make a Resolve + Composure + Supernatural Tolerance roll. If the activation roll has more successes, the victim suffers a –2 dice penalty to all actions as long as the aura remains. If the victim gains more successes, he is immune to the aura unless the entity uses the Numen again.

Essence Thief

The entity may consume and steal Essence from ephemeral beings other than its own type — for example, spirits with this Numen may consume ghosts and angels. The Numen costs one Essence to activate.

Firestarter R

The entity causes flammable materials to combust. This Numen costs one Essence and causes one small fire to break out per activation success within the entity's Power in yards.

Hallucination

The entity may create an illusion experienced by a single target: it can be anything from a sight or sound to an imaginary person who holds a conversation. The Numen costs one Essence and is contested by the victim's Wits + Composure + Supernatural Tolerance. Each success over the contesting roll alters one of the victim's senses.

Host Jump

The entity may leap from host to host when using the Possess or Claim Manifestations. The current host must touch the intended host while the entity spends 3 Essence; the new host must be under all necessary prerequisite Conditions. If both prerequisites are met, the entity immediately transfers the Possessed or Claimed Condition to the new host, although Claimed hosts must begin the process of Claiming again. The entity does not need to re-spend Essence on the Manifestation Effect when jumping hosts with this Numen. Living Claim victims who are vacated with the use of this Numen still suffer the aftereffects listed under the Claimed Condition.

Implant Mission R

This Numen grants a mortal a vision of a task the entity wishes him to accomplish as well as a magical determination to see it through. The entity pays 2 Essence and rolls Power + Finesse. On a success, the subject receives a short vision of whatever the entity wishes him to do and is under the Obsession Condition regarding carrying that mission out.

Innocuous

The entity is very good at being overlooked. Perception rolls to notice the entity are penalized by 2 dice. This Numen does not require a roll to activate and has no cost.

Left-Handed Spanner

The entity disables a device, paying one Essence and touching the object if Manifest, or moving its Twilight form to superimpose with it if not. The device must be a human-manufactured object with at least three moving parts. If the

activation roll succeeds, the device malfunctions for a number of turns equal to the successes rolled. Using this Numen in combat requires the entity to Grapple and gain control of the object, and so can't be used this way in Twilight unless the target is in Twilight as well.

Mortal Mask

This Numen disguises a Materialized entity as a human and can be used at the same time as the Materialize Manifestation Effect. Using the Numen costs 1 Essence and the human seeming lasts for activation successes in hours. The human "costume" is flawed — witnesses may make a Wits + Composure roll penalized by the entity's Finesse to realize that something is wrong. Characters able to sense the entity in Twilight do not suffer a penalty to the roll.

Omen Trance

Once every 24 hours, the entity may enter a trance in order to gain a glimpse of the future. The Numen costs one Essence if the entity is trancing on its own behalf or 3 Essence if it is searching for omens for another. The activation roll is an extended action, lasting at least one scene. If successful, the entity sees a vision of an event sometime in the next week. The visions are predisposed to be warnings of danger.

Pathfinder (R)

This Numen allows an entity to know the quickest route to a destination. The fastest route isn't always the safest, of course; the Numen doesn't reveal any dangers on the way, only a set of directions to the target. If the destination is the subject of the Safe Place Merit, the activation roll is contested by the lowest Resolve + Supernatural Tolerance among any owners. The Numen costs 1 Essence and lasts for a scene. If the destination is too far away to reach that quickly, the entity must use the Numen again.

Rapture (R)

The entity forces a response from the pleasure centers of a living being's brain, granting ecstatic visions, a feeling of communion with the universe, and sensations of bliss. The Numen costs 2 Essence to activate. If successful, the victim suffers the Insensate Tilt (p. 332). If the victim fails a Resolve + Supernatural Tolerance roll, she gains a temporary derangement for the entity's Power in days, in a form that binds her closer to the entity's wishes.

Regenerate

The entity can use Essence to heal bashing and lethal wounds on its Corpus. This Numen does not require a roll to activate, but costs 1 Essence and heals one level of damage — the entity must reactivate the Numen each turn to heal more severe wounds. Bashing damage is healed first, then lethal.

Resurrection

This Numen — only available to Rank 4+ angels and spirits of healing — raises the dead. The Numen costs 10 Essence to use and the activation roll is penalized by one die per day that the subject has been dead. Supernatural beings that have already died as part of their transformation — vampires, mummies and Sin-Eaters — can't be resurrected, nor can anyone who died of natural causes. Other supernatural beings lose their powers when resurrected. Mages become Sleepwalkers and werewolves, wolf-blooded.

Seek (R)

The entity can sense the presence of suitable Conditions from a distance. The base range is two miles per Rank; entities may spend an Essence to multiply this by 10. If successful on a Finesse roll, the entity becomes aware of the direction and distance to the nearest suitable Anchor, Infrastructure or Resonant Condition.

Speed

The entity accelerates into a blur of movement. The entity chooses whether to spend 2 or 4 Essence when activating this Numen. Spending 2 Essence doubles its Speed for the remainder of the scene, while spending 4 Essence triples it.

Sign

The entity creates messages or images in any media they would be able to access to be used by a mortal — it can write in the condensation on cold glass, produce images on computer screens, and send audible messages via phone lines. The Numen costs one Essence to activate, and if successful creates a single message.

Stalwart

The entity appears armored in Twilight form and uses Resistance as its Defense score instead of the lower of Power or Finesse.

Telekinesis (R)

The entity can manipulate objects without using a Manifestation Effect. This Numen costs one Essence. Successes on the activation roll become the entity's "Strength" when attempting to lift or throw an item. Fine motor control is impossible using this Numen.

Mortal Interaction

Mortals can interact with ephemeral entities in many more ways than as simple victims to Urge, Possess, or Claim, both for and against an entity's interests. Characters with an

Unseen Sense for ghosts, spirits and angels can sense those beings' presence, even if the entity is in Twilight. Mystery Cults dedicated to serving particular entities attempt to assist their master in creating the necessary Conditions — often unwittingly. An angel doesn't need to explain to the mortals it forces to carry out strange actions that it is building Infrastructure, let alone explain why the God-Machine needs it to.

Of course, faced with humanity's fate as a resource for alien intruders, some mortals fight back.

Research

Most deliberate interactions with entities — summoning, exorcising and abjuration — rely on as much knowledge of the entity in question as the mortal can get. Research rolls to determine bans and banes are handled as extended Intelligence + Occult rolls for the most part, but many entities in the World of Darkness are protected by deliberate secrecy, obscurity, or don't often take interest in human affairs and so haven't had their details recorded. The target number of successes for a research roll is determined by the entity's type and Rank, as follows:

Rank	Successes
1	5
2	7
3	10
4	14
5	20

Researching a ghost reduces the target number of successes by 2, while researching an angel increases it by 4. Reaching the target number reveals the entity's ban or bane, while an exceptional success reveals both. Partial successes should reveal increasing information about the entity, as the character learns more about their nature, habits, and history.

Resourceful investigators find other ways to learn the weaknesses of an ephemeral foe — many entities are willing to sell out their fellows' secrets in exchange for something. Many bans are also rather obvious, especially for low-Rank entities; a mortal might simply try to use the right thing by chance.

Contact

Faced with a haunting, or what appears to be a haunting, many occult investigators' first course of action is to attempt to make contact with the entity involved. Unless the entity actually has the Image or Materialize Manifestations or the Signs Numen, this is a slow process of trial, error and research that takes up several actions, each roll relating to one tested attempt to understand what the entity wants.

Some mortals, however, are true mediums, able to make it easier for an entity to contact them. Doing so opens them up to the risk of being used for the entity's own ends; see the Medium Merit on p. 299.

Esoteric Armory (• to •••••)

Effect: Your character is the go-to guy when one needs a knife carved from the bone of a martyred saint, a hawthorn stake, rock salt shotgun shells, the powdered remains of cremated suicides or any number of other things. No matter how strange the need, you've got it covered. After successfully researching an ephemeral entity's Bane, compare your dots in this Merit to the entity's Rank. If the merit is equal to or greater than Rank, you've got what you need in your Armory. You should decide along with your Storyteller where the Armory is, though; a one-dot Esoteric Armory can fit in a large bag, but a four- or five-dot one will fill a house.

Summoning and Exorcism

For a solitary occultist attempting to force a ghost to appear, or a shaman inviting a spirit to Influence an area, occult libraries are filled with summoning rites. None of them, strictly speaking, actually *work*, in that without supernatural power it's impossible to compel an ephemeral entity to appear, but the rituals and practices of a summoning can often, by accident or design, create the Conditions an entity would need to appear if it were so inclined.

A summoning is made up of several research actions (Intelligence + Occult rolls, with bonuses and penalties for access to proper literature) that narrow down the requirements for the rest of the rites. The remaining actions serve as alternate ways to cause the Influence Conditions in the desired location.

By acquiring a ghost's bones, or researching his Anchor and using it in the rite, the summoner sets up the Anchor Condition. By burning rare materials, the area is made Resonant with a fire-spirit. By gathering people who can see the gears and following the God-Machine's instructions, Infrastructure begins to build. Using the fruits of their researches, the Cultists customize Conditions for their intended guest, advancing the Condition to Open... and allowing it to Manifest. Summoning rituals involving bringing an entity forth from another world must include a step where the gateway is opened — summonings for spirits must be performed in locii, and those for ghosts near a gate to the Underworld. These are even more difficult to pull off and apt to be interrupted by meddling investigators, but are the only way to allow truly powerful entities access to the world.

Occult literature is full of proposed ways to control summoned entities. These usually consist of banes and bans, which the summoner can use as leverage. Some spirits really

are bound via their bans to serve mortals that raise them in the correct manner, while others will Blast anyone presumptuous enough to try.

Exorcism is the opposite of summoning, but works in exactly the same way — a series of actions that interact with the Conditions an entity is relying on to Manifest or feed. The classic image of an exorcism, priests sealing themselves into a room with a possessed victim who drive the entity out with prayer, confrontation, and willpower, is a combination of exorcism to chip away at the entity's conditions, bindings and wardings to keep it from escaping or summoning aid, abjurations to provide a spiritual kick, and the use of as many banes and bans as the exorcist has been able to research.

Abjuration

While exorcism is an attempt to tackle the Conditions underpinning an entity's presence by mundane means or the use of bans and banes, abjuration fights the supernatural with the supernatural, pitting the users' soul and Resolve against the entity he is attempting to force away.

Although many exorcists (and therefore many people knowledgeable enough about the ephemeral to attempt abjuration) are religious, abjuration does not require religious faith to work. It's a consequence of the human soul; by stilling and focusing the mind, concentrating on the higher self, a skilled abjurist can cause his soul to affect Twilight, forcing ephemeral beings away and clearing an area of Influence.

The abjuration effect must be performed as a meditative exercise that helps the user stay calm even in the face of a rampaging Materialized spirit. Religious abjurists use repeated prayer, while more secular occultists rely on incantations learned from their researches. Anything that instills the proper calm and reverence will work, though — a soldier might attempt to abjure a ghost by reciting the patriotic oath of his country.

The abjuration itself is a Resolve + Composure roll contested by the entity's Power + Resistance. As Abjuration channels the higher self, working the ritual by a means that matches the abjurist's Virtue provides a +2 die bonus to the dice pool. A strong psyche is also useful — characters with Integrity 10 receive a +3 bonus, Integrity 9 characters gain +2 dice and Integrity 8 +1 die. Conversely, if the abjuration calls on the abjurist's Vice, the dice pool is penalized by 2 dice. Low Integrity characters suffer a –1 dice penalty per Integrity dot below 6 — –1 for Integrity 5, –3 for Integrity 3, and so on.

If the abjuration is successful, all Conditions tagged by the entity in the abjurist's Willpower in yards are suppressed for one day. On an exceptional success, the abjurist also becomes an extra bane for the entity until its Conditions return.

Warding and Binding

Occult lore is full of references to sealing locations from spirits and ghosts, either to bind them inside or keep them from entering. Chalk circles, protective charms in windows — even a simple horseshoe above a threshold. Most of these tales have nothing substantial to them. Some are half-remembered references to bans or banes, or the weaknesses of supernatural — but still physical — creatures. A few, though, describe true warding or binding rituals.

Warding and binding are a combination of abjuration and an entity's bane, empowered to create a temporary ban that prevents the entity from crossing into or out of an area defined by the ritualist.

Instead of confronting the entity directly as in abjuration, the ritualist marks the boundary she intends to protect with the entity's bane. She doesn't have to mark a complete boundary — her concept of the area she's protecting is what's important. Marking doors and windows with lamb's blood to keep out a spirit that can't touch it will prevent that spirit from simply floating through the wall while in Twilight, and carefully drawing a sigil on the floor will serve to trap the angel whose name it is.

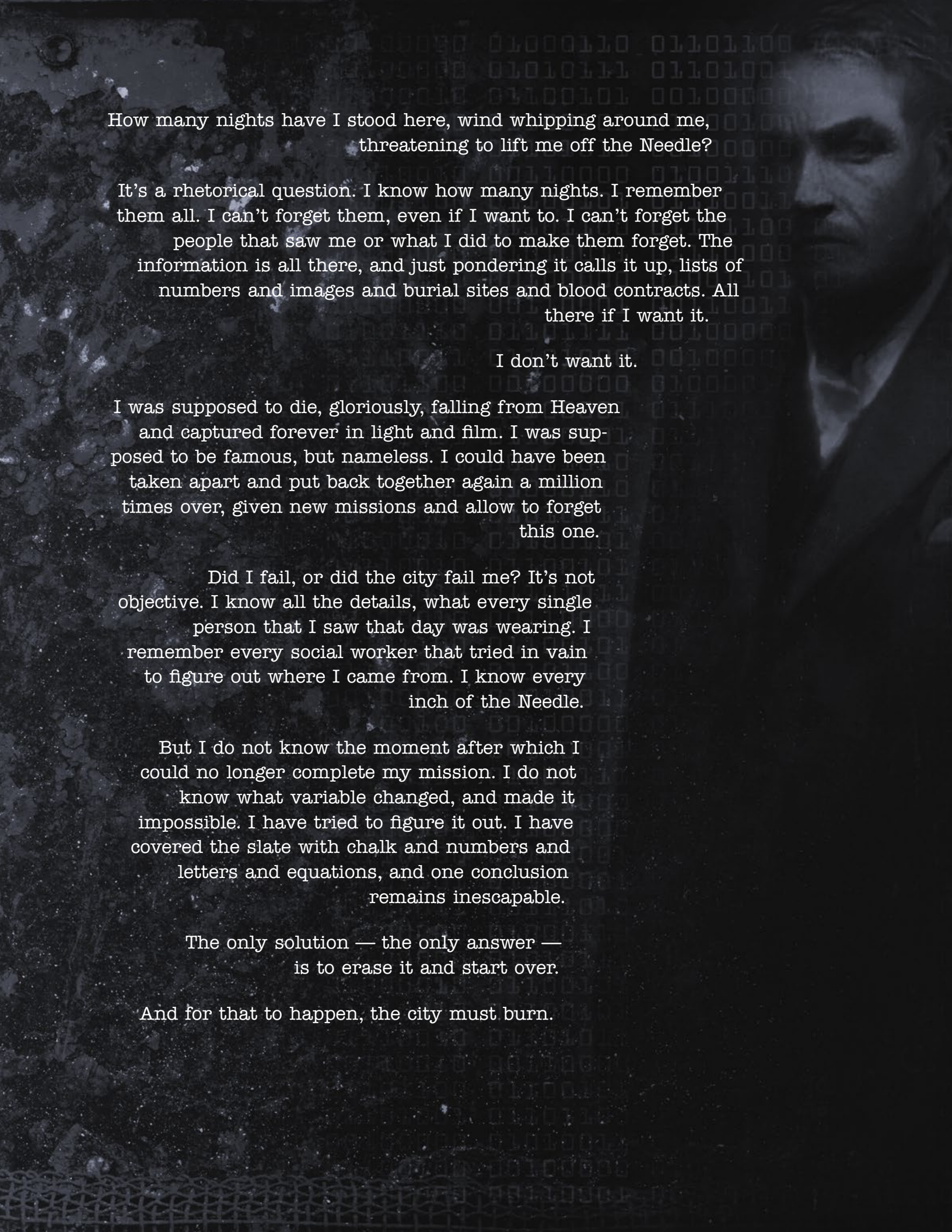
If the ritualist doesn't have the proper bane for her ritual's subject, it fails automatically, so the most important part of warding is getting that detail right. Once that's done and the area has been marked, the ritualist performs whatever abjuration method she knows, focusing on suffusing the area with the essence of the entity's bane. The ritual is a Presence + Occult roll, modified by the ritualist's Integrity as per an abjuration and further penalized by the entity's Rank. A further modifier depends on the size of the area being warded.

Area	Modifier
Small area within a location, up to a six-foot area	+1
Single room or vehicle	0
Two-story, suburban building	–1

Larger structures levy increasing penalties; an additional –1 for every equivalent of a family home. Most superstructures, like skyscrapers, trains, government buildings, and hospitals are too large to be effectively warded.

If successful, the entity described in the ritual treats attempting to move into or out of the warded area as though it were against its ban. The effect lasts for successes in days or is broken if the marking of the boundary is disturbed — a determined entity can suffer the injury from touching the bane material marker in order to break the ward.





How many nights have I stood here, wind whipping around me, threatening to lift me off the Needle?

It's a rhetorical question. I know how many nights. I remember them all. I can't forget them, even if I want to. I can't forget the people that saw me or what I did to make them forget. The information is all there, and just pondering it calls it up, lists of numbers and images and burial sites and blood contracts. All there if I want it.

I don't want it.

I was supposed to die, gloriously, falling from Heaven and captured forever in light and film. I was supposed to be famous, but nameless. I could have been taken apart and put back together again a million times over, given new missions and allow to forget this one.

Did I fail, or did the city fail me? It's not objective. I know all the details, what every single person that I saw that day was wearing. I remember every social worker that tried in vain to figure out where I came from. I know every inch of the Needle.

But I do not know the moment after which I could no longer complete my mission. I do not know what variable changed, and made it impossible. I have tried to figure it out. I have covered the slate with chalk and numbers and letters and equations, and one conclusion remains inescapable.

The only solution — the only answer — is to erase it and start over.

And for that to happen, the city must burn.

How an Angel Dies

The late 1980s: This is a subliminal example of a society that has sucked and fucked itself into a rehashing value of greed.

– Kurt Cobain, Journals

Some people just want to see the world die, the people in agony, and the cities crumbled to dust. Every religion in history has an account of the end of all things, the time when the current society would crumble. Is this because we are at heart so limited in vision that we cannot conceive of society continuing on without our understanding of it? Or is it because we know, on some level, that it all will fall apart?

The characters are about to learn that some beings truly do wish for everything to end...and they have means to bring it about. In fact, the characters just might help them.

Introduction

How an Angel Dies is a story for **Demon: The Descent**, best used with 4-6 characters. The experience level of the characters isn't especially important, though if the Storyteller is using higher-powered characters, she may wish to make some of the opponents more challenging. We do recommend that at least one character has a Primum score higher than 1 and an open "slot" for a Cover.

Treatment

The characters receive a cry for help from a dying demon. The demon informs them in a roundabout kind of way that a new angel is going to be summoned on the George Washington Bridge, near the Fremont Troll. The Troll (or rather, the VW Beetle clutched in its hand) is a gateway to the 1962 time-splinter as described in the Appendix of **Demon**. The angel thus summoned, a powerful Destroyer called the Lambent, is going to attempt to close that gateway.

Since they come into the knowledge of this impending angelic visitation ahead of time, the characters are now able to indulge in angel-jacking (p. 117). If they do, one of the demons receives a new Cover and the characters can feel satisfied that they have stopped the machinations of the God-Machine. If they don't, they might still choose to take on the Lambent at the Troll, since its mission is to close the 1962 gateway.

In either case, the characters discover that the Lambent's mission benefits everyone in the city. In the past, an apocalyptic cult called the Fellowship of the Final Awakening summoned what they believe to be a demon. In fact, the beast they refer to as Marchosias (after a goetic demon) is in fact an extremely powerful cryptid, kept in stasis for years. In the 1962 splinter, the Fellowship continually tries and fails to awaken it. This time, however, due to the actions of the mad Integrator Simon

About the Storytelling Adventure System

If this is your first Storytelling Adventure System (SAS) product, you've chosen a fine place to start. To keep this story kit lean and focused, though, we haven't included a lot of the core premises and Storyteller suggestions that are at the heart of the SAS. Whether you're a new Storyteller or an old hand, be sure to read the free **SAS Guide**, found at the SAS website:

www.white-wolf.com/sas

Here are some of the features available in **How an Angel Dies**:

- **Interactive links.** Clicking on anything in blue will take you directly to the section referenced, or to an appropriate character sheet or prop. It may also take you to an external website that could be useful.
- **Scenes.** Clicking on a scene name in the scene flowchart or the page number in the scene card will take you to the full write-up of the scene.
- **Bookmarks.** This PDF is fully bookmarked, so you can jump to major sections at any time when the file is open.

Flannery, they will succeed. The God-Machine therefore creates Infrastructure to summon the Lambent and seal the gateway.

By interfering, the characters find themselves with some unsavory choices. They can let Marchosias arise, wriggle through the gateway and lay waste to the modern city of Seattle. They can wait until the cryptid emerges and kill it there — possible, but difficult and almost certain to expose the characters. They can travel back to the 1962 splinter and prevent the Fellowship from succeeding. This is probably the best solution, but it requires that they deal with Simon Flannery somehow — and Flannery is perfectly will to expose them all if it means he can finally go home.

Themes: Duty, Obligation, and Restitution

The characters in this story follow a lead that they hope will grant them a significant boon — a new Cover free of charge and a way to damage the God-Machine. They discover, however, that in this instance the God-Machine is merely trying to protect the modern city at the expense of one of the splinter timelines. What are the characters obligated to do? Angel-jacking is difficult and risky for many reasons, not the least of which is that the mission of the destroyed angel needs to be addressed. Can the characters seal the gateway before Marchosias arises? Should they feel guilty for destroying the Lambent, either by jacking his Cover or destroying him in battle? Where does a demon's hatred or fear of the God-Machine end and his duty to his adopted species — humanity — begin?

Mood: Nothing is As It Seems

The God-Machine is trying to save the city. The angel that the characters kill is trying to keep a hideous monster away. A demon is trying to bring on the apocalypse in hopes of going home. Nothing is simple, nothing is cut and dried, and nothing is obvious. When running this story, don't explain anything to the players beyond what their characters know. Let them make assumptions. Don't show them what happens "off-screen," only the results of those events and their own actions.

A Chapter in Your Chronicle

If you are using **How an Angel Dies** as part of an ongoing **Demon** game, it's possible that the characters know a great deal about Seattle, the splinter timelines, and the other demons of the area. Use this to your advantage. This level of knowledge means that the characters probably have an inkling of what the stakes are if someone tries to seal a portal to a splinter timeline without you having to explain it. If you plan on running other stories before **How an Angel Dies**, you can also introduce characters like Gordon Reardon and even Regina Donahue before beginning this story, which will make their plights more personal to the ring. The characters might even run afoul of Simon's cult in some minor way (but be careful not to make them enough of a nuisance that the characters think to investigate them too closely).

If **How an Angel Dies** is meant to kick off your chronicle, use it to showcase the strange nuances of Seattle. If you can expand a little, allow the characters to visit the other splinters and interact with luminaries like Mother Damnable and Comrade West. Let the characters use this story to establish themselves in the city's demonic scene a bit.

A Story By Itself

If you're running this story as a self-contained arc, be careful of shutting doors. Make sure that the characters always have a clear lead to follow and don't call for Investigation rolls unless you're prepared for a failure as well as a success. Don't worry about the other splinter timelines; give your focus to modern Seattle and the 1962 splinter.

Backstory and Set-Up

Before we get into the story proper, some backstory and introduction to the characters is probably helpful. The Storyteller should pay close attention to the events preceding **How an Angel Dies**, both because it will help him work this story into an existing chronicle (if necessary) and because the players will likely think of avenues of approach not covered by the following scenes. If the Storyteller knows what came before and what the principal characters' motivations are, he will be much better able to roll with the proverbial punches.

Backstory

The splinter-timelines of Seattle are explained thoroughly the Appendix. The important ones, for purposes of this story, are the modern "prime" timeline and the 1962 timeline. The events of **How an Angel Dies** begin with Simon Flannery.

As an angel, Simon was created in 1961 and given the Cover of a young boy. He was meant to fall from the Space Needle, still under construction, and become the subject of a famous photograph — the unknown victim, a nameless child whose body was never identified. The God-Machine's desired output for this occult matrix is unknown because it never came to fruition. Instead of falling, Simon Fell. He grew up without a family (because his Cover did not require one), though over time he managed to cobble together a reasonable facsimile. He also grew to resent humanity, Seattle, the Space Needle and everything that surrounded him. He wanted nothing more than to be given another chance to die in service to the God-Machine, but he couldn't figure out a way to do it other than simply present himself for reassimilation. That wasn't good enough for Simon.

MYSTERY CULT: FELLOWSHIP OF THE FINAL AWAKENING

The Fellowship of the Final Awakening is small, boasting less than 20 members. All are well-educated and well-off, and all believe that world is headed for ruin and devastation unless humanity as a whole accepts destruction and rebirth.

Initiation Benefits

• Occult Specialty: Apocalyptic Legends

•• Share and share alike, since humanity is doomed anyway: Resources 2.

••• Initiates at this level of study have learned to seek out odd explanations for social upheaval. Gain the Eye for the Strange Merit.

•••• The few members at this level gain three dots to split between Contacts, Resources and Library as they see fit.

••••• This level is reserved for the cult leaders, only two or three at most. They gain the Unseen Sense (God-Machine) Merit and are considered stigmatic or a choice of the following supernatural Merits: Aura Reading, Clairvoyance, Cursed, Omen Sensitivity.

Discovering the gateway in the Troll, he traveled to his native timeline and realized that here, unlike in the "real" timeline, he never existed. The God-Machine had simply written him out after his failure. Depressed, he fell into the 1960s counterculture and eventually wound up meeting the Fellowship of the Final Awakening, a group of demonologists, occultists and messianics. They had already managed to call up spirits of vice and other unclean beings, and some of their number had manifested strange and awful magic. Dazzling them with his own supernatural power, Simon convinced them that the end of the world was indeed drawing near, but if they could prove their loyalty to the Greater Powers by *beginning* Armageddon, they would be the masters of the new order.

Simon, of course, knew what he was doing. His studies in modern Seattle had already led him to the resting place of a cryptid created from a husky's unfortunate interference in an occult matrix. The cryptid had been created in 1954, and then imprisoned in a concrete bunker (the circumstances of how it came to be imprisoned are described with Marchioas' write-up, below). Simon informed the cult that the demon Marchosias (described in *The Lesser Key of Solomon* as having the body of a wolf, the wings of a gryphon, and spitting fire — not an exact description of the cryptid, but close enough) slept below the Earth in Seattle. All they had to do was summon it.

Over the years, Simon tried to get the cult to break through the bunker and release the creature, but they always failed. Then the timeline reset itself, meaning he had to reestablish ties all over again. Frustrated, Simon ventured to the other splinter timelines, and uncovered the final secret of his Cipher — "in the moment of death, all are equal."

Simon misinterpreted that to mean that if *everyone* died, he along with them, he could finally prove himself to the God-Machine. He redoubled his efforts, establishing ties with cults as far back as the 1880s, and wove subtle threads through the timelines that granted the Fellowship additional knowledge and power. This time, the prison opened and Marchosias came forth. It slaughtered the cult and everyone in the 1962 timeline of Seattle, and then the timeline reset.

Now Simon knew how to make it all work. He has set up the "current" iteration of the 1962 splinter so that when Marchosias rises, it will kill the cultists and then make for the portal to the Fremont Troll, wriggle through the gateway, and lay waste to modern Seattle. And Simon, standing atop the Space Needle, will watch the city burn and then plunge to his death to die with it.

Unless, of course, the characters intervene.

Set-Up

Simon has a bit of a wrench in his plans already, a demon named Gordon Reardon. Reardon, a scholar of demonology himself, noticed through studying local history that the Fellowship of the Final Awakening, once a minor footnote in cult history texts, had become more prominent. Reardon, reasoning that the portal to the 1962 splinter was probably a factor, set up surveillance of the Troll and eventually caught Simon on camera emerging from the window. He approached Simon — not out of any particular desire to stop him, but simply out of curiosity.

Reardon realized that Simon was up to something, but wasn't sure what (and certainly didn't think he meant to end the world). Noting that the Fellowship studied goetic magic and attempted to summon demon using *The Lesser Key of Solomon*, he took notes on them, planning to get in contact with other Inquisitors once he had a working theory. Using his secondary Cover, he used the Extispicy Exploit (p. 165) and realized that Regina Donahue was involved somehow. Tracing her family tree, Gordon discovered that Regina's paternal grandfather, James Donahue, had been a member of the Fellowship of the Final Awakening. The Inquisitor therefore made it a point to keep an eye on Regina.

Assuming his Cover as Gordon, he listened to his police scanner and learned that Regina had been taken into custody for smashing a phone on the George Washington Bridge (again). He planned to go and bail her out and learn her involvement in all this. Simon, however, didn't let it get that far.

He sent his cultists with some special Gadgets designed to incapacitate the demon long enough for them to beat him to death.

Reardon took some insurance against this, though. He kept a book with his observations about the cult, but kept it at the home of his second Cover, a woman named Priscilla Benedict. Gordon kept this Cover secret so Simon didn't know to search her place. Unfortunately, Simon *was* canny enough to find Gordon's home. Gordon manages to contact the characters as he dies, and manages to encode a picture with a clue for them.

Simon just wants Reardon out of the way. He's not especially careful about covering his tracks, because he figures that it's almost too late — as long as Marchosias gets summoned, his plan should work. Note that Simon doesn't *know* that the God-Machine has put Infrastructure in place to block Marchosias from entering Seattle-Prime (if he did, he'd try to jack the Lambent himself).



Involving the Characters

- Reardon can send a text message to any of the characters that he happens to know. If one of the characters keeps abreast of the other Unchained in Seattle, it's not unreasonable to think Reardon might have her number.
- A character passing by might sense a discharge of Aether as Reardon attempts to assume demonic form (and fails due to the stigmatic cultists' Gadget).
- A Contact, Ally or Retainer of one of the characters might notice the disturbance and contact them.
- If you don't wish to involve the characters in a fight, then have the character see the stigmatics running from Reardon's building, one of them covered in blood, another one injured.

The Cast

Simon Flannery

"This time I'll do it right."

"Everyone's going to come with me. We'll all be part of something so much greater."

"All my work. All my work."

Background: Simon Flannery is something of an oddity among demons. His original Cover was that of a child, and so his current form is the adult version of that Cover. Since his Cover was never meant to be anything other than a child, however, he's had to add to that Cover over the years, buying pieces of people's lives for patch jobs. And all the while, he regrets not fulfilling his mission.

Simon was supposed to fall from the top of the Space Needle, still under construction in 1961. He panicked as he started to climb, and the photograph that was supposed to include him falling to his death was simply a picture of the Needle. Disconnected from the God-Machine, possessing a demon's facility for language and memory but a child's intellect and understanding, Simon wandered the streets of Seattle trying to find a home. Gaining one, though, was a violation of Cover, as Simon learned when a murderous angel came for his first foster family. From there on out, Simon made his own way. He adopted other Covers along the way, but nurtured and maintained his original. He bought "employment at the Space Needle" from another demon in Seattle and patched it into the Cover, just so he could get up to the observation deck easily, and watch the city below, planning for his final act.

Description: Simon still wears his original Cover, though that Cover is now in its 50s. Simon has white hair, a firm if aging build, and favors a soft gray suit. He walks with a cane and appears frail and unsteady, but decades of life as a demon have made him powerful in magic. He is never without a stigmatic attendant and keeps an assortment of Gadgets on him (his cane, for instance, has the Ambush Embed worked into it).

Storytelling Hints: If Simon is insane, or self-hating, or ruthless, it's because the world made him that way. He is will-

ing to kill people to further his goals, but he prefers not to — killing is risky, and somewhere along the way Simon managed to assimilate the feeling of guilt. He grieves for the people he has killed or who his presence has led into danger. But at the same time, he wants so badly to be reunited with the God-Machine that he is willing to feed the city to a monster just for the chance.

Name: Simon Flannery

Concept: Failed Child Star

Incarnation: Messenger

Agenda: Integrator

Virtue: Afraid

Vice: Penitent

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 4, Composure 4

Mental Skills: Academics (History) 3, Computer 1, Crafts (Gadgets) 3, Investigation 4, Occult (Demonology) 3

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 1, Drive 1, Firearms 3, Larceny (Pickpocket, Lockpicking) 3, Stealth 4, Survival 2, Weaponry (Cane) 3

Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Intimidation 2, Socialize 1, Streetwise (Seattle) 5, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Armed Defense 3, Cultists (modern-day) 4, Cultists (Fellowship of the Final Awakening) 5, Danger Sense, Defensive Combat: Weaponry*, Eidetic Memory, Fast Reflexes 3, Good Time Management, Marksmanship 3, Sleight of Hand, Resources 2

Embeds: Ambush, Authorized, Devil's Advocate, Efficiency, Fulcrum Point, Interference, Knockout Punch, No Quarter, On the Mend, Shatter, Strike First, Trust No-One, Without a Trace

Exploits: Living Shadow, Inflict Stigmata, Reality Enforcement, Swift Resolution

Demonic Form Abilities: Electrical Sight, Mental Resistance, Sense the Angelic, Sonic Acuity, Essence Drain, Mirrored Skin, Phasing, Multiple Images

Health: 7

Primum: 4

Aether/per turn: 13/4

Willpower: 8

Cover: 5

Size: 5

Speed: 10

Defense: 5/6*

Initiative: 10

Notes: Simon carries a cane with the Ambush Embed installed (he can activate it to automatically surprise an opponent when attacking with the cane) and a pair of shoes installed with Fulcrum Point (activated when he kicks and object), plus any other Gadgets the Storyteller wishes to give him. He has completed his Interlock Matrix, and has access to the following powers:

Paranoid Clarity: Simon makes a target more susceptible to becoming stigmatic. Manipulation + Occult vs. Resolve + Composure, instant action. Success indicates that when using Inflict Stigmata on the target, Simon starts with a number of successes in place equal to his Primum.

Erased by the Victor: Although history remembers the Fellowship and some of the influence that Simon has had, no photographs or written records of him exist, due to his Interlock Matrix.

Pledged to Die: A stigmatic that Simon creates automatically has Iron Stamina 3, and cannot be Beaten Down (p. 317).

REGINA DONAHUE

"Phones? You think goddamn phones are gonna stop anyone?"

"Can I get a dollar?"

"He's still here in spirit. I feel him."

Background: Regina Donahue is a local girl. She grew up in Fremont with her brother, Isaac, as her constant companion. They had a plan — when Regina graduated from high school, they were going to take Isaac's car, their life savings (just shy of $7000), Regina's cat and Isaac's guitar and drive south. If they made it Los Angeles, fine, but Regina was just hoping to make it as far as Salem.

But then Regina didn't graduate. At the time, the dropout rate for Seattle high school students was hovering around 50%, so she wasn't exactly uncommon in this regard. She said she'd get her GED and then they could go, but the six months she needed turned into a year, and then two, and then the money was gone, and their aunt died of cancer, and then ....

And then Isaac jumped off the George Washington Bridge. Regina, who knew that he was low but never really acknowledged that he was *depressed*, wandered the bridge night after night, trying to come to grips with it. One evening she wound up by the Troll and saw someone climb into the window of the VW Beetle and vanish. That instance opened her eyes, and she became stigmatic. On her way home, responding to some deep and indescribable urge, she smashed one of the phones on the bridge. She's been doing it for more than a year now. Every time that phone is replaced, she breaks it. Sometimes she gets



caught and arrested, sometimes not, but it doesn't matter. She intends to keep doing it. It's not like she's ever getting out of Fremont, not with Isaac gone.

Description: Regina is of mixed descent (her mother is black, her father is white). She is pretty but fairly unkempt — she wears her hair in a tangle of dreadlocks and seldom bothers to apply makeup anymore. Careful observers might notice that a few strands of her hair are stiff and metallic, almost like steel wool (she has not noticed this herself, or at least she hasn't consciously acknowledged it). Regina wears loose-fitting clothes, usually from a thrift shop, and has a tattoo on her shoulder with her brother's birthday and a guitar.

Storytelling Hints: Regina had problems enough before becoming stigmatic. Now, as a witness, she follows a desire implanted by the God-Machine — break one particular phone. This simple action has become the focus of her life. She wanders the bridge obsessively, stopping in to the businesses and bars in the area to kill time. As a result, she knows the people here very well, and if the characters can free her from her obligation (and maybe even bring peace to her brother's soul), she would be a useful Ally.

Name: Regina Donahue
Concept: Pawn of the God-Machine
Virtue: Loyal
Vice: Lazy

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 1

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Computer 1, Crafts 1, Science 1

Physical Skills: Athletics (Long Walks) 2, Brawl (Self-Defense Class) 1, Larceny 1, Stealth 2, Weaponry 1

Social Skills: Empathy 2, Persuasion (Sad Story) 2, Socialize 1, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Anonymity 1, Contacts (Local Businesses, Police) 2, Direction Sense, Fixer, Striking Looks 1, Unseen Sense (God-Machine)

Health: 8
Willpower: 4
Integrity: 7
Size: 5
Speed: 9
Defense: 4
Initiative: 5
Armor: None

STIGMATIC CULTIST

"Yes, sir."

"We do not bleed. We do not hurt."

"He lied to us. Please. He lied."

Background: Use these traits for Simon's cult of stigmatics in modern Seattle. Simon chooses these people from the working poor and undocumented immigrants, people that are used to performing physical labor and are desperate for whatever help they can find. Simon has little use for pacts, at least lately, but he does require muscle. As such, the stigmatics he creates are stronger and faster than most people, but rarely exhibit anything in the way of supernatural powers.

Description: Simon doesn't discriminate based on gender or race, merely on physical ability. As such, his stigmatics might be black, white, Hispanic, Asian, male or female. Most of them are from poor neighborhoods, and all of them are in good physical condition. Once they become stigmatic, they all gain a blue marking under their left ears in the shape of a two-inch-high spike with a rounded bit near the top. Characters noticing this marking might realize that it closely resembles a profile of the Space Needle.

Storytelling Hints: The cultists have all been promised money, good health, a better job, or some other kind of assis-

tance. Simon has no problem promising them whatever they ask for, and since he isn't signing pacts with them he doesn't have to deliver. After they become stigmatics, these cultists lose their inhibitions where violence is concerned and pain no longer impedes them.

Notes: If you wish, some of these cultists might have developed supernatural powers such as Telekinesis, Biokinesis, or Psychokinesis (Electricity). In addition, they carry three Gadgets constructed for them by Simon Flannery:

- `A ring that prevents a demon from taking demonic form. The wielder can take no other action but pointing the ring at the target demon (the wielder can move up to her Speed, but does not receive Defense). Roll 10 dice contested by the demon's Resolve + Primum. If the stigmatic wins, the demon is stuck in human form until the effect is broken (the wielder takes an action or uses her Defense, or the scene ends).
- `A length of chain that saps Aether. The chain has a damage rating of 1L, and every successful strike saps 4 Aether from a demon. The chain does not drain Aether if the strike inflicts no damage (due to armor, for instance), and has no special effect on non-demons.
- `Brown, steel-toed boots that carry a powerful concussive shock. Anyone that suffers damage as a result of a kick attack from the stigmatic wearing these boots also suffers the Stunned Tilt. The boots give off a shower of blue sparks when used. The boots have three uses per scene, whether the uses are successful or not.

Name: Stigmatic Cultist

Concept: Servitor of Simon Flannery

Virtue: Trusting

Vice: Violent

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 1, Computer 1, Medicine 1, Occult 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Drive 1, Firearms 2, Stealth 1, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Empathy 1, Expression 1, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 1, Streetwise (Seattle) 2

Merits: Iron Stamina 3, Mentor (Simon) 1, Unseen Sense: God-Machine

Health: 8

Willpower: 5

Integrity: 7

Size: 5

Speed: 11

Defense: 5

Initiative: 5

Armor:

Notes: Feel free to add Specialties or other Merits to flesh out these cultists. Likewise, some of them may carry knives, guns, or other weapons if you feel the need to make combat with them more dangerous.

FELLOWSHIP CULTIST

"Time for a change. Of everything."

"Until the Awakening."

"Oh, god. What were we thinking?"

Background: The members of the Fellowship of the Final Awakening are, in general, well-educated and liberal. The leadership of the cult is mildly psychic and is aware that great upheavals in society are coming soon (the Vietnam War and the protests thereof, the Civil Rights movement, and so forth). The cultists believe, wrongly, that these changes are going to result in nuclear war and the end of the world, but that if they can give humanity an awakening — a conceptual breakthrough in which all of mankind realizes its folly and submits to a cleansing destruction — that some new, perfect society may arise.

In the original, modern Seattle timeline, the cult drifted apart during the later 1960s. The more radical members became involved in causes that were grounded in reality, while the ones who were more interested in mysticism continued their studies. The last remnants of the Fellowship officially and quietly disbanded in 1978 following the mass suicide of the Peoples Temple in Guyana.

In the splinter timeline, however, Simon Flannery appeared to fan the flames of the Fellowship's messianic beliefs. He taught them demonology, helped the leadership develop their psychic powers (turning some into stigmatics), and encouraged their belief in cleansing destruction. The Fellowship cultists that the characters encounter in Through the Troll's Fingers are not as physically competent as Simon's modern-day cultists, but they are mystically adept and driven.

Description: The Fellowship cultists are clean-cut, healthy white men in their 20s and 30s. Most of them are well-dressed and come from money, and almost all of them are college educated.

Storytelling Hints: The Fellowship of the Final Awakening perfectly illustrates the maxim, "a little knowledge is a dangerous thing." Some of them have an inkling of psychic awareness, but they bring so many of their own biases and assumptions to the subject that what little truth they have uncovered is useless. Many of the members are nominally liberal, but still very much rooted in their own racial and economic privilege. Some of the members, especially James Donahue, are vocally in favor of ad-



Integrity: 6
Size: 5
Speed: 9
Defense: 3
Initiative: 4
Armor:

Notes: The traits given here are for a "typical" member of the cult. If the cultist is stigmatic, add Unseen Sense (God-Machine) to Merits. Feel free to add supernatural Merits as necessary. Good choices include: Aura Reading, Clairvoyance, Cursed, Medium, and Omen Sensitivity. Likewise, if you need a more combat-capable member of the Fellowship, use the traits for the Stigmatic cultist.

mitting non-white members to their ranks, while others argue that, in general, minorities don't have the intellect or education to fully grasp the ramifications of the cult's goals.

Name: Fellowship Cultist
Concept: First World Messianic
Virtue: Driven
Vice: Gullible
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 2
Mental Skills: Academics 3, Investigation 2, Medicine 1, Occult 3, Politics 2, Science 1
Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Drive 1, Firearms 1, Survival 1
Social Skills: Expression 1, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 2, Socialize 2, Subterfuge 1
Merits: Eye for the Strange, Library (Occult) 2, Multilingual (varies), Mystery Cult Initiation (varies; see p. 358), Resources 3
Health: 7
Willpower: 5

ISAAC DONAHUE

"Anybody seen my sister?"

"I wasn't sad. I was dead inside."

"No one wants to hear a ghost say that it's better over here, so don't ask me."

Background: Isaac Donahue was two years older than his sister, Regina. Their parents were good people, but emotionally distant (their father worked two jobs all their lives and their mother was simply never comfortable in her role as a parent), and so they were each other's main support. Regina, however, was never as committed to the idea of getting out as Isaac was. That idea, that someday goal, was all that got him through the worst of his depression.

When it became clear to him that Regina was never going to muster up the drive to leave Seattle, Isaac found himself with a choice: Stay and be miserable, or leave without Regina and be miserable. Faced with the choice of stagnation or uncertainty and seeing no joy in either, he finally succumbed to his illness and jumped off the George Washington Bridge. His ghost lingers, however.

Some days Isaac wanders the bridge, and other days he sits near the Troll, watching tourists take pictures of the beast. He sees his sister on the bridge, breaking the phone that hangs near where he jumped, and he longs to tell her that he is all right. He doesn't — not because he can't, but because it would be a lie.

Description: Isaac resembles his father; he is a black man in his early 20s, dressed in jeans and a Mariners t-shirt. On the rare occasions when he Manifests, his guitar is sometimes visible, slung over his back.

Storytelling Hints: Isaac retained his sadness as a restless spirit. If that was all that remained of him, he probably would have faded into



nothing already. A spark of music still stirs in his dead heart, however, and some days, when the sun shines and he sees his sister on the bridge, his guitar appears and he is able to play. Most days, though, when the sky is full of rain clouds and he can't find any smiling face, he stands on the bridge, wondering why he is still here.

Name: Isaac Donahue
Concept: Sad Ghost
Virtue: Creative
Vice: Depressed
Rank: 2
Attributes: Power 2, Finesse 4, Resistance 3
Influence: Sadness 2
Corpus: 8
Willpower: 7
Integrity: 8
Size: 5
Speed: 11
Defense: 2
Initiative: 7
Armor:
Numina: Emotional Aura, Innocuous, Omen Trance, Sign
Manifestations: Avernian Gate, Discorporate, Image, Twilight Form
Max Essence: 15
Ban: Isaac loses all his Willpower if he does not hear guitar music once a week
Bane: Gold (24K or more)

MARCHOSIAS

(inchoate howling)

(hungry panting)

(plaintive whining)

Background: The creature now known as Marchosias, the Great and Mighty Marquis, began its life as a husky pup living in a house in Redmond in 1954. The dog, named Freddy, led a life of walks, chasing sticks in the park, and belly rubs, until the day he slipped his leash chasing a cat.

The cat led Freddy through the neighborhood, under cars and through hedges, until it came to a huge hole in the ground (part of a construction site). Stuck in the mud at the bottom of that hole was a demon named Blaylock. Seeing the dog, Blaylock beckoned to it, hoping to send a message to an ally, but Freddy lost his footing and fell into the hole. Out of ideas, Blaylock assumed demonic form and beat his wings to free himself, flying away and leaving poor Freddy at the bottom of the pit.

This site was Infrastructure and Freddy was not meant to be part of it. The blast of Aether and the disruption of the site caused by Blaylock's presence altered Freddy, turning him into a monstrous cryptid. The creature clawed its way to the surface and hunted down Blaylock (who was hiding from angelic pursuers less than a mile away). In the ensuing battle, Blaylock, two angels and four civilians were killed, three houses burned, and poor Freddy was returned to the pit. The remaining angel sealed him up there and a house was built on top of his tomb.

In modern Seattle, he might still be there. But in the 1962 splinter, thanks to the efforts of Simon Flannery, the cryptid is on the verge of being freed. On behalf of the Fellowship of the Final Awakening, James Donahue bought the house in 1961 (no one kept it long before that — Freddy's repeated attempts at freedom make the house too warm, and inhabitants can sometimes hear his whimpers at night). Now they have dug deep enough through the basement to reach the tomb. Soon, they will breach it and free a creature they believe to be a powerful demon that commands 30 legions of spirits, but is in fact a lost dog that was merely following instinct.

Description: Marchosias is a huge dog-like creature, roughly 10 feet long. Despite the description in *The Lesser Key of Solomon*, it does not have wings, but its tail is long and serpentine and ends in a black spike. Its mouth is distended and fanged,



and its ears and face are charred and blackened from years of spitting fire. Its breathing sounds like a diesel engine, and smoke rises up from its fur.

Storytelling Hints: Any resemblance to a natural animal has been worn away by decades of imprisonment. Marchosias has no need of air, food or water, and so its body remains healthy, but its mind is gone. It wants only to kill and burn and taste the flesh of the Unchained as it does.

Name: Marchosias

Concept: Cryptid Monster

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 1, Wits 4, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 7, Stamina 6

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 1, Composure 1

Mental Skills: None

Physical Skills: Athletics (Chasing) 5, Brawl (Biting) 5, Stealth 2, Survival 3

Social Skills: Intimidation 4

Merits: Fast Reflexes 3, Fleet of Foot 3, Iron Stamina 3

Rank: 3

Health: 12

Willpower: 4

Size: 6

Speed: 20 (species factor 7)

Defense: 7

Initiative: 11

Armor: 2/1

Notes: Marchosias has the following Adaptations:

Longevity: Marchosias does not age and will not die of natural causes. It is immune to disease, and does not require food, water, or air to survive.

Savage Bite: The cryptid's bite has a damage rating 3A. It is quite capable of killing with a single bite.

Impossible Armament — Fire Breath: Marchosias can exhale fire. Roll Stamina + Athletics to hit; anyone more than 10 feet away is immune. The fire inflicts 2L damage (meaning that it inflicts a maximum of 2L damage regardless of how many successes the Storyteller rolls), and ignites any flammable materials it comes in contact with, including clothing. A character thus immolated suffers 4L damage per turn. After Marchosias makes two such attacks in a scene, the area suffers the Inferno Tilt (see p. 386).

Impossible Armament — Tail Strike: Marchosias' tail has a damage rating of 2L. Anyone suffering damage from the tail receives the Poisoned Tilt (p. 333; 1 bashing damage per turn until the subject succeeds on a Stamina + Resolve roll).

THE LAMBENT

"Only through expiation can we be cleansed. Only through light and fire."

"I am the Lambent. Let those who are not righteous avert their eyes."

"No! No! It must be closed!"

Mission: The Lambent is an engine of destruction, pure and simple. He appears at the north end of the George Washington Bridge and makes his way, ranting and raving, to the Troll. There, he smashes the VW Beetle's frame with his sledgehammer, all the while making reference to a "gate" that must be closed. If no one interferes, his insane ramble down the bridge becomes a viral video and his destruction of the Beetle becomes an urban legend (in a year's time, local lore will say that someone tried to stop him and the Lambent killed the unfortunate man with his hammer).

Description: A white man in his 40s, dressed in a dingy overcoat and a faded, stained suit, carrying a huge sledgehammer.

The Lambent reads as "crazy" from a long way off. He has matted, mane-like brown hair and a slight odor of curdled milk, and is missing his upper canine teeth.

Methods: The Lambent acts crazy for a reason. He — rather, the God-Machine — wants people to notice him. The God-Machine wants the demons of Seattle to know that changing the timeline is not allowed (as explained on p. 252, normally this would result in the demon in question being written out of history, but the circumstances of Simon's Fall and his superlative ability to remain hidden have kept this from happening). The Lambent is acting in a flamboyant manner to show the Unchained that the God-Machine is still in control. Funny, then, that this particular angel might wind up never even able to begin his mission.

Virtue: Destructive

Vice: Crazy

Rank: 4

Attributes: Power 12, Finesse 7, Resistance 8

Influence: Light 2, Destruction 2

Corpus: 13

Willpower: 15

Size: 5

Speed: 24 (species factor 5)

Defense: 8

Initiative: 19

Armor: 1/1

Numina: Awe, Dement, Left-Handed Spanner, Mortal Mask, Seek, Shatter (as the Embed — p. 131), Stalwart

Manifestation: Discorporate, Materialize, Twilight Form

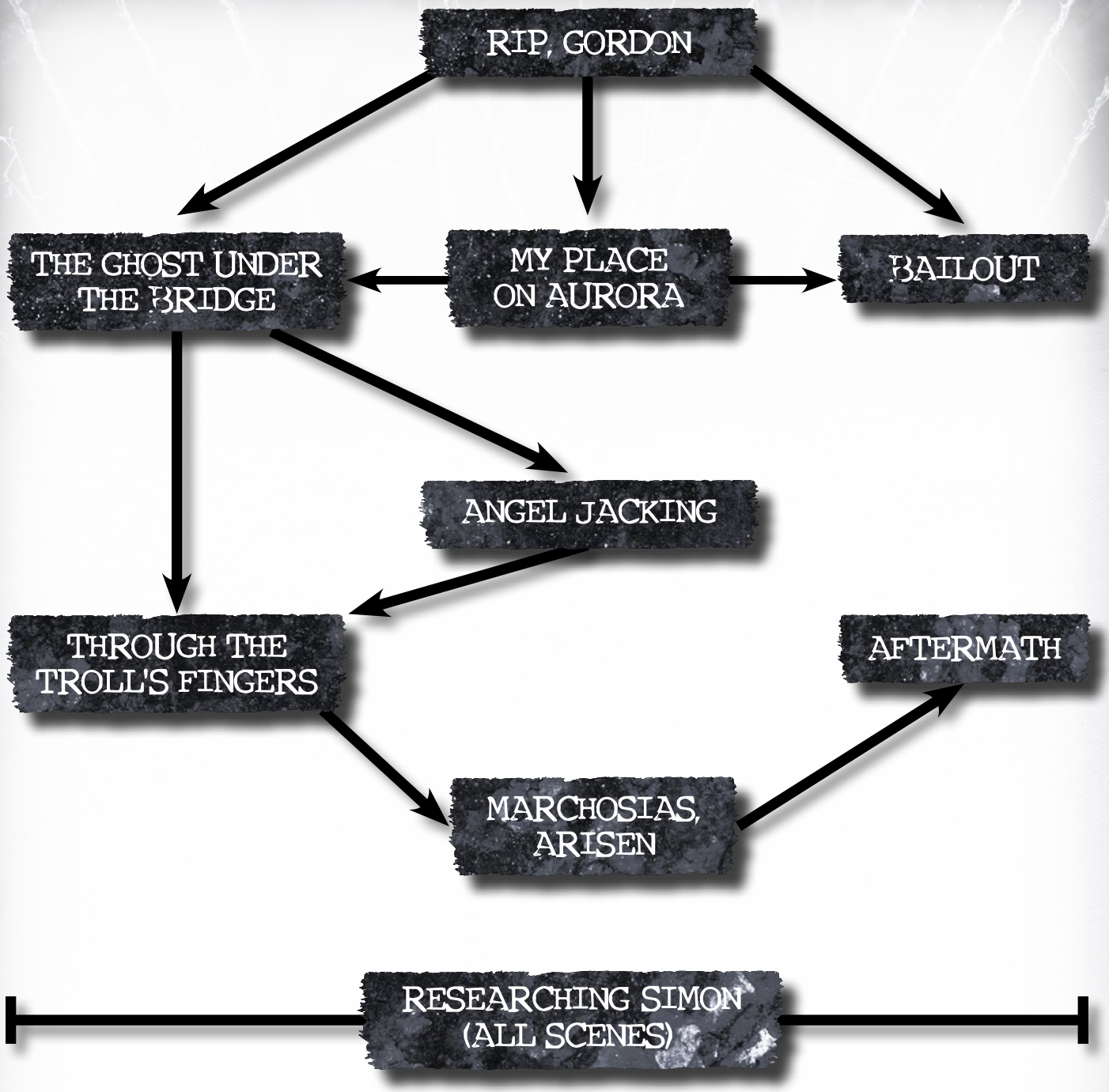


Max Essence: 25

Ban: The Lambent must strike a nail with his hammer, if he sees one. Scattering a handful of nails therefore keeps him busy for a while.

Bane: A piece of the linchpin phone from the bridge

SCENE FLOWCHART



RIP, GORDON

MENTAL ••• PHYSICAL ••• SOCIAL •

Overview

In this scene, the characters discover the corpse of Gordon Reardon and the message he left behind for them. At the Storyteller's discretion, they might be able to avenge his death.

Description

Caught in the Act

The door to Gordon's apartment has been smashed in. In the hallway, a man holding a bloody crowbar stands looking at something in the room, not paying attention to you. From further inside, you hear a thump and a moan of pain, and a voice saying, "Just die already!"

The Culprits Flee

As you approach the building, the front door flies open and five men and a woman run out. All are physically fit, all wear dark clothing, and most of them carry a makeshift weapon — tire iron, baseball bat, a length of heavy chain. They scatter, running through alleys and down the street. One jumps into a beat-up car and drives away. Glancing down at the sidewalk, you realize that at least two of them are leaving bloody footprints.

After the Fact

The apartment has been ransacked. Furniture is overturned, the television smashed, and the couch cushions sliced open. Gordon lies dead in the middle of the floor, beaten so badly his face is unrecognizable. Bloody footprints surrounded the body; from the condition of the place, it's obviously that he didn't die quickly or easily.

Storyteller Goals

Your goals in this scene are to get the characters involved in the story by giving them the clue that Gordon left for them. Whether this scene involves finding Gordon's body, interrupting the murder in progress, or seeing the assailants running out of the building is up to you and what kind of note you'd like to start **How an Angel Dies** on.

Finding the Body

If you choose to have the characters discover the scene of the murder, they can take their time with investigating it. This is a good starting point for rings that don't include many combat-capable characters, or for troupes with players that would rather interpret clues and piece together information than play through combat. The Synthesis Embed (p. 138) gives a fairly thorough replay of the murder, including Gordon crawling across the floor to put his hand on the photograph (see below). The characters may well wonder why Gordon did not assume demonic form, but even with Synthesis they don't have a good way to know that. If no one knows the Synthesis Embed, use the system below for Investigating the Scene.

Seconds Too Late

If the characters get to the apartment as the stigmatics are running out, they can choose to engage them in combat or let them go. This is a good starting point for players that know the game well or have characters with varying levels of combat expertise. Characters can pursue the stigmatics — or not — in service to Virtues, Vices or Aspirations and pick up Willpower or Beats as appropriate. They can also hide and observe, perhaps using Embeds like Tag & Release or Living Recorder on the characters. These Embeds function normally (a demon could also follow one of the stigmatics), but the stigmatic characters aren't supposed to do anything else out of the ordinary. Following or marking them allows the demon to learn their real names and identities, but Simon's Interlock powers allow him to avoid easy detection.

If the characters choose to attack the stigmatics, they do all they can to escape (see Foot Chase, p. 65 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**). If cornered, they fight, using the same Gadgets they used on Gordon, but since they scatter in different directions a character doesn't have to worry about being hit with all three the way Gordon was.

In the Act

The characters arrive at the apartment while the stigmatics are beating Gordon to death. This is a good place to start if your players are spoiling for a fight or have Aspirations related to violence. You can run the fight using Down and Dirty Combat (p. 317) or the standard combat rules, but the stigmatics do not surrender and they never get Beaten Down. If you use Down and Dirty Combat, the characters cannot name "save



Gordon" as the intent — he is already beyond help. If the characters come up with some clever way to save him (such as the Echoing Death Exploit), Gordon can tell them what he knows about Regina and the George Washington Bridge Infrastructure directly, but don't go out of your way to make it possible for the characters to save him.

If the characters attack the stigmatics as they are beating Gordon, the one with the ring keeps it pointed at Gordon until he is actually dead, while the other two gadget-wielding stigmatics attack the most dangerous-looking demon. Once Gordon dies (two turns after combat begins), the stigmatics attempt to escape rather than fight.

The Photograph

However the characters wind up in the apartment, before they leave they should find the photograph. Gordon has a photograph of Puget Sound on his wall and during the assault he encoded it with the Special Message Embed (p. 153). If one of the characters is active among Inquisitors, or if one of the players decides her character knows Gordon personally, then Gordon coded the message so that one that character can read it. Otherwise, any demon can understand it. The photograph is encoded with the message: "Bail Regina Donahue out."

Any character familiar with the area probably knows Regina Donahue (her main claim to fame is that she gets arrested periodically for breaking a phone on the George Washington Bridge, and has been doing so for months). Characters can use Contacts or other Social Merits to figure this out, or you can have someone roll Intelligence + Streetwise. Since the plot doesn't progress unless the characters go looking for Regina, though, it's better just to assume that one of the characters knows who she is without a roll.

The Stigmatics

If the characters manage to capture one of the cultists or following one back to his home, they can interrogate him. In a combat situation, the stigmatics fight fiercely and without registering pain (courtesy of Simon's powers), but under social questioning they have no special defense. A character can use hard leverage (p. 316) to get a cultist to spill his guts. If the characters take this route, use the system for Interrogating the Cultists, below. Alternately, the players might make clever use of various Embeds. Find the Leak (p. 150) reduces the number of Doors that the character has to open to get someone to talk. Don't I Know You? (p.141) allows the character to take on the mannerisms of someone that the cultist regards favorable, which can smooth the process.

The problem is that Simon never lets his name slip to the cultists, and his demonic powers make him hard to remember. The cultists can confirm that a man gave them the Gadgets, told them how to use them, and sent them to kill Gordon Reardon. They can also confirm that this man promised them riches, education, better jobs or anything else you think would be interesting. The demons can confirm that the stigmatics all have the same mark (which means they were all "made" by the same being, rather than accidentally stumbling into their condition), but not who might have made them that way. If the characters use an Embed on a cultist, the cultist informs them that he went under the bridge (that is, the George Washington Bridge) one night, but insisted that no one come with him.

Since Simon lives "off the grid" with respect to other demons, they do not know him personally, though one of the other well-connected demons of Seattle might. See Researching Simon if they ask around.

Character Goals

Avenge Gordon's death. Learn why he died. Steal the stigmatic's Gadgets.

Recalling Information about Gordon

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Politics

Action: Instant

Hindrances: Different Agenda than Gordon (–1), new in town (–4)

Help: Character is an Inquisitor (+1), Status in the local Agency (add Status dots)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character mistakenly believes that Gordon was an Integrator.

Failure: The character does not know anything about Gordon.

Success: The character knows that Gordon was a Guardian Inquisitor who kept mostly to himself, and that he was a student of history, especially of cults and demonology.

Exceptional Success: As above, and the character knows that Reardon preferred to avoid combat, but that he employed the Swarm Exploit when in need of distraction or defense. No evidence in the apartment suggests that he used it, though.

Investigating the Scene

Dice Pool: Wits + Investigation

Action: Extended (one roll = 10 minutes/5 successes necessary)

Hindrances: Character has never been here before (–1)

Help: Character has been here before (+2), other characters help (use Teamwork rules, p. 134 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The attempt fails and the character gains a Condition to reflect this failure — possibly Confused or Shaken.

Failure: The player can either accept a Condition and continue or abandon the investigation.

Success: The character(s) manage to piece together a rough timeline of events. Someone kicked in the door to Gordon's apartment. Gordon was sitting on his couch when the assailants entered. They surrounded him and beat him with weapons (including a tire iron, chain, and baseball bat). He crawled across the floor, pulled himself up to his feet, and put his hand on a photograph of Puget Sound that was hanging on the wall. He then fell to the floor and the people continued beating him until he died. At no point did he assume demonic form or fight back.

Exceptional Success: The player can choose one of the options for exceptional successes on extended rolls listed on p. 313, or can take the Informed Condition for her character (if she is acting alone) or the In Synch Condition (if using the Teamwork rules; resolve the Condition to add two dice to a primary actor's roll on a future Teamwork action).

Investigating the Apartment

Dice Pool: Wits + Investigation

Action: Extended (one roll = 10 minutes/5 successes necessary)

Hindrances: Character has never been here before (–1)

Help: Character has been here before (+2), other characters help (use Teamwork rules, p. 134 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**), a demon involved in the search uses the Last Place You Look— p. 144 (+3)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The attempt fails and the character gains a Condition to reflect this failure — possibly Confused or Impatient.

Failure: The player can either accept a Condition and continue or abandon the investigation.

Success: The characters find various items of interest hidden in Gordon's apartment. The number of successes required to find these items is noted.

- Gordon has a police scanner sitting on his coffee table. (1 success)
- The movie in Gordon's DVD player is *It Happened at the World's Fair*, starring Elvis Presley and Joan O'Brien. (2 successes)
- He didn't keep lists or notes (demons all have flawless memories, so they rarely commit information to paper), but he does have several photographs of the Fremont Troll. A half-dozen of the photos were taken during the day, and all of those have a black X drawn over them. Another three pictures are of the Troll at night. In one picture, a man dressed in multiple layers of clothing and pushing a shopping cart is visible. That picture has an X over it. The other two both

have the window of the VW Beetle circled in black. The players can infer from this that something significant happens to that car at night, when no one is watching (let them think about it for a while; if it stalls the game later on, give them hints until they figure it out). (3 successes)

- Among the books on Gordon's shelf is the *Lesser Key of Solomon*. An Intelligence + Occult roll tells the character that the book is a how-to guide for summoning demons, but not their kind of demons. (4 successes)
- Hidden in an envelope, glued to the wall and then painted over, is a piece of paper with the name "Priscilla Benedict" written on it, along with an address in North Seattle. (5 successes)

Exceptional Success: The player can choose one of the options for exceptional successes on extended rolls listed on p. 313, or can take the Informed Condition for her character (if she is acting alone) or the In Synch Condition (if using the Teamwork rules; resolve the Condition to add two dice to a primary actor's roll on a future Teamwork action).

Observation of Stigmatics

Dice Pool: Wits + Composure

Action: Reflexive

Hindrances: Darkness (–1), in combat (–2)

Help: Trained Observer Merit (9-again or 8-again)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character feels an errant trace of Aether from a stigmatic and mistakes the cultist for an angel.

Failure: The character notices nothing about the stigmatic except basic information: height, build, clothing.

Success: The character sees the marking on the stigmatic's neck (see the Description for the Stigmatic Cultist).

Exceptional Success: The character sees the marking and notices the ring that one of the stigmatics is wearing and that it pulses with Aether.

Interrogation of Stigmatics

Dice Pool: Presence or Strength + Intimidation (depending on the character's methods)

Action: Instant

Hindrances: Character's interrogation method relies on physical pain (–1), number of Doors (see p. 314; –4)

Help: Character's interrogation method relies on threatening something personal to the target (+2)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: In a display of will that shocks even the demons, the cultist refuses to give up any information about Simon, no matter what the demons do to him.

Failure: The stigmatic calls the character's bluff. If the character makes good on whatever threat she made, the player can try again (provided that the stigmatic still has something to lose).

Success: The stigmatic reveals what he knows to the character. This information is explained above, but does not include the bit about the bridge.

Exceptional Success: The terrified cultist spills everything he knows, including the information about the bridge.

Consequences

Depending on what happens in this scene, you might wind up with the characters cleaning up a bloodied apartment, on the run from agents of the God-Machine (if things get really out of hand, it's not impossible that they might wind up with Conditions like Flagged or Hunted), or interrogating a stigmatic. If the characters find the envelope and wish to visit Priscilla's apartment, go to My Place on Aurora. If the characters decide to go and bail Regina out of jail, go to Bailout. If they decide instead to check the bridge, go to The Ghost Under the Bridge. If they decide to do research into whatever demon did this, go to Researching Simon (note that this scene can happen more than once during the course of the story).

My Place on Aurora

Mental ••• Physical •• Social •••

Overview

Probably following a lead from Gordon's apartment, the characters enter the home of Priscilla Benedict. Here, they learn that Gordon and Benedict were the same demon, and might run into a very influential member of the Unchained community.

Description

Aurora Avenue

Turning onto Aurora, it's as if the trees just go away. The street running north through Fremont and then Wallingford is bordered by flat, gray-roofed buildings, vacant lots, counseling centers, and video stores that you suspect don't stock family films. The Sterling Apartments are on the left. That, apparently, is where Priscilla Benedict lives.

Getting In

The interior of the place is as grimy as the exterior. As you enter, an apartment door opens and a nervous-looking man in a suit too expensive for the neighborhood staggers out, smelling of cigarette smoke and perfume. He turns away from you and shuffles out, toward the back door. The mailboxes indicate that Priscilla's apartment is on the second floor. A man sits on the staircase, and shows no inclination to move. He shifts a bit as you approach. "Who you want?" he mumbles.

Meeting Comrade West

As you look around the apartment – very clean, given the state of the building – you hear footsteps outside the door. A man glances around the corner. He's of Asian extraction, probably Vietnam or Laos, but his fashion is pure North Seattle. He glances up and down the hallway and then says, "Looking for Priscilla?" He follows up in Serbian. "Me, too," and waits to see if you understand.

Storyteller Goals

The characters might not ever make it here, and it's not going to make the rest of the story impossible if they don't. This scene allows them to gain a little bit more perspective on what is happening and why, as well as allowing them to meet Comrade West and learn about the Demon's Republic of Seattle (which can be useful if you plan on having this story continue beyond **How an Angel Dies**). Information on the region, West and the Republic can be found in the Appendix.

All of that said, finding Priscilla's apartment allows the players to see, firsthand, how a demon with multiple Covers lives, and that in itself is good enough reason to nudge them a little bit. If the characters don't find the envelope in Gordon's apartment, consider having West contact them (especially if any of them are members of the Republic or just keyed in to Unchained society in general) and ask them to drop in on Priscilla, who's apparently gone missing. Voice of the Machine or Extispicy can also lead them here.

When the characters arrive at the apartment building, they immediately realize that the place is rife with sex workers (which isn't exactly uncommon in this area). The man sitting on the staircase, mentioned above, is in Comrade West's employ. Since demons and other supernatural beings travel in groups and tend to stand out, this observant fellow (named Marques) watches Priscilla's home sometimes and reports to West if any weird groups come calling. If the characters say that they're looking for her, he tells them she's not at home. He doesn't put up more than a token show of resistance, though a player can roll Presence + Intimidation or otherwise motivate him to move if she feels the need. Unless they keep tabs on him, however, Marques sends a text message to Comrade West immediately.

Priscilla's front door is locked and the locks are fairly impressive. They aren't supernaturally reinforced, though, so Shatter, Disintegrate, or just a good hard kick can break them. Picking the lock requires a roll (see below).

Once inside, the characters can search the place. The systems and results for this are listed below.

Comrade West

The Storyteller can have Comrade West arrive any time she wishes. If Marques texts him, he arrives 20 minutes after the characters go upstairs (which means they might be picking the lock on the door when he arrives). If not, he can arrive randomly. West helped Gordon acquire his secondary Cover as Priscilla, and so he knows that if Gordon is dead, so is Priscilla. If the characters have not met West, he introduces himself, but he holds off on telling them about the Republic until he knows they aren't here to cause trouble.

West does not know about Simon Flannery or about the Fellowship of the Final Awakening. He is aware that the George Washington Bridge is Infrastructure, but only within the last few

months. He doesn't know what the Infrastructure might be building up to, and he's reluctant to speculate (it's usually pointless, since the God-Machine builds occult matrices in such a roundabout way). "If you really want to know," he says, "go there, look for the linchpin — you'll know it when you see it — and poke around in it. But if you get jumped by angels, don't say I didn't warn you."

Character Goals

Learn the truth about Priscilla. Find out about the Fellowship of the Final Awakening. Meet Comrade West.

Picking the Lock

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Larceny

Action: Extended (8 successes required, 10 minutes per roll)

Hindrances: No tools (impossible), inferior tools (–2)

Help: Good tools (+2)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Part of a tool breaks off in the lock, rendering further attempts to pick it impossible. The character gains a Condition to reflect this, such as Annoyed or Shaken.

Failure: The character can either accept a Condition (Frustrated, Annoyed) or abandon the attempt.

Success: The character picks the lock successfully and the door opens.

Exceptional Success: The player can choose one of the options on p. 313 for rolling an exceptional success during an extended action.

Searching the Place

Dice Pool: Wits + Investigation

Action: Extended (5 successes required, one roll/5 minutes)

Hindrances: Teamwork (use Teamwork rules, p. 134 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**)

Help: Use of Last Place You Look (+3)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character finds nothing of interest and gains a Condition such as Frustrated or Confused.

Failure: The character can either accept a Condition (Frustrated, Annoyed) or abandon the attempt.

Success: The character finds one of a few different clues in the apartment.

- The same photograph of Puget Sound that was on Gordon's wall hangs on Priscilla's (though this one is not encoded with any special meaning; Gordon/Priscilla just liked the photograph). (1 success)
- The characters find a dismembered German shepherd in the refrigerator. An Intelligence + Medicine roll reveals that the dog was disemboweled before it was cut up. An Intelligence + Occult roll reveals the practice of reading the entrails of a living creature to glean omens about the future. If one of the characters happens to have the Extispicy Exploit, she can attempt to see what Priscilla saw. This imposes a –5 modifier to the Exploit roll, however. If the roll succeeds, the character sees the word "Regina" in the entrails, followed by a vision of imprisonment and a bridge. (2 successes)
- The character finds an envelope, taped to the wall and painted over. The words "Gordon Reardon" and Gordon's address are written on a piece of paper inside it. (3 successes)
- The characters find a street map of Seattle. Various routes around the city are highlighted. Many of them go from one of Gordon/Priscilla's homes to the other, or to the Space Needle, or to the EMP (see p. 270), but all of them avoid the George Washington Bridge. (4 successes)
- Hidden in a bag affixed to the back of a bookshelf with heavy staples, the characters find a copy of a book called *Cults in America: The Hoaxes, The Harmless, and The Horrors* by Eric Rasoletti, PhD. The book is, as the title suggests, a discussion about American cults and includes most of the famous examples (including the Peoples Temple and Heaven's Gate). The "Harmless" section discusses cults that were extensive or long-standing, but had no sinister agenda or did no actual damage to anyone. The Fellowship of the Final Awakening is described in this section; the author says that they were an apocalypse cult, active in the Pacific Northwest in the early 1960s. They believed that humanity was ultimately doomed and would be consumed by fire, probably in a nuclear war, unless mankind explicitly chose destruction at the hands of a supernatural being. To that end, they practiced goetic magic. Handwritten notes in the back pages of the book, however, indicate that the section (which now covers five pages) was originally a single paragraph. Notes in the margins of the book say "THIS IS ALL NEW." Apparently, the Fellowship is retroactively becoming more significant. If the characters do their own research into the Fellowship, they find the same information as in the book. (5 successes)

Exceptional Success: The player may choose one of the special effects for rolling an exceptional success on an extended action (p. 313).

Consequences

This scene helps to give the characters more details and information about what they are investigating, but none of it is strictly necessary to "solve" the problem. If the characters decide to look into Regina a bit more, go to Bailout. If they try to identify Simon, go to Researching Simon. If they investigate the bridge, go to The Ghost Under the Bridge.

Bailout

Mental •• Physical • Social ••

Overview

The characters bail Regina out of jail and learn her reasons for breaking the phone. They probably also learn that she is stigmatic, and that the George Washington Bridge needs their attention.

Description

Freedom

The officer brings Regina out, still in handcuffs. She is relaxed, as though she has done this many times before. She looks at the officer and raises her hands slightly. "Yo. Can you unlock me?" The officer sighs and uncuffs her, and then says, "We about done with this shit, Regina?"

Revelation

Regina rests her head on the wall. She fishes a packet of cigarettes out of her pocket, but it's empty. "Fuck." She glances up at you. "I should quit. I started right after Isaac died. I just...I never thought he'd do it. He's been hinting since he was 12, I thought it was just how he coped." She lowers her eyes. "He's still there, I think. Still on the bridge."

Family History

Regina looks north, over the bridge, and glares. "Almost got out of here," she says. "Isaac and me, we were gonna leave. Go to California, maybe look up my grandpa's family. The Donahues." She stretches her neck and kicks at the ground. "He was from here. My grandpa. Owned a house out in Bellevue in the 60s. Never lived there, though." She blinks, and then stares at you. "What'd you say?"

Storyteller Goals

This scene is meant to be purely conversation/information gathering. The characters can meet Regina, earn her trust and learn the root of her strange repetitive vandalism. Your goals in this scene are to steer the characters toward the bridge, either by making the players suspect that the bridge is Infrastructure nearing completion or because they wish to help Regina's brother find peace.

Note, too, that Regina herself is a useful friend to have. She knows the Fremont area extremely well, she's friends with a lot of the cops (yes, she's a persistent lawbreaker, but just for vandalism and she never resists arrest) and she's an unaffiliated stigmatic. Sadly, she's also lazy and somewhat gullible, which means that if a demon character wanted to make a pact for some part of her life, or even for her soul, it could probably be arranged. Making a minor pact just requires a good pitch and a successful roll (see below), while convincing Regina to sign a soul pact requires Social maneuvering (see p. 314; bailing her out of jail bumps the characters from a neutral impression level to good).

Bailing Regina out doesn't require any dice rolling if the characters have the money. Any character with Resources 2 or more has the cash on hand to bail her out. If not, the characters need to find a way either to get the money to get her out another way (various Embeds, such as Authorized, might come in handy here). Any plausible way to bail Regina out should work, as the meat of the scene is the conversation with her.

In conversation, Regina is initially friendly, open, and grateful to the characters. She will chat about whatever they want to talk about, and is full of interesting information about the area and the people that live there (this is, by the way, an excellent opportunity to drop hints about any upcoming plotlines you might be considering, if you intend to keep the chronicle going past **How an Angel Dies**). If the characters ask about the phone, she says that she hates those phones because "they don't fucking work." She then tries to change the subject. If the characters persist, use the system below.

Regina will go with the characters to the bridge to help them look for her brother's ghost. She fully believes that his spirit is there, wandering the bridge and the area near the Troll, and she goes there and talks to him frequently. She doesn't necessarily expect the characters to be able to make Isaac show himself (he's never done so for Regina), but she's at least open to the possibility.

Regina does not know the God-Machine by that title, nor is she receptive to hearing the truth about it. Regina isn't the most devout of people, but she is nominally Christian. Having that belief challenged is a breaking point for her, especially if the characters demonstrate by using Exploits or revealing demonic forms (remember that revealing the truth to mortals is a compromise, too).

Also, Regina's paternal grandfather, James Donahue, was a member of the Fellowship of the Final Awakening. Before

Simon's meddling, the Fellowship was just a minor cult, barely worth of noting in Dr. Rasoletti's book. Now, however, it actually has the potential to have caused a great deal of harm, which means Regina's memories of her grandfather are in flux. If the characters get her talking about her family (not impossible, given Isaac), she says something about her grandfather, James, and about how he used to own a house in Bellevue or about how he was killed in a fire. She then blinks, and acts confused, having forgotten she said anything about it. Pressing her on the issue is fruitless; she can't remember because the past isn't fixed yet.

Character Goals

Bail Regina out. Learn that she is stigmatic. Learn about the Infrastructure on the bridge.

Earning Regina's Trust

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Persuasion *or* Presence + Empathy (depending on a character's approach)

Action: Instant

Hindrances: Character is belligerent or brusque (–1), character makes flippant or disrespectful reference to suicide in general or Isaac in particular (–2)

Help: Character shares a similar personal tragedy (+1), character demonstrates facility for playing guitar (+1)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Regina leaves the characters' presence as soon as she can. If the characters are in a car, she gets out at the next stoplight. If they are walking, she crosses the street and tries to hop a bus. She won't speak to the character that offended her again, and any other characters attempting to talk with her suffer a –2 penalty and are considered at the hostile impression level.

Failure: Regina keeps the conversation polite and friendly, but she doesn't share anything personal with that character. Further attempts suffer a –1 penalty.

Success: Regina talks about Isaac's suicide with the characters — the salient points are that he was depressed most of his life and he jumped off the bridge a few years ago. She says that she feels his ghost under the bridge, but she's pretty sure it wasn't Isaac she saw get into the Beetle and disappear. If pressed on this point (it doesn't take much), she reveals that she saw someone get into the Beetle and vanish, and it was on the way home from that experience that she smashed the phone for the first time. If asked why, she repeats her belief that the phones are worthless — after all, they didn't save her brother.

Exceptional Success: As above, but she tells the characters that on the night she smashed the phone for the first time, the whole bridge seemed "on, like it was plugged in and lit up." She felt an irresistible urge to smash the phone, and she feels it now every time it gets fixed. She never feels the need to break any other phones than that one.

Consequences

From here, the characters will hopefully investigate the George Washington Bridge, which takes them to The Ghost Under the Bridge.

The Ghost Under the Bridge

Mental ••• Physical •• Social ••

Overview

The characters meet Isaac, either by compelling him to manifest or traveling to the Underworld. They learn about Simon Flannery, as well as uncover the true purpose of the George Washington Bridge Infrastructure.

Description

Apparition on the Bridge

Speaking with the Dead

Standing on the bridge, looking down to the streets below, you feel a sense of vertigo. This was the last thing that Isaac Donahue saw, except that he fell, plummeting through space until he struck the ground. Trying to imagine that kind of sadness, that kind of hopelessness … maybe it's not so difficulty. After all, you've had your own Fall. As you ponder this, you see a figure shimmer out of the air next to you.

"His name is Simon," says the ghost. "He's like you. Whatever 'you' is. He comes through here a lot, walks down here, climbs into that bug and goes away. Then he comes back out. Walks right by me, doesn't even see me." Isaac strums his guitar. "Guess I should be used to that."

The Truth of the Bridge

All of the other phones are just that – yellow boxes with blue telephone symbols, containing a simple line to emergency services. This one, though, is different. Not just because Regina broke it and it's useless now, either. To most people, it would be indistinguishable from the others, aside from the damage, but you can see its function. It's a linchpin, a placeholder, keeping an occult matrix in check. Of course, without more data you aren't sure what the matrix will do.

Storyteller Goals

This scene allows the characters to learn about two important details: the function and mechanics of the Infrastructure and the identity and habits of Simon Flannery.

What the Dead See

This scene introduces the characters to Isaac Donahue directly and allows for some interesting roleplaying between demons (creatures capable of feeling emotion, but under no compulsion to express it) and a ghost (a being of pure emotion who can't *not* express it). Isaac knows Simon Flannery by name and face and can give a good description of him to the characters. If you decide that other agents of the God-Machine have been around the bridge to maintain the Infrastructure; whether stigmatics or minor angels, Isaac can identify them as well.

Isaac can tell the characters that Simon enters and exits through the window of the VW Beetle clutched in the Troll's hand. He has only ever seen Simon enter the Beetle at night, and when he comes here with his cultists, he has them wait up on the bridge — it apparently doesn't work with humans watching (Isaac doesn't seem to count). Isaac doesn't know where that window goes, but he notes that Simon emerges anywhere from a few hours to a few days later. When he's "in the car" for extended periods of time, he tends to emerge wearing different clothes, fashions that have been outdated for decades. Isaac describes the clothes if asked; from his description, the characters realize that the fashions were in style in the early 1960s.

Isaac can't tell the characters much about Simon, other than what he's observed about his behavior and that he is a demon (Isaac doesn't use the word, but he recognizes through aura and mannerisms that the characters and Simon are of a kind). He mentions that Simon has "a plan, and it's not a good thing." Getting him to elaborate compels him to use his Omen Trance Numen on the characters' behalf, but he's not immediately inclined to do so (see Systems).

The characters can help Isaac pass on, if they so desire. Isaac is trapped in his depression, as he was in life. Here, in death, it's not a matter of brain chemistry so much as stagnation. If the characters can show him that it's not his illness holding him back anymore, but just *him*, he can pass on. If a character says as much to him, he asks the characters to pass his love on to Regina (or he smiles at her, if she's present), and vanishes. This action may fulfill Virtue, Vice or Aspirations for the characters, but it's worth a Beat in any case.

If the characters don't help Isaac pass on, he can act as a useful if inconstant source of information. He can't leave the Bridge, but he can use Omen Trance if motivated to do so.

If one of the characters possesses the Rip the Gates Exploit, consider having Isaac stay there rather than in Twilight on the Bridge. Isaac is capable of opening gateways to the Underworld himself, and so he vanishes there when he doesn't wish to wander the Bridge or wait at the Troll. You don't have to get too deep into Underworld geography; Isaac is waiting right inside the gate. Simply describe the Underworld as a massive system of caverns, leading forever downward. Here, Isaac is solid and appears human; and if the characters bring Regina here, both siblings are very grateful.

Understanding the Infrastructure

Apart from Isaac and Regina's story, the important issue here is the bridge itself. The George Washington Bridge is Defense Infrastructure. It hasn't been Infrastructure for more than a few months (meaning the God-Machine is using the existing structure to further its goals). The bridge is meant to summon an angel into the world to seal a gateway and (if necessary) destroy Simon Flannery. The characters can figure that out if they examine the bridge in more detail.

The characters immediately know that the entire bridge is Infrastructure and that one of the phones close to the north end of the bridge (near the Troll) is a linchpin. This phone is, at the moment, smashed beyond repair. Because of that, the characters have an opportunity to pick through the wreckage of the phone and learn more about how the Infrastructure works. They have a few different options for doing this.

Embeds: A number of Embeds can be useful here, especially Like I Built It (p. 135) and Synthesis (p. 138). Inference (p. 144) can also help by masking the characters' movements. If the characters are feeling brave, Voice of the Machine (p. 155) can also give them the information they need. This Embed enjoys a +2 modifier if used on the bridge, but the compromise roll required after a successful use suffers a –1 penalty rather than the usual +1 modifier.

Using Like I Built It gives the character the information listed below for "success" under Taking Apart the Phone. Using Synthesis shows the character how the damage Regina did affected the phone; this is good for a +3 bonus to the roll for Taking Apart the Phone.

Using Voice of the Machine allows the character to hear the heavy, grinding drone of traffic driving over the bridge. She then hears the voice of the God-Machine: "Primary mission: the Lambent closes the aberrant gateway. Secondary mission: appear in viral video. Tertiary mission: Destroy rogue programs. The Lambent is 97.43% complete."

Exploits: Extispicy (p. 165) is an option, but is messy and might result in a compromise roll. The other Exploit that a demon might think to use here is Raze Infrastructure; this is addressed under Consequences.



Examination: The characters can take apart the phone and examine its contents. This requires tools and time, but it yields good results (see below). The characters might consider taking the phone off the stand, which requires either tools or superhuman strength, so as to bring it somewhere with good light. Taking it apart on the bridge is difficult (as reflected in the Hindrances below).

Character Goals

Learn about the Infrastructure. Meet Isaac, and perhaps send him home. Recruit Regina.

Taking Apart the Phone

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Crafts

Action: Extended (10 successes required, five minutes/roll)

Hindrances: Darkness (–2), high winds/rain (–3)

Help: Successful use of Synthesis (+3), good tools (+1 to +3)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: A tool slips and severs some circuits. Every phone on the bridge starts ringing, and the characters feel an odd sense of perspective shift, as though the bridge has grown smaller somehow. The God-Machine has increased scrutiny of the bridge. Every demon still there needs to check for compromise every minute. This ends when the demon leaves the bridge or when the demon accepts the Flagged Condition (p. 120).

Failure: The player can either abandon the attempt or accept a Condition as described on p. 313.

Success: The character takes apart the phone, and realizes the following two points:

- It's not actually a phone. It isn't connected to the phone system, and never was. It's connected into the bridge with slim, blue wires that lead straight back into the concrete — obviously part of the Infrastructure.
- The wires form a circuit. Smashing the phone broke it. If the phone hadn't been broken, the circuit would continue building power until it reached a certain level, at which point a switch in the mouthpiece of the phone would be triggered.
- Triggering the switch activates another circuit to the speaker. The characters hear a pleasant, female voice say, "Connected. The Lambent has been dispatched." The characters do not feel or see any change in the Infrastructure, however, nor do they perceive any output of Aether (which they would if an angel had been summoned).

Exceptional Success: The character also uncovers a SIM card from the phone's system – unusual for a landline phone. Plugged into any device that will support it, the character learns the Lambent's mission: to seal the gate by destroying the Troll's car.

Convincing Isaac to Help

Dice Pool: Manipulation or Presence + Persuasion

Action: Instant

Hindrances: Character acts unkind toward Regina (–4), character displays contempt for Isaac's suicide (–3)

Help: Character displays compassion for Regina (+2), character compliments Isaac on his music (+1)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Isaac vanishes and doesn't return until the following evening. If the characters come back the next night, any further interactions with him suffer a –3 modifier.

Failure: Isaac is reluctant to use his Numina on behalf of the characters. If they bring Regina here, he agrees. If she is already present, a character can try this action again if he gets Regina to support the attempt.

Success: Isaac agrees to use Omen Trance for the characters. He absently plays his guitar for a moment, staring at the Troll, and then recoils. "Light, and fire," he says. "Something's going to burn. It's going to come from that bridge, and walk down here, and then comes the fire. It calls itself ... the Lambent."

Exceptional Success: As above, and Isaac agrees to help the characters search the area for clues.

Searching the Area Under the Bridge

Dice Pool: Wits + Investigation

Action: Instant

Hindrances: Searching at night (–2)

Help: Isaac agrees to help (+2), Teamwork (use Teamwork rules, p. 134 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**), Synthesis Embed (+2)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character steps on the ticket stub and ruins it. Recovering the information requires some way to make the ticket new again or raise the ink.

Failure: The character does not find any evidence.

Success: The character finds a ticket stub from the Ballet Folklórico de México. The ticket was torn and shows signs of being in someone's pocket. It is also dated September 2, 1962. The ticket has a thick layer of grime and dirt over it, and looks like it has been here for some months (which it has; this ticket was Simon's from the last time the 1962 splinter cycled around to September).

Exceptional Success: No additional evidence, but the character gains a good understanding of the layout of the area under the bridge. This grants the character the Familiar Condition with regard to this area. If the character is involved in a fight scene in this area (perhaps with the Lambent; see Angel-Jacking), add 3 to the character's Initiative.

Consequences

From here, the characters might decide to wait for the phone to be replaced (or to rig the broken one so that the Lambent appears) in order to perform some angel-jacking. In that case, go to (appropriately) Angel-Jacking. If the characters want to investigate the gateway to the 1962 splinter and see if they can figure out why the God-Machine wants it closed, go to Through the Troll's Fingers. If they want to investigate Simon directly, go to Researching Simon.

If one of the characters wants to use the Raze Infrastructure Exploit, remind the player that while yes, this is possible, the George Washington Bridge is nearly 3000 feet long, is on the National Register of Historic Places, and is a major transportation system in a large metropolitan area. Destroying it would be almost certainly lead to a squad of hunter angels coming for the character, to say nothing about mortal and other supernatural interests wanting to find and bring to justice the perpetrator of a heinous terrorist action. If that's the kind of chronicle that you and your players would enjoy, though, sure, burn it on down.



Angel-Jacking

Mental ••• Physical •••• Social •

Overview

In this scene, the characters confront or absorb the Lambent. If one of the demons jacks his Cover, however, thus preventing him from manifesting, that character becomes acutely aware of how important this mission is to the God-Machine.

Description

Success

You feel it on your hair first. It grows out, tickling your neck and your face, and you feel the tangles appear and the matted patches grow. Two of your teeth recede – not recede, really, but simply go away. They've always been gone, now that you are the Lambent. You also feel the heft of a hammer in your hand and a rising urge to break things.

Failure

You couldn't hope to become the Lambent. The Lambent is bright and powerful and pure and not just a little insane. You stagger backward away from the phone and nearly into the street, and you see the angel appear, first in Twilight and then in the flesh. It raises a hammer and prepares to deliver judgment.

Patience

From off the bridge, near the side street that leads to the Troll, you wait. And then you hear him coming. A small crowd of people precedes him, and you see cell phones and hear jeering laughter. Above it all you hear his voice – "The cleansing fire begins with the spark from God's own hammer! Pain and breaking leads to expiation and purity!" The citizens of Seattle are laughing at him ... but you know what he is and what light burns behind his eyes.

Storyteller Goals

The point of this scene is to resolve the Lambent's storyline and bring **How an Angel Dies** to a midpoint. The characters can either enact some angel-jacking on Lambent, absorbing his Cover and striking a decisive blow against the God-Machine, or they can wait until he Materializes and then take him on under the bridge. Both approaches have advantages and disadvantages.

Angel-Jacking

Angel-jacking is described on p. 117. It requires that one character take on the job of absorbing the Lambent's Cover. Other characters can help by boosting that character's connection with the Infrastructure, or by interfering with the Lambent. Interfering with the Lambent is described below; helping boost the absorbing character's connection simply makes the roll a Teamwork action (p. 134 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**). Jacking the Lambent's Cover has a target number of five. If the character succeeds at the angel-jacking and she has a free "slot" to take on the Cover (which requires a Primum rating of 2 or more), she can use the Lambent as an alternate Cover.

Remember that if the character fails – that is, the Storyteller reaches five successes rolling the Lambent's Power + Finesse (19 dice!) before the player does – the Lambent manifests as usual. It immediately attacks the character that tried to jack it, enacting its Virtue (Destructive) in the process. If the character succeeds, she not only gains the Lambent as a Cover, but also the Plugged In Condition.

Combat

If the characters decide to wait until the Lambent appears and then take him on, they're in for a fight. The Lambent is extremely strong and he has no qualms about killing demons. He doesn't attack human beings, but has no qualms about hitting demons with his hammer, even if it gets him arrested. If the police do arrive, the Lambent uses its Numina (Dement and Awe especially) to buy itself some time to escape.

In combat, the Lambent doesn't chase opponents. If people back off and use firearms, he runs, trying to get past his assailants and down to the car. If knocked below five Corpus, the Lambent discorporates.

Waiting

If the characters let the Lambent fulfill his mission, he starts to smash the VW Beetle. At this point, if the characters still don't interfere, you have a few choices.

- **Let It Ride:** Let the Lambent destroy the car and then wander off (he eventually vanishes, his mission complete). The players can keep looking into Simon and his plots. Simon knows of the other gateway to the 1962 splinter, at the top of the Space Needle. It's just harder for him to use.
- **Police Ex Machina:** As the Lambent tries to smash the car, the police arrive to stop him. The characters can get

THE LAMBENT AS A COVER

As described on p. 118, all of a demon's Covers uses the same Attributes, Skills and (for the most part) Merits. If a demon takes on the Lambent as a Cover, the Cover has three dots of the Anonymity Merit (p. 293). If the character doesn't have any Merits that she can lose when switching Covers, she doesn't gain these dots.

The Lambent wasn't designed with the aim of interacting with human society very much, and so it isn't the sturdiest of Covers. That said, the Lambent does have a few identifiers: A "real" name (which the player is free to create), a criminal record (vagrancy, vandalism, and assault) and a local reputation (people know about "the crazy guy with a hammer," even if he never actually showed up until now).

involved overtly or subtly (using Embeds like Just Bruised or Cool Heads Prevail, or Exploits like Swift Resolution).

- **Simon Steps In:** Simon's plan is near completion, but he still needs the portal open. He arrives in full demonic form, cult at his side, to kill the Lambent. If that's too overt for you, he could send the cultists to do the dirty work and just shoot at the Lambent himself from a block away using his Marksmanship Merit.

Character Goals

Kill or absorb the Lambent. Prevent the destruction of the Beetle.

Interfering With the Lambent's Manifestation

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Expression (stopping traffic on the bridge); Wits + Crafts (messing with the phone's workings); Strength + Weaponry (breaking the phones)

Action: Instant

Hindrances: Character has the Flagged, Plugged In, or Hunted Condition (–2)

Help: A character has used the Interference Embed on the area (+2)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character either inadvertently makes the manifestation easier (+1 to the Storyteller's roll for the Lambent this turn), or harms the character trying to absorb him (–1 to the angel-jacking player's roll).

Failure: No effect; the character doesn't impact the manifestation.

Success: The character disrupts the manifestation. This by itself is only worth –1 to the Storyteller's roll, but any character that wishes to can participate. Each character's interference action is worth a –1 modifier to the Storyteller.

Exceptional Success: In addition to the –1 modifier, add a success to the total that the Storyteller needs to accumulate to win the contested action.

Consequences

If the characters decide to crawl through the VW Beetle's window and see what's going on, go to Through the Troll's Fingers. If they wish to learn more about Simon, go to Researching Simon. If they have not previously spoken with Regina or Isaac (unlikely, but not impossible), go to Bailout or The Ghost Under the Bridge.

Another consequence of this scene, one that the players hopefully realize when the time comes, is that having the Lambent as a Cover means that a character has a Cover to burn in battle with Marchosias.

Through the Troll's Fingers

Mental •• Physical •• Social ••

Overview

In this scene, the characters travel into the 1962 splinter of Seattle to look for Simon. They might not find him, but they can find the Fellowship of the Final Awakening and convince one of the cultists to talk.

Description

Back in Time

You look around again – no one here. No one watching. One by one, you pull yourself through the window of the old car, and feel a strange tactile sensation, as though your bodies were being slowly submerged in a thick, warm liquid. And then you're pulling yourself out of the window of the car, but the Troll is gone, the air tastes different, and a dirty, derelict woman sits on the hood of the car, staring in horror with a needle in her arm. Judging from her clothes, you have indeed arrived in the year 1962.

The World's Fair

The crowds are incredible. It isn't just the numbers of people, it's the enthusiasm. Throngs of people, expressing a love of science, learning and technology that you have never seen. And underneath it all, you hear the ticking and grinding of the God-Machine, spinning its wheels endlessly, trapped in a repeating loop like the rest of them. You glance nervously skyward – if you can sense Infrastructure, surely it can sense you?

The Cult

"The end is coming," he says. He takes off a pair of gold-rimmed glasses and polishes them with his shirt. "We can't stop it. The best we can do is be ready to go down with dignity and grace. If we accept our fate, then we'll have some chance of making whatever comes next better for everyone." He looks around at his fellows, who all nod. And then he looks at you as though he expects to agree.

Storyteller Goals

The main goal of this scene is to introduce the characters to the Fellowship of the Final Awakening and, through them, Simon Flannery. By this point, the characters should know that a demon sent a group of stigmatics to kill Gordon Reardon and that demon is capable of creating stigmatics. They might also have learned that his name is Simon. They can learn that Simon uses the portal to the 1962 splinter from Isaac in The Ghost Under the Bridge, from one of his stigmatic cultists in RIP, Gordon, or through their own investigations in Researching Simon. Once they learn that the answers they seek probably lie in the 1962 splinter, they just need to find out how to use the portal. They might have discovered this back in Gordon Reardon's apartment or infer it from one of the stigmatic cultists, but if not, other demons in the city (including Comrade West) can inform them. They might also learn it through simple trial and error.

One decision that the Storyteller needs to make when the characters come through the splinter is how much time to spend on the "demons out of time" scene. As with any story that involves traveling to a different time, the players might wish to enjoy the dramatic potential of some contemporary people thrown 50 years into the past. Demons being the timeless entities that they are, the shock isn't as great as it would be for a human being, but the characters' Covers are modern and that can make the sensibilities of the 1960s positively alien. The characters might see segregated bathrooms or water fountains and cluck their tongues at how unenlightened the people of yesterday were, but if any of the characters actually are black, they can't just watch this shameful practice and shake their heads. They (like the people targeted by those laws) have no choice but to participate. This is true about any of the cultural biases of the time-splinter (or of the modern day of course, which is the lesson to internalize here): the people that the system protects can feel whatever way they want about it, but they can *choose* not to be part of it. In a way, that mirrors the machinations of the God-Machine and the demons' position in relation to it, as compared to human beings and angels. A demon might want to destroy, subvert or support the God-Machine, but at least she's aware of her options.

In any case, the characters emerge in a run-down, drug-infested neighborhood. If you want to have someone accost them for money just to highlight the poverty and crime of the area, feel free, but it's probably enough to describe it. The ring can leave Fremont by any means they can muster (take a bus, call a cab, steal a car, or just walk) and move throughout the city, but the big event at the moment is the World's Fair.

Details on the World's Fair can be found on p. 274. The Storyteller can include Infrastructure, angels, and stories related to them within the technological marvels at the Fair. For purposes of **How an Angel Dies**, the Fair can show them something important: the Fellowship of the Final Awakening.



The characters must emerge from the car at night, but by dawn the Fair is in full swing. When the characters arrive in 1962, the date is Saturday, September 1st, just before midnight on Sunday. The 1962 splinter will continue for another seven weeks and then will reset itself, returning to April 21st, 1962. Simon, of course, plans to release Marchosias and send it back through the portal before that.

The members of the Fellowship are attending the Ballet Folklórico de México. How many of them there are is up to you. If any of them are psychic, you might consider having one of use Aura Reading on one of the characters, provided that the demon gives the Fellowship some reason (acting out of character for the era would do it). Note that the demon immediately has the option to Spoof the human psychic's power, which means that the demon's aura reads as human but still expresses whatever the character is currently feeling. If you go this route, a Wits + Subterfuge roll reveals the Fellowship characters watching the demons intently.

The characters have a few options when it comes to the cult. They can approach the cultists and explain what is happening. The truth is a hard sell for the cultists, as they have come to trust Simon. If the characters are persistent and demonstrate their supernatural prowess, though, the Fellowship reveals their plans. After the performance, they intend to visit a vacant house, perform a summoning ritual, and call up a demon (the cult's apocalyptic rhetoric probably either amuses or horrifies the demon, but the creature they intend to summon is no less terrifying).

They can, instead, simply follow the cult to the summoning site. If they do that, they have the chance to disperse or kill the cultists, destroy Simon Flannery, and possibly even kill or permanently imprison Marchosias. The cultists drive to the site, meaning that the characters need to obtain a vehicle in order to follow them. They can do so by bribing someone, hotwiring a car, carjacking someone, or any other method they can think of.

Finally, they can wait until the cultists are out of the public eye and attack them. The cultists might have some psychic prowess, but they are probably no match for a ring of demons. If this happens, they stand and fight only long enough to realize they are outmatched and then they flee, trying to make it to the site and Simon's side.

A further wrinkle in all this is that James Donahue, Regina's grandfather, is a member of the cult. What the characters do to him should carry through to the dominant timeline, both because it makes Regina's part in this story more resonant, and because it keeps the characters guessing about how the splinter timelines work (at no point should the characters believe they have it figured out). James uses the traits for Fellowship Cultists, but he has the Cursed Merit (p. 299), and so receives +2 on any Resolve + Composure roll to resist self-doubt or fear. You can

extend that bonus to help him resist mind- and emotion-controlling Embeds and Exploits if you feel it's appropriate. In any case, while Regina hasn't been born yet (her father, David Donahue, is only a baby in 1962), any knowledge of his family — or, better yet, showing him a picture of his granddaughter — is a superb way for the characters to get their point across.

Character Goals

Meet the cultists. Experience the 1960s. Find Marchosias' prison.

Following the Cultists to the Site

Dice Pool: Wits + Drive vs. Wits + Composure

Action: Contested

Hindrances: Characters obtain a subtle or ubiquitous car (–2 to cultists), Handling rating of car (–1 to –3)

Help: Characters obtain a noticeable or ostentatious car (+2 to cultists), Handling rating of car (+1 to +3)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The cultists notice the characters and attempt to lose them. The scene becomes a vehicle pursuit (pp. 69–70 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**).

Failure: The cultists notice the characters, but don't necessarily think anything supernatural is going on. They pull into the vacant house's parking lot, get out, and watch the characters. They demons can still take whatever action they wish, but the element of surprise is gone.

Success: The demons follow the cultists all the way to a sub-development in Bellevue. The cultists don't notice the characters, and if the demons decide to spring a surprise attack on the cultists, apply a –3 modifier on the roll to see if the cultists notice the characters (see Surprise, p. 319).

Exceptional Success: As above, but the characters gain the Blended In Condition (as a group). They can resolve this Condition at any time to automatically succeed at any roll to remain hidden *or* any compromise roll brought on by using an Exploit or going to demonic form.

Converting the Cultists

Dice Pool: Presence + Persuasion vs. Composure + Subterfuge

Action: Contested

Hindrances: Demons offer no proof of their supernatural prowess (–4), demons try to convince cultists that Simon is a charlatan or that the supernatural doesn't exist (–5)

Help: Demons demonstrate an Embed (+1 to +3, depending on how showy the Embed is), demon demonstrates an Exploit (+4), demons show James Donahue a picture of Regina (+3), demon changes to demonic form (+5)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The cultists disperse, getting as far away from the characters as possible. They believe that the characters are supernatural beings, but that they have been sent by otherworldly interests to prevent the cult from pursuing its mission. If the characters persist, the cultists attempt to use whatever magic they have learned against the characters. They tell Simon as soon as possible.

Failure: The cult doesn't believe the characters' claims. If the characters have shown them supernatural power, they believe that the characters are rivals to Simon, trying to trick them. They don't consider the characters a threat, however. They tell Simon as soon as they can, but don't make a special effort to do so.

Success: The cult believes the characters and tells them that Simon is waiting for them at a house in Bellevue. There, they plan on summoning Marchosias and believe that he will bring an end to the world. They can describe Marchosias (body of a wolf, wings of a gryphon, tail of a serpent, etc.). Any demon that has read the *Lesser Key of Solomon* (Intelligence + Occult, or automatic success if the characters found the copy in Gordon's apartment and read it) recognizes Marchosias as one of the demons described therein.

Exceptional Success: As above. Also, one of the cultists tells the characters that Simon mapped out a "path" for Marchosias, which the cult believes to be along a ley line. The path leads from Bellevue to Fremont. If the path is plotted on a map, the characters realizes it takes Marchosias straight to the portal in the VW Beetle.

Consequences

One way or another, the characters probably go from this scene to Marchosias, Arisen. If they decide to flee back to modern Seattle and destroy the portal, go to Aftermath.

Marchosias, Arisen

Mental •••• Physical ••••• Social ••

Overview

The cult attempts to raise Marchosias from his tomb. If this happens, the cryptid kills the cult and makes its way to the portal, burning the city on its way. The characters can step in at any point.

Description

The Ritual

The cultists stand around the living room of the house. A huge, five-pointed star is painted on the floor, and small bowls of wine rest at every point. The cultist at the north end of the room says something in Latin and pours the wine on the floor. From below you, a rumbling sound ... and a small burst of Aether. Are they in fact summoning a demon?

Marchosias

The house erupts in flames. The neighbors run out of their homes, watching the blaze, stunned. You hear someone yell, "I'll call the fire department!" From inside the burning house, you hear screams and then nothing. The front window explodes outward, and a monstrous, wolf-like creature lands on the lawn. Easily 15 feet long from nose to the tip of its blackened, scaly tail, it roars at the assembled suburbanites and then exhales a blast of fire that sets the lawn ablaze.

Interference

The wolf-creature nears the portal. The city burns behind it. You've lost count of the number of people you've seen burned and dying. The creature breaks into a run as it sees the car, and you look up and notice a luminous being, a woman made of quicksilver and wire, fly close to the wolf...and then turn and fly away. Somehow, the angels can't approach Marchosias.

Storyteller Goals

This is the climax of the story, and depending on what actions the players take during this scene or have taken before this, it can go a number of different ways. Indeed, the characters might not even make it to this scene. If they kill Simon before Marchosias is freed, the cultists can perform their rituals all they like but they can't free the cryptid. It remains safely locked away in its tomb, the 1962 splinter resets itself, and without Simon's influence the cult never learns about Marchosias.

If the characters attack and destroy the cult and miss out Simon, he frees Marchosias himself. In this case, the characters might not learn what has happened until the cryptid attacks modern Seattle.

If the characters have destroyed the portal (or allowed the Lambent to do it) but taken on other action, Marchosias is still freed, but cannot make it into modern Seattle. It destroys the 1962 splinter, which then resets. Simon dedicates himself to fixing the portal and killing the characters.

The rest of this scene assumes that the cultists get back to the house in Bellevue and set up for the "summoning."

Calling Up Marchosias

Simon has worked with the Fellowship to develop a workable summoning ritual. It doesn't actually do anything, of course, since the "demon" it's trying to summon isn't a demon at all, but it looks impressive. The cultists drew occult symbols throughout the house, then intend to pour "sacred" wine and sacrificial blood (from a rabbit) at each of the five points on a star. At this point, Simon (hiding in the basement), activates a gadget he installed with the Shatter Embed. It destroys the stone slab holding Marchosis down and the huge wolf-creature burns its way through the floor. The resulting inferno kills the cultists in seconds, Marchosias leaps through the front window and surges toward the portal. Simon, in his demonic form, uses Phasing, climbs out of the house, gets into a car parked nearby and races to the Space Needle, where he uses the secondary portal (see p. 275) cross into modern Seattle.

Normally a destructive cryptid in Bellevue would attract a great deal of attention from the God-Machine. Simon set up a "path" for the creature, however, using various Gadgets and disabling Infrastructure along the way (Infrastructure isn't as reliable in the time-splinters anyway). The God-Machine is unable to stop Marchosias from leaving the splinter, which is why it tried to send the Lambent to prevent the crossing over from happening.

Enter the Characters

The characters can get involved at any point along the way. They can try to contain or kill Marchosias at the house, try to disable the pathway that keeps it hidden, or try and kill it before

TILT: INFERNO

The area is on fire. Anything flammable is either already burning or will start burning soon.

Effect: All characters suffer a –2 penalty to all rolls due to smoke and pain from the fire. After two turns, any character that breathes suffers 2B per turn due to smoke inhalation. After three turns, the character suffers 1L per turn from burns. If the character catches fire, he suffers 4L per turn until he dies.

Causing the Tilt: An accelerant and a match, an exploding gas tank, a fire breathing cryptid, faulty wiring — all it takes is some excited molecules.

Ending the Tilt: Different types of fire require different methods of extinguishment, but in general, cutting off the fire from its fuel sources does the trick. Water, carbon dioxide, sand, and baking soda can be useful, depending on the size and type of the fire. Eventually all fires burn themselves out, but that can be cold comfort in the aftermath of a destructive blaze.

(or after!) it crosses over. This scene is either a fight or a race to prevent one.

Be aware that, as written, Marchosias is a highly deadly opponent. Once the Inferno Tilt takes effect in an area (see sidebar), even demons aren't long for the world unless they are immune to fire. Also, two good bites from Marchosias are enough to kill one of the Unchained, and with its armor and Defense, the cryptid is hard to hurt. Expect the players to come up with some clever way to defeat the monster, and that's perfectly appropriate ... but make them work and suffer for it.

One possibility is for the characters to locate one of the gadgets that Simon used to establish the Path (installed with the Inference Embed) and destroy it. This exposes Marchosias and allows for the God-Machine to send a hunter angel (p. 216) after it. Of course, once the hunter angel is done with Marchosias, it turns its attention to the characters.

Another (rather less subtle) possibility is to go loud (see p. 113). A character that goes loud enjoys a scene of having Primum 10 and access to any Exploit, many of which can be used on Marchosias to great effect (Frozen in Time, Swarm, Echoing Death, and Reality Enforcement, to name a few). A character that absorbed the Lambent even has a convenient "burn Cover" to use for this purpose.

Character Goals

Kill Marchosias. Kill Simon. Protect the city.

Disrupting the Path

Dice Pool: Wits + Composure or Investigation

Action: Extended (10 successes required, 1 roll/turn)

Hindrances: Inferno Tilt (–4), general chaos (–2)

Help: In demonic form (+1), use of Like I Built It Embed (+3), Teamwork (use Teamwork rules, p. 134 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character cannot find the gadget and Marchosias comes roaring by. Apply the Inferno Tilt to the area, if it's not already there.

Failure: The player can accept a Condition or a Tilt (Shaken, Insensate) or abandon the attempt.

Success: The character finds a Gadget in Marchosias' path. The Gadget is an air raid siren with the Interference Embed built into it. Destroying it requires reaching it (it's 20 feet up on a pole), but a targeted attack with a large caliber firearm or targeted use of an Exploit like Incendiary will get the job done. If the Gadget is destroyed, angels can target Marchosias. What happens then is up to the Storyteller; if the troupe would enjoy watching from the sidelines as vengeful angels destroy the cryptid, that's what happens. If the trouble would rather take on the mutated dog itself, just have the angels confuse and distract Marchosias enough to lower his Defense to a more manageable level.

Exceptional Success: The character can select one of the options from p. 313 for extended actions, or can lead Marchosias down a blind alley and gain a tactical advantage (time for an ambush, a clear shot while he's in a narrow space, etc.).

Consequences

At the end of this scene, the characters might be grieving their fallen compatriots, celebrating over the body of vanquished foe, or searching for Simon Flannery. In any case, go to Aftermath.

Researching Simon

Mental •••• Physical •• Social ••••

Overview

This scene can happen at any time, and indeed can be considered an ongoing endeavor throughout the story. The characters call upon their resources to learn more about Simon Flannery

Description

A Meeting with The Devil

"Aye, I know the man" says the pirate. He strokes his beard and stares you down. "Slight fellow, but a good hand at sea. Partook of Mother Damnable's hospitality more than once, as I recall. But ..." he scratches his head, and his eyebrows furrow. "But now that you ask, I find I cannot recall much. My memory of him slides away from me." He frowns, and the confused look gives way to anger. "I don't like it. Not at all."

Hitting the Books

No records for Simon Flannery. No criminal records, no record of a house owned or a car registered. Like so many of the Unchained, he seems to have covered his tracks well. How long has he been here? Where and when did he Fall? That won't be in any record – not one you can look up downtown, anyway.

Search Engine

The guards are disabled, but the angels won't be so easy. The alarms are already ringing. You have only a moment, and the strange, humanoid figure in front of you stares impassively. You reach out and tap the keys, and watch in fascination as the characters appear on Y2K's "body." He speaks in an oddly soothing monotone, repeating the words you type: "Who is Simon Flannery?"

Storyteller Goals

The standard method for researching one of the Unchained is to find holes in that demon's Cover and keep picking at them (as described on p. 114). Simon is careful not to leave details about his life lying around, but once the characters know his name, they've got a start.

Simon doesn't have a lease in his own name, nor does he register a car. He's not registered to vote and he holds no professional certifications. If the characters are going to find anything about him, they have to find him. Below are a few methods of doing so.

Other Demons

Simon never joined the Demon's Republic of Seattle or any of the other Agencies, but some of the demons therein know him. Comrade West has never met Simon himself, but he is aware that an Integrator out there started a cult by making promises, but not actually signing pacts. Members of their Agendas can tell them the same thing. Other demons, especially other Integrators, know that Simon keeps to himself and has never joined a ring. They might also know that he has had the same Cover for many years. They might also locate the demon that sold Simon the pact that allowed him to patch "works at the Space Needle" into his Cover.

Research

Researching Simon Flannery leaves the characters with limited options, as mentioned above. One thing that they can find out with the right resources is that Simon works at the Space Needle. He works there in a kind of nameless, useless managerial capacity (he "bought" the job at the Space Needle from another demon), and really only keeps it so he can access the portal on the observation deck.

If the characters follow their research through, they learn something important: Simon Flannery was a ward of the state as a boy. That means that Simon has been around since the 1960s, and became a demon as a child. This is fairly uncommon (a demon that young stood a better chance of being captured and recycled), and speaks to Simon's competence. Once the characters have found that Simon Fell as a child, though, they can start poking holes in his Cover. They can eventually determine where and when he Fell.

Splinters

Simon has visited all of the splinter timelines, weaving himself into the occult landscape in subtle ways and learning from the people therein. If the characters visit these splinter timelines, they can meet the important supporting characters from each one (described in the Appendix). These characters cannot provide specific information about Simon's plan, but they can give the characters physical descriptions of him and a general idea of what he was trying to do. Demons in other timelines seem to think he is an Inquisitor rather than an Integrator, based on his attempts to learn and understand the occult landscape.



Systems

The usual system for researching a demon's Cover is Wits + Occult, but in this case it really depends on what the characters are trying to find and what methods they're using to do it. Below is a list of facts about Simon, along with some examples of where the characters could find them.

- Simon works at the Space Needle (employee records, tax records, demons in modern Seattle).
- Simon has been using this Cover since at least the 1960s (county records listing him as a ward of the state).
- Simon bought his job as part of a patch job (demons in modern Seattle).
- Simon is an Integrator, or possible an Integrator-Inquisitor (demons in modern Seattle or any splinter).
- Simon has a fascination with the Space Needle (demons in modern Seattle or 1962).
- Simon makes deals with mortals and turns them into stigmatics, but does not forge pacts (demons in modern Seattle).
- Simon is skilled at making Gadgets (demons in modern Seattle, stigmatic cultists).
- Simon's job at the Needle does not have a title. He has an office with his name on the door, but no one knows what he does (visiting the Space Needle).
- Simon has attempted to buy a particular piece of property in Bellevue several times (demons in any splinter except 1889, demons in modern Seattle).

Character Goals

Learn about Simon Flannery.

Consequences

The characters can go to nearly any scene from this one. They can also revisit this scene as necessary. It's less a scene and more an ongoing investigation.

AFTERMATH

When the story is over, the characters might have thwarted Simon Flannery's plan before it really got going. One of them might have a new Cover as a hammer-wielding crazy person. They might have all but sealed off the 1962 splinter (the portal on the observation deck of the Needle still works, it's just very difficult to use), or they might have trapped Marchosias in it. At the Storyteller's discretion, the destruction that Marchosias wreaks in Seattle-1962 might be enough to make it become "detached" as 1889 did, meaning that the city becomes a burnt-out wasteland in which survivors must avoid the attention of an immortal monster.

If Simon survives and his plan is thwarted, he swears undying enmity upon the characters. He hasn't given up his plan to end the world and die in the process, now he just wants to make sure that the characters die first.

If Simon is dead, his stigmatic cult might start hunting down demons, feeling betrayed that they never got what he promised them. They might even get some support from the God-Machine, especially if the characters made themselves known by destroying or jacking the Lambent.

No matter how the characters approached the events of **How an Angel Dies**, they almost certainly have repercussions to deal with. This, of course, can power further **Demon** stories if you and your troupe so desire.





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