

DEVIANT

the renegades

Kickstarter Manuscript Preview #1



Deviant: The Renegades Manuscript Preview #1

Introduction

A nondescript sedan drives slowly along the block. The driver keeps her eye on the street. The two other occupants — both men — have no interest in the traffic. They're watching the pedestrians and shops as the car rolls by.

A movement catches the eye of one of the men, and he gestures to his colleagues. Someone wearing heavy, shapeless clothing appears from behind a small group of people and heads off quickly away from the car. The weather is warm, so why wear such heavy clothing? Head down, with a ball cap pulled low, it's trying to avoid recognition, which piques the men's interest.

The car stops for just a moment, so the men can step out. The driver pops the roomy trunk. The modified springs keep it from automatically rising, but it's ready for quick access when the men need it. She keeps the engine running so they can leave the area rapidly when they've completed the job. No point waiting for police to arrive; too much paperwork.

Though the shapeless individual never looks around, it picks up the pace as if it knows they're following it. The men increase their speed while giving every appearance of being relaxed and uninterested in the individual, betraying professional training.

The shapeless individual heads down an alleyway. The men reach the entrance and pause before they're silhouetted against the street. They're not stupid, but they do have a job to do. With practiced movements, they release clips on the holsters on their belts. The man on the left draws a taser, the one on the right a pistol. Covering multiple scenarios.

The taser-wielder moves first, hugging the wall of the alley, maintaining a low tactical approach. The dumpsters and garbage will break up his outline and conceal him. The shapeless individual has made a tactical error.

He stops short of a dumpster and gestures for his partner to move forward. After a moment's inactivity he glances around. His partner isn't there, but the shapeless thing is. Beneath the heavy coat sickly neon-esque light glows, revealing something metallic held in place by inflamed, dying flesh.

The police finally investigate the car three days later, after shop owners complain about the smell coming from the trunk. They find enough parts to piece together most of three individuals — two men and a woman — missing several square feet of skin. Two individuals watch the police from nearby. One talks on her cellphone while the other scrutinizes the crowd of onlookers.

The shapeless individual watches the scene streamed live via an unsecured webcam placed conveniently in one of the shop windows. The flesh graft itches where it meets the implants. Incompatible donors, it won't last long, but it distracts her body from rejecting the metal, which would kill her.

Let them keep sending people. They'll find the same reception waiting for them. The only way she'll ever go back is when she uncovers their location and burns the place to the ground.

Welcome to **Deviant: The Renegades**, a game about anger and revenge. It's about the horror of changing against your will, of your body's betrayal as it twists and warps away from your

humanity. Even those Deviants who chose to undergo their transformation — the Divergence — didn't really know what to expect. Because of this, **Deviant** is a game of sorrow, regret, and escape. It's about the catharsis of retribution or the comfort of loyalty. Of the anger at wrongdoings, and the acceptance of what is. While Deviants loyal to their conspiracy's cause may console themselves through the pain by accepting — or even embracing — the goals and methods of the conspiracies that hunt their kind, Renegades harbor a burning need for vengeance. The Deviant's suffering is someone's fault, and that someone should be accountable. Some heartless assholes lied to you. Some pieces of shit stripped away your humanity and divorced you forever from a life free of pain, suffering, or anything approaching normal.

Deviant: The Renegades is about destroying those who wreck lives, who dare to use people as tools, who sow human misery in their wake. Fuck them and their literal dehumanizing of their victims. Fuck them and their pursuit of power.

It's time to make them pay.

Shrouded in Darkness

The **Chronicles of Darkness** is a game of modern horror. The **Chronicles** take place in a world recognizably like our own, but a little less inviting. The world is a little greyer, the people a little colder and less welcoming. The similarities to our world are thin veneer, barely covering the rot beneath the surface. Scratch away that veneer, even for a moment, and see the darkness. Everyone has brushed against the supernatural hiding within that darkness, though few admit it. The chill of a ghost's passing, the stranger who appears at the periphery of vision, the feeling of someone watching you when you know you're alone. People disappear without a trace all too frequently. Their loved ones go through the motions of searching for them, but they don't hold out hope. Few return, and rarer still are those who come back the same as when they left.

Humans rarely speak of what their blood and bones know must exist in the world. Sometimes, safely behind locked doors, windows securely bolted, and lights burning brightly, people hesitantly whisper about what they encountered in the darkness. Few people talk about it because they never know who may be listening and taking pleasure in the fear and suffering of others, and the power this brings.

Supernatural beings aren't the only ones who seek occult power. Humans pursue it like moths to a flame. Deviants come from these dalliances with things poorly understood and better left alone. While some are people who wanted to empower themselves, more frequently they're the victims of another's experimentations, or the unlucky who were simply in the wrong place at the wrong time. Many paths lead to Divergence. Progenitors of Deviants use sorcerous rituals, experimental surgeries, or exposure to strange or ancient artifacts. These Progenitors use whatever works, and inflict pain, misery and suffering on victims to discover what does work. Whatever the process, the result is one of the Remade and no longer a human. Something that touches on and draws against the darkness in ways that are more than human. Unfortunately, these changes are never seamless. They leave lasting scars.

Divergent and Hunted

To be one of the Remade is to never be free of harassment and pursuit. Every Deviant is a valuable resource, a scientific curiosity to study and try to replicate, a tool to achieve someone else's goals, or a weapon to leverage power over others. Unfortunately, Remade rarely begin in positions to choose how to spend their lives. Other people desire the power that the transformed

possess and they can and will bring tremendous resources to bear to leash the Deviant to their will. Many Deviants chafe at this control, refuse to submit, fight against their chains. These Broken refuse to accept the title, break free and take back control of their lives. Few conspiracies allow their prizes their freedom for long, constantly hunting them and others to satisfy the lust for power. Renegade Deviants believe the only true way to freedom is to burn it all down and ensure no one lives to come after them any longer.

Conspiracies

Within certain circles, the existence of the Broken is well known, as is the potential power they bring to those who control them. These conspiracies have many goals and methods — wealth, scientific curiosity, religious fervor, political power, and countless others — but all of them regard the Remade as tools. Few conspiracies view themselves as evil, but all are selfish in putting their own interests over those of others. Some acknowledge the suffering they inflict on the transformed, but even these believe their goals justify the pain.

The ways in which the conspiracies use their tools are as varied as the conspiracies themselves. Some recruit Deviants with promises of aid and support in return for service. The conspiracy may keep these Deviants on a long leash, allowing considerable latitude when not ‘on mission’. Or they might contain the Remade within a guilted cage, where comfort and luxuries are plentiful, but freedom is unacceptable. Many Deviants don’t know any life outside the conspiracies and accept their lot as the only option.

The work of many conspiracies leads them to attempt to make Deviants of their own, that they better understand, and control. In fact, most of the terminology used to describe and classify the Remade came from conspiracies that flourished in the time of Darwin in the 19th century. The rise of scientific classification and understanding helped these new conspiracies codify what they hunted. Over time, even the less scientifically-focused conspiracies adopted much of the language, in part to communicate with other conspiracies they encountered, but also to add another layer of camouflage over their ancient roots, and hide within the scientific zeitgeist of the time.

The desire to transform humans and create new Deviants doesn’t extend to every conspiracy. Many lack the knowledge or resources to be Progenitors, and instead benefit from the labors of others. Importantly, the conspiracies who hunt for a given Deviant may have nothing to do with her condition. She may have escaped one group only to run afoul of another. This isn’t even rare. For a conspiracy that is adept at generating Remade, the cost of hunting and containing a replaceable resource may outweigh the benefit, or they need to silence the Renegade.

Divergence

Being Remade sets a Deviant apart from humanity. The processes for transforming humans into Broken are myriad. What one Progenitor accomplishes through cutting edge gene recombination and surgery, another achieves via ritual sacrifice on an altar to an ancient being. This understandably results in such a breadth of possible deviations that even the conspiracies who would hunt and capture as many transformed as possible don’t recognize some individuals as their prey. Whatever the process, every Deviant shares one absolute commonality. Every one has a broken soul.

The moment of Divergence, as conspiracies call the point separating Baseline human from Remade, breaks the soul. Learning that souls do indeed exist might be a surprise to the less

spiritual Progenitors. But having a soul isn't a matter of faith, it is simply fact. It preserves the sense of self and connects all humanity together on some level. Regardless of whether the Progenitor used scientific or spiritual means on the Remade, breaking the soul is key to the Divergence. Whether this fuels the Deviant's powers — called **Variations** — or whether those Variations tear the soul asunder is unknown and possibly unknowable. For most Progenitors, it's irrelevant. The Divergence worked, and the transformed's soul breaks. Who cares which came first? What's important is that processes that don't achieve this breaking result in a failed — often dead — subject.

Even a successful procedure isn't always a triumph. Sometimes too much power flows when the soul cracks, consuming the victim in her own power like aggressive, malignant supernatural cancers. Other times the Divergence's mundane trappings fester and destroy the transformed — infected implants, complete supernatural possession rather than a controllable portion of demonic essence, or just complete system shock shutting down the body beyond recovery. Even the Broken who survive often kill themselves if they have the chance, reacting in horror to what they have become. Once the Divergence happens, it's permanent.

Deviants

That every Deviant has something wrong with her isn't a metaphor. It's not a poetic reference to some aspect of the human condition. At the core of her being, regardless of coercion, voluntarily accepting the change, or being a victim of circumstance, the broken soul sets her forever apart.

Individual Remade tend to think of their existence in terms of how it came about. For each of them, this process and time marks the point when they became more and less than human.

Genotypal Deviants are **Born** into their condition, through accident or deliberate intervention from conception to gestation. **Epimorphs** agreed to undergo the process, **Volunteers** who fell victim to the honeyed words of their Progenitors. In contrast, **Autourgies** sought out the change. How aware these **Elect** were of the results is questionable, regardless of their intent. The **Exomorphs** were victims of someone else's choice. Many of these **Unwilling** are the result of Progenitors still perfecting their process, or those building controllable — and often expendable — soldiers to their causes. Finally, **Pathological** Remade are victims of circumstance, **Accidents** literally in the wrong place at the wrong time. The conspiracies often have no idea what process changed these Broken but find a use for them regardless.

Regardless of its origin, the Divergence provides some advantage over the rest of humanity. The Deviant gains powers and abilities beyond what humans can do or experience. These **Variations** are why the conspiracies expend so much time and energy to control the Remade. Whether forced or voluntary, a transformed's service is power for the conspiracy to achieve its goals. Unfortunately, Variations invariably come with **Scars** that inflict pain and suffering on the unfortunate Remade, a constant reminder of the price she paid.

Though each Deviant is unique, and few Remade have enough ongoing contact with others of their kind to discover similarities and differences, the conspiracies have studied, enslaved, and classified them for centuries. These divisions, called **Clades**, focus on how the Remade manifest their powers, rather than how they came to be. The conspiracies generally agree that Remade fall into five main Clades. The **Cephalists** are those Deviants whose minds opened through the Divergence to manifest incredible abilities. The Variations of these **Psychics** aren't necessarily all mind tricks, and can manifest as physical enhancements. The **Chimerics** combine biological material from something other than human to create something incredible. Progenitors frequently

turn to the animal kingdom for inspiration for these **Hybrids**, but mixing elements of plants, or other mysterious donors isn't unknown. Deviants whose abilities derive from inanimate foreign structures within their bodies are **Invasives**, often labelled **Cyborgs** although their powers could come from technological marvels, magical jewels, or even alien artifacts discovered among meteoric wreckage. In contrast, **Coactives** directly channel energy as their source of power. These **Infused** belong to this Clade whether they harness natural energies known to science, or esoteric energies human researchers can't clearly quantify or explain. Finally, the **Mutants'** powers are clearly biological in origin, but inconsistent with other Clades. The bodies of these **Grotesques** defied the circumstances of Divergence but nevertheless changed, albeit in unexpected ways.

Renegade and Devoted

The Divergence leaves a gap within each Remade. While it creates the wellspring for the Deviant's powers, the damage it does fundamentally separates the Broken from the rest of humanity. Baseline humans experience a sense of self-identity and free will. A Deviant replaces this with a desperate yearning to define herself by how she relates to others, either with loyalty or opposition. She can no longer rest or exist comfortably with herself; she must act to seek external validation to temporarily ease this pain. This divorce from humanity forces the transformed to choose a side and take a stand, even if for no better reason than to maintain her sanity against the horrors she faces.

Some Deviants find solace in service to the conspiracies. The blind loyalty of these **Devoted** allows them to overlook the damage they cause. As long as they remain a part of something larger, working alongside people they care about, these Remade find peace.

Conversely, the **Renegades** have thrown off their bonds and escaped the conspiracies. Though their lives usually become a cycle of pursuit and escape, their conviction to remain free and fight the conspiracies gives them just as much relief as service does to their opposites. Much as she might wish otherwise, a Renegade soon discovers that this fight defines her existence. Even if she wins and destroys the conspiracy — or at least eliminates its ability to pursue her — she can't sit idly by and settle into a peaceful life.

Deviants who refuse to follow their rebellious or compliant drives stagnate and cut themselves off from their remaining tenuous links to humanity. These unfortunate individuals undergo a process the conspiracies call **Instability**, wherein their Scars fester and grow until the Deviant dies a painful, lingering death.

How to Use This Book

Deviant: The Renegades is a Storytelling game of transformation and revenge. This book includes all the rules you'll need to take a group of Remade characters from their Divergence to their revenge, but you can find expanded rules in the **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**.

Deviant also includes the **Web of Pain Chronicle**. The various conspiracies that hunt and control the Remade to service their goals are never discrete entities. At some point, they all connect. Two friends may end up working for different conspiracies; though they keep those aspects of their lives secret, eventually they recognize commonalities and create a loose connection. The connection might be stronger, with the CEO of a corporate conspiracy leading a parallel life as the grand magus of one with sorcerous roots. Whatever the connections, the conspiracies extend their grasping tendrils into the world, where they inevitably find each other.

Within this web, as the Remade expose one conspiracy, they discover another, grander structure pulling the strings of their existence.

Chapters

Chapter 1: Origins and Clades introduces the various ways Deviants become Remade and how the conspiracies classify and divide them.

Chapter 2: Setting reveals the world in which Deviants live. Here we examine the Divergence's effects, how the Broken meet their daily needs, and how they take the fight to the conspiracies.

Chapter 3: Renegades provides rules and game systems to make Remade characters, their powers and the burdens they carry as a result of their Divergences.

Chapter 4: Storytelling System presents all the core rules necessary to run a game of **Deviant: The Renegades**.

Chapter 5: Antagonists covers the people and organizations who hunt the transformed, and who the Deviants hunt in return. This chapter provides systems for creating your own conspiracies, and how they react to the actions of the characters.

Chapter 6: Settings and Sample Conspiracies tours the world, examining several locations in how the conspiracies and Broken struggle against each other, and one another.

Chapter 7: Storytelling gives tips on running successful games of **Deviant**, and explores the game's niche of transformation and revenge.

The **Appendices** provide lists of the equipment, Conditions, and Tilts that are likely to come into play in **Deviant**.

Deviant, the Storytelling Game

You probably already know what a Storytelling game is, but if you don't, here are the basics.

In **Deviant**, you and your friends tell stories of a core cast of characters transformed to be both more and less than human, and forever separated from Baseline life. These characters escaped the clutches of their creators only to find many other conspiracies want to hunt and capture the characters to control their power. This desperate fight for revenge and survival takes place within the Chronicles of Darkness, a grim version of our own world. Roleplaying games are like ongoing comic books or TV dramas, like *Orphan Black* or *The Gifted*. Each gaming session (called a "chapter"), which usually lasts between two and six hours, is like a weekly episode or single issue, building into distinct storylines as you play.

The ideal group size for **Deviant** is around two to five players. One person takes on the role of Storyteller, while the others play the role of one main character each. Each player makes the decisions for her character, when he'll use his power, how he views his fractured existence, and precisely how he enacts revenge on those who transformed him. The Storyteller is responsible for portraying characters who don't belong to specific players, and presenting fictional situations that challenge the other players' characters. These characters and situations help or oppose the core cast, and may be recurring antagonists or one-off challenges that cause unique kinds of trouble.

The Storyteller aims to create scenes where the players must make decisions fraught with conflict and danger. The Storyteller narrates a situation. Then the other players say how their characters respond. The Storyteller's most important question is, "What do you do now?"

When a character's response has an element of risk or uncertainty, the outcome is determined by rolling ten-sided dice. Basically, you add a few numbers on your character sheet and roll that many dice. You'll find out whether your action works, or fails and gets your character into more trouble. While having characters succeed in their actions is enjoyable, more drama and fun can come from when things don't go well, or as expected. In TV series and comic books, the most interesting episodes are often those where so much goes wrong for the characters until they overcome their challenges and find a way to succeed despite the obstacles.

Importantly, the Storyteller isn't trying to make the characters fail, and should ensure they have chances to overcome their setbacks. The Storyteller's job is to provide challenge and conflict and danger, so that when the characters succeed the players feel a sense of victory and accomplishment.

The Storyteller is responsible for...

- ...bringing the Chronicles of Darkness to life through description.
- ...deciding where scenes start and what's going on.
- ...portraying characters who don't belong to other players.
- ...involving each player and their character in the ongoing story.
- ...putting players' characters in tough spots, encouraging interesting decisions.
- ...facilitating the actions players' characters take, while making sure there are always complications.
- ...making sure that poor dice rolls affect but don't stop the story.

The players are responsible for...

- ...creating their own individual characters and members of the cast.
- ...deciding what actions their characters take.
- ...making decisions that create drama and help keep the story moving.
- ...highlighting their characters' strengths and weaknesses.
- ...confronting the problems the Storyteller introduces.
- ...developing their character's personality and abilities over time, telling a personal story within the overall story of the game.

Everyone is responsible for...

- ...giving other players chances to highlight their characters' abilities and personal stories, whether that's by showing them at their strongest or weakest.
- ...making suggestions about the story and action, while keeping in mind the authority of players over their characters and responsibility of the Storyteller to occasionally make trouble.

Anger and Loneliness

Deviant explores several themes in its presentation. These thematic motifs and the intended mood of the game weave throughout the text, including the mechanics. They inform the assumptions the game makes about the stories you will tell. Reading this book through the lens of these will help provide the fullest enjoyment of the game and your chronicles.

A Divergent Journey

The Remade are transformed from human stock to gain power at the expense of their humanity. Their creators — Progenitors — seek power by harnessing ill-understood processes, channeled through combinations of mystical and scientific methods. Irreversibly altered by the experience, often carrying physical, mental, or emotional scars from the Divergence, Deviants face a new life filled with challenges. Many of the transformed's changes require special care and upkeep. The Remade who neglect this care face sickness, further mutation, or madness.

Theme: Isolation

Even in a crowd, a Remade is always alone. The Divergence severs the Broken from the interconnectedness between every Baseline, brought together by the shared bonds of the human soul. Transformed struggle with the instinctive human ability to make connections with others. Every alliance, every friendship is a challenge. Maintaining connections requires more effort than experienced by even the most socially isolated human. Baselines feel the same way about the Remade. Even a transformed who the human likes, or loves, seems to require so much more effort to be around. This reinforces that the Deviant has lost her place among humanity and further drives her disconnection from society.

Hunters search for every Remade, even those who can pass for normal. Returning to the familiar, to lives from before the Divergence, is a guaranteed path to discovery. Transformed flee to where they don't know anyone, and more importantly, where no one knows them. Spiritually, Deviants need some connection with humanity to prevent further degradation of their soul. The fear and danger this presents can't be overstated. A Remade doesn't know how individuals will react to seeing his transformed flesh. Some respond with pity, others scorn. Additionally, the revelation might gain an ally, but could drive away those he reached out to. Worse, they could whisper, gossip, or report him to authorities, which brings the conspiracies to his location, and forces another, further isolating move.

Mood: Tragic Revenge

Make no mistake, **Deviant** is about revenge. Someone must pay for the Broken condition, even if the Remade himself was a self-Progenitor or a conscious and willing volunteer. The transformed needs to hold someone accountable, even for his own ignorance.

As the conspiracies hunt them, the Remade hunt the shadowy organizations to uncover and disclose their secrets and drag them into the light, to bring pain to those in power and destroy their lives. Broken don't have the luxury of hiding from their past or finding a place of permanent safety. The spiritual damage from the Divergence forces them to confront their personal demons. From the moment of transformation, every Deviant has a choice between following orders and soothing the soul through loyalty to someone else, or striking back and using the conviction of the Remade's anger as a balm for her spiritual pain.

The Web of Pain

Unfortunately, the path to revenge is seldom easy. Burning down all the laboratories, warehouses, and facilities of an organization merely reveals it to be one tendril of a larger group extending many branches across the local region. Destroying these holdings one by one exposes more intermeshed links, feeding each other for the benefit of the greater conspiracy. And even when the Broken manages to grind all these tentacles into bloody smears she discovers another conspiracy hidden behind the façade, secretly pulling the strings of its smaller offshoot. Even though these tendrils interlink and tangle across one another, all of them seek to control the Remade, to break her spirit and turn an enemy into a weapon and exploit her in any one of a thousand ways.

This is the **Web of Pain**, where even the most insular, well-hidden conspiracy has at least a few connections to its peers. Total secrecy brings potentially fatal ignorance of competitors seeking the same resource is a certain path to submission or destruction. The conspiracies within the Chronicles of Darkness exist as a vast, tangled web of personal and organizational connections. It is a conspiracy of conspiracies, where each controls the center of its own node and spins its threads to reinforce its position, or weaken and devour its fellows. Unfortunately for Renegades with a singularity of purpose who think they've completed their job with the destruction of their Progenitors, there's always a bigger threat along the web, or a hungry young conspiracy eager to fill the void left by the Deviant's efforts.

Inspirational Material

Modern entertainment is full of stories about shadowy organizations and the people who fight them. It's similarly filled with characters filled with power that comes with a price. Finding the Divergence in countless sources of inspiration only takes a little effort. Often, it takes no effort at all.

Television

Dark Angel: A mass breakout of Chimeric children from the military conspiracy that created and enslaved them. Having hidden from scrutiny for years, Max, now an adult, works to gain revenge against her abusers.

Orphan Black: The Genotypal characters unravel layer upon layer upon layer of conspiracy in their struggle to free themselves from the ones who created them.

Stranger Things and *Stranger Things 2*: Shadowy conspiracies, Cephalist children — or are they Coactive? — the hunt for those who escape, and how they pursue revenge. These series incorporate everything you need for **Deviant**.

Movies

Bladerunner: What are replicants if not a form of Genotypal Mutants? Roy Batty leads the Renegades. More than human, they've broken free from their corporate leashes, but can never outrun their fatal Scars. If Deckard is a replicant, he's Devoted and kept ignorant of his condition.

Memento: A man's memory disorder and thirst for vengeance against his wife's murderer drives him to frame innocent men so that he can bask in a moment of bloody revenge that he won't remember. A significant inspiration for Conviction.

Robocop: A fatally-injured human Remade as an Invasive, complete with Scars of inhuman appearance and implanting behavioral limitations. Officer Murphy's arc runs from unwitting Devoted through to Renegade, and finally manages to find middle-ground as a Guardian.

Books

Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde: Dr Jekyll triggers his own Divergence through chemical cocktails intended to suppress his darker urges. Instead, he unleashes the monstrous Mr. Hyde, who becomes increasingly dominant. Jekyll's Scar begins as needing the cocktail to access his Variations, but over time the Scar shifts to requiring the chemicals to maintain any trace of his Jekyll self at all.

Games

Bioshock: A broken world where genetic tampering gives rise to fantastic powers, and all it costs is your sanity. Powerful men fight for control of the source of the power, whatever the cost to those around them.

Lexicon

Accidents: Alternate name for Pathological Deviants.

Acclimation: A measure of how acclimatized a Deviant is to her condition.

Adaptation: Ways in which Deviants can manipulate their Variations and Scars, determined by Clade.

Autourgics: Deviants who sought out the Divergence.

Baseline: A human who hasn't undergone the Divergence.

Born: Alternate name for Genotypal Deviants.

Broken: Alternate name for Deviants.

Cephalists: Also known as Psychics, a Clade of Deviants who employ psychic powers unleashed by the trauma of Divergence.

Chimeric: Also known as Hybrids, a Clade of Remade comprising Deviants who combine human and other — often animal — anatomy.

Clade: A definitional grouping of Deviants, classified by how the Remade's powers manifest. Deviants define themselves by Origin, whereas the conspiracies classify the Remade into Clades.

Coactive: Also known as Infused, the Clade for Deviants who derive their powers from outside energies.

cohort: A group of Renegades and their Loyalty Touchstones, allied against a conspiracy.

conspiracy: an organization that seeks to control Deviants for its own ends. Many conspiracies make Deviants, but some must acquire Remade from their competitors.

Conviction: A measure of the Deviant's drivers toward revenge — most common among Renegades.

Cyborgs: Another name for the Clade known as Invasives.

Deviant: A human who has undergone the Divergence, suffering a broken soul and gaining Variances and Scars. See also Broken, Remade, and transformed.

Devoted: A Deviant who serves a conspiracy, led by Loyalty to her society.

Divergence, the: The moment a person becomes Remade; also, the nonhuman aspects of a Deviant.

Elect: Alternate name for Autourgic Deviants.

Epimorphs: Deviants who volunteered but didn't know they what they were really signing up for.

Exomorphs: Deviants who were victims forced into the Divergence against their will.

Faltering: When a Deviant suffers an integrity crisis from working against her Conviction or Loyalty.

Feral: A Deviant with no Touchstones, mutated beyond all recognition.

Form: A variation to the normal Deviant Origins and Clades.

Genotypal: Deviants born into their condition, through accident or deliberate intervention.

Grotesques: Another name for the Clade known as Mutants.

Guardian: A Renegade who has achieved a precarious state of balance between her Loyalty and Conviction.

Hybrids: Another name for the Clade known as Chimerics.

Infused: Another name for the Clade known as Coactives.

Instability: A setback to a Deviant's stability.

Invasive: Also known as Cyborgs, a Clade of Deviants who derive their powers through non-living, foreign objects implanted within their flesh.

Loyalty: A measure of the Remade's drivers toward protecting those she loves — most common among Devoted.

Magnitude: A measure of the strength of a Deviant's Variations or Scars.

Manticore: A Remade animal.

Mutants: Also known as Grotesques, a Clade of Deviants whose bodies rejected the changes forced upon them, instead changing in unexpected ways.

Nemesis: A Devoted who has achieved a precarious state of balance between her Conviction and Loyalty.

Origin: The circumstances under which a Deviant came to Divergence.

Pathological: Deviants who underwent the Divergence through accident or circumstance.

Progenitor: Someone directly responsible for a Deviant's Divergence.

Psychics: Another name for the Clade known as Cephalists.

Remade: Alternate name for Deviants.

Renegade: A Deviant who resists the control of her conspiracy and seeks retribution against her abusers.

Scar: A Deviant's supernatural disability.

Stability: A measure of how far a Deviant's mutations have twisted through isolation from humanity.

transformed: Alternate name for Deviants.

Unwilling: Alternate name for Exomorph Deviants.

Variation: A Deviant's supernatural ability.

Volunteers: Alternate name for Epimorph Deviants.

Wavering: When a Deviant begins to lose touch with her anchors, by either softening her loyalty or conviction to her goals.

Web of Pain: The network of conspiratorial links between conspiracies.

Chapter One: Origins and Clades

*For it had come from the large covered vat in that ghoulish corner of crawling
black shadows.*

— H.P. Lovecraft, “Herbert West — Reanimator”

This chapter is about what they did to you—“you” being a so-called Deviant, newly escaped or otherwise self-defined in the face of forces that would have chosen a place for you. Their mistake is they believed you never had a voice, an influence, a single particle of will to choose your fate. You thrashed at the restraints from the start or bided your time, but you eventually made your true desires known.

Yet, one way or another, the Remade make accommodations for what happened to them, and while hiding out or even serving once’s “creators” may be seen as cowardice, it’s still a natural reaction to what may be an intense trauma or the flowering of some unbreakable-seeming dark tradition. Devotion might seem like the safest or only option. But if anyone wants to escape servitude and fear, the only way forward is to fight and, to the degree one can while preserving one’s own safety, shine a light on what happened. Then, one cannot just be said to be a Deviant, but one’s true self, where no unjust influence overrides one’s will.

Of course, if you did it to yourself, it all gets rather *complicated*.

Origins

A Deviant’s Origin is not just a matter of circumstance, but disposition. Some of the Remade readied themselves for transformation, or at least believed it was a worthwhile price to pay. Others were taken against their will, had Divergence forced upon them by a family legacy, or were transformed by accident. While Clade describes the Remade based on the Variations she manifests, the Origin’s effects are influenced by deep-seated attitudes, and the way the Deviant’s initiation into their kind supports or offended their physical and spiritual autonomy.

Conspiracies have long studied the nature of Deviant Origins. Some scientists wish to eliminate Origin as an influence, to control the manifestation of Variations and Scars precisely. Conspirators want to instill obedience, and remain confounded by Origins which seem to promote defiance, or twist careful conditioning into resentment. Not all conspiracies are so focused on control, however, and believe a subject’s ability to influence their own transformation presents opportunities for further research. Could a carefully conditioned zealot manifest stronger Variations? What about a pretended accident, or torturing a subject so that, in defiance, they develop novel abilities? Established conspiracies may attempt to manipulate Origins in this way, and the latest generation of Deviants may share stories of the strange, excruciating psychological experiments that followed.

Conspiracy literature identifies five major Origins, with formal and informal designations. They are:

- **Autourgics:** The **Elect** wholeheartedly wish to be Remade, to satisfy a sincere personal desire or some ideologically-driven urge. They may not know what they will become, exactly, but understand they will break the confines of human nature and welcome it. They tend to manifest Overt Variations, and often remain deeply entangled in the conspiracy that makes them. In fact, many are senior conspirators themselves, and in a few cases, are their own Progenitors.

Most of the Elect are Devoted — they get what they wanted, even if it comes with a certain degree of trauma. Renegades are usually those who chafe against conspiracy control, or who discover that post-humanity isn't what they believed it would be. Autorgic Renegades are rare, enough so that some other Renegades do not trust them, fearing they might be spies and infiltrators sent by the conspiracy.

- **Epimorphs:** With threats and promises, conspiracies convince **Volunteers** to become Remade. Where the Elect seek transformation for its own sake, Epimorphs agree to it to pursue some secondary goal: money, freedom, or safety for loved ones. Many Volunteers are lied to about what will happen to them, or are desperate enough not to care about the details of a drug study or a mandatory journey to some weird, remote locale. Epimorphs are often Devoted, though not always sincerely so, hunting Renegades for pay and perks. Their tales of Divergence often involve developing deep ties to the conspiracy, and even if they go Renegade, they must deal with the connections they establish from fellow workers, caregivers, and other connections. Volunteers tend to display Subtle Variations.

- **Exomorphs:** Remade intentionally, but against their will, the **Unwilling** usually turn Renegade whenever a safe opportunity presents itself. Conspiracies treat Exomorphs with utter contempt or the grim pity one feels for an enemy who never wanted to be where they are, but who must be put down, nonetheless. Unwilling may be kidnapped, threatened, incapacitated, or even secretly exposed to the means of transformation. At some point, each of them realizes Divergence is taking place, but is unable to escape it. Exomorphs manifest Overt Variations. This may be due to the conspiracy's callousness promoting bolder action, or it may be that Unwilling antipathy leaves Scars. In many ways the archetypal Renegades, they tend to be especially driven to destroy conspiracies, and prevent anyone else from suffering as they did.

- **Genotypal** Deviants owe their conditions to their parents, the circumstances of birth or conception, or some legacy buried within their ancestries. Some of the **Born** always know they are special, and are either the children of Remade, or possess some recessive trait or lineal quality that designates them as "the One Who Will Arise," or some other ominous figure prophesized by science or tradition. In other cases, such origins are kept hidden by parents, or even arrive out of the blue, the result of a long-dead Progenitor's experiments on an ancestor. Genotypal Remade often discover their Variations in adolescence, though this isn't always the case, as a critical trigger might come earlier or later. These circumstances lead to many types of Variations, and a wide variety of attitudes about the conspiracy, where some might be "nobility," and others may have been taken away by caregivers, given new names, and hidden away.

- **Pathological** Deviants are victims of pure circumstance. These **Accidents** opened a strange machine, fell into a pool of otherworldly energy, or unintentionally encountered something so deeply Other that changed them forever. Pathologicals have no clear Progenitors, and no common patterns link them to conspiracies. New organizations might form because of a Pathological's accident, as the curious and ambitious band together, or dormant sects may awaken from minimal activity because the Deviant satisfied a certain prophecy, or activated *that* machine.

**[BEGIN DIAGRAM. WHILE I HAVE LAID THIS OUT AS A SINGLE TAB
TABLE IT SHOULD HAVE LINES GOING BETWEEN EACH ORIGIN WITH
ARROWS—ONE ARROW TO AND FROM EACH TO EACH A LA A COTERIE
DIAGRAM. MEANWHILE, THE ARROW HAS TEXT PARTWAY THROUGH**

WHICH IS THE STEREOTYPE CARRIED BY THE ORIGIN IT IS COMING FROM, TO THE ORIGIN IT IS POINTING TO. THIS STEREOTYPES WILL IMMEDIATELY FOLLOW HERE, AND SHOULD BE INSERTED AS NOTED. FOR MORE INFORMATION, AS DAVE BROOKSHAW.]

Origin Conviction **Loyalty**

Overt Unwilling **Elect**

Accidental

Covert Born **Volunteer**

[NOW THE STEREOTYPE LISTINGS TO GO WITH THOSE ARROWS. NOT FOR INLINE PRINT!!!! THEY GO IN THE DIAGRAM!!!!]

Accidental Stereotypes About:

Born: I could have used a lifetime to cope.

Elect: What do you mean, “on purpose?”

Unwilling: I’m so sorry.

Volunteer: Doesn’t sound like free will to me.

Born Stereotypes

Accidental: First, accept that it isn’t going away.

Elect: Always someone trying to get into the family.

Unwilling: Those who’ve lived it can show you the way.

Volunteer: More than you bargained for, but a lifetime to understand.

Elect Stereotypes

Accidental: Learn what you are, then act.

Born: Don’t take what you’ve got for granted.

Unwilling: Half your pain is in resisting your gifts.

Volunteer: Maybe I should have got paid too.

Unwilling Stereotypes

Accidental: I’m so sorry.

Born: You show me survival is possible.

Elect: Earn my trust. It won’t be easy.

Volunteer: Was it worth it?

Volunteer Stereotypes

Accidental: You deserved better. I mean literally, like a payout.

Born: It’s not who you are, it’s what sacrifices you’ll make, and why.

Elect: You were swindled.

Unwilling: Unfair. Get what's coming to you, with interest.

[END OF STEREOTYPES TO BE INSERTED INTO DIAGRAMS AS NOTED]

[END OF DIAGRAM]

Autourgics: The Elect

Be careful what you wish for.

You're self-made — almost. You looked upon yourself and saw something unfinished. Flesh of clay, too malleable for an incorruptible self. Maybe this transhuman poetry ensnared you, but it's entirely possible you came to be Remade with eyes half-open, with scientifically structured aspirations. Four genetic letters, cybernetic schematics, or weird alchemical formulae danced in your head. Instead of a personal vision, you might have joined the Elect to further a cause: a war to win, a peace to keep, a people to liberate, or destroy. Revenge is a common, potent motive too, and especially good at blinding you to the consequences of being Remade.

In any event, you quested for the power to bond these dreams to your flesh. You sought out your Progenitor. You *wanted* to be Remade — they didn't need to ask. You might have felt fear, but never reluctance. Your Progenitor was eager to help; in the literature of established conspiracies, Autourgics like you, with a strong will to change yourself, bear the torment of Divergence well enough to support truly novel Variations.

Look at what you are now. Look at what you *wanted*.

Nicknames: elective, seeker

Beginnings and Divergences: Consider these origins.

It's our central nervous system that fails us in the end. That's what she thought, after the last novel tryptamine, after she hung from hooks on an ancient oak in a mythic ordeal of her own design, after fucking and debating and drunkenness. After meditation that brought her to a place of gray light, but not as far as that final bliss. She could go no further than her neurons would allow. After all, the "speed of thought" is less than 300 miles per hour. Senses are fragile, the capacity to process their input is weak. But she recognized the quiet ones, the note-takers, from the circles of extreme experiences she moved in. They had means, but no direction, while she knew the exact shape of her perceptual limits. She guided them while they cut, injected, chanted in Tibetan and muttered about stem cells and "psychic capacity." She awoke. She saw the world with better eyes. It was so *ugly*.

Strength — she wanted it more than anything. She worked as hard as anyone else at the gym and on the base's obstacle courses, but hit a wall. Lactic acid in her muscles burned, but her course times never budged past a certain point. She couldn't lift any more, though she wasn't deficient by any standards but her own. She was a crack shot and good with a knife. She earned rank, patches, and eventually, a place in a unit with no patches or uniforms, where she trained to inflict quiet, efficient death on those her country was ashamed to admit they were killing — and where she was third-best, and hated it. But in the deep military, where even nation states are only vaguely present, there's always another, more elite unit. She deciphered their communications, killed their sentries and volunteered. "I'm here for the Invasive protocol," she said. "Give it to me." They made her strong — so strong. So weak, too, when they revealed she was nothing more than a specialized drone, guided by wire to incomprehensible missions. But she was never

afraid of pain. She knew how to work the knife, and dig out the chip. Now she's strong on her own terms.

Nowadays, he appreciates mad science clichés. They really did call him a crackpot, and it really did drive him further from orthodoxy. His interest in psychic research started innocently enough, by analyzing experiments conducted according to the best protocols, whose results nevertheless defied replication. He broke them down and accounted for every conventional bias, until all that was left was desire, tapping into some unknown force. He isolated it, seeking funding from rich eccentrics, and aid from a surprisingly large network of scientists interested in just this sort of thing. None of his allies would go public and risk their reputations, so he was disgraced alone. That sense of isolation firmed his resolve to build the Coactive Device without bothering with normal safety protocols, and use it on himself—he would either kill himself, or prove them wrong. But after the Device's energies changed him, connected him to a vast noetic matrix of thought, he knew his assistants had been guiding him to this breakthrough. He was not the first — just the first to live with the pain.

Going Renegade: Autourgics usually discover the gulf between their aspirations and the reality of their situation immediately. Without well-defined goals, they never would have become Remade. On the other hand, they're often willing to endure great sacrifices for the sake of attaining a "more than human" state, and may serve their conspiracies until it becomes clear that the Remade state doesn't match their aspirations, and its capabilities don't compensate for being controlled.

Most Elect don't take that last step. Divergence may add unanticipated pain to the power they've gained but it *is* power — abilities ordinary people said were impossible to achieve, and foolish to pursue. Thus, most of them are Devoted to their conspiracies. In many cases, they believe themselves to be a conspiracy's master, not its servant, but even though they might be called "the Prime Experiment" or "Prophesied One," they remain ensnared by whatever duties the conspiracy chains them with.

Origin Factor: Autourgics benefit from their strong motivation to become Remade, and gain one Scar-free Magnitude of an Overt Variation. Their desires ensnare them with an extra dot of Loyalty, however. They may feel lingering, even involuntary bonds with those crucial to their transformations, or increased spite toward those who stymied their wills to power.

Character Concepts: self-experimenting scientist, elite athlete, spiritual seeker, transhuman ideologue, patriotic volunteer

Epimorphs: The Volunteers

I thought I knew what I wanted, but I don't anymore. I only know it wasn't this.

Down on your luck. Bored, Desperate. Willing, though not entirely wanting. Conspiracies call people like you "Epimorphs," because even though you don't have an urge to be Remade, your neediness provides fertile soil for whatever they want to grow — or graft, splice, or inject. The method matters less than the psychic factor you present, which might also be imagined as a certain hollowness. That emptiness drove you to accept Divergence, to ask fewer questions than you should have, and subordinate yourself to the conspiracy's needs.

Whether you think about this potential as emptiness or new, raw earth, its origins aren't so poetic. You might have volunteered because of deep debt — your own, or a that of someone you

love. On the flipside, you might be greedy, willing to “join the program” and take its six-figure salary. Conspiracies take Epimorphs from prisons, setting themselves up as ways to reduce convicts’ sentences. (Of course, this arrangement might produce the Unwilling as well, depending on the degree of coercion.) You might be an ex-con unable to find a job, and the conspiracy’s willing to ignore your record. You might have medical bills, gambling debts, a sick friend or relative the conspiracy can cure. You might have hit a dead end, where your personal dreams seem dead, and becoming Remade, while not what you wanted, is a way to begin again. Unlike Autourgics, Divergence isn’t your goal, but what you’re willing to do to renew yourself — or fill that hole in your life.

Nicknames: volunteer, mark (both as in “Mark X,” of an experimental type, and a “mark” in the sense of the victim of a deception.)

Beginnings and Divergences: Who’d be classified as an Epimorph?

Him. He was going to get cancer by his 40s. That’s how his father went out, and how his father’s father died. He made his money early, motivated by early death, but spent it fast, going to specialists who might help him cheat it. The last one ran his genome and showed him the code that would kill him, but told him there was a way to beat it — maybe. She saw him reach for his checkbook and assured him it wouldn’t cost a dime, but he’d have to fill out numerous, complex forms. He didn’t even wait for his lawyer before he signed the form forbidding him from talking to one. Over the next few weeks, he endured the surgeries and injections, the pulsing new organs and masked doctors muttering about “chimeric horizontal gene transfer.” He healed in a haze of drugs, over hours he thought were days. But the new flesh, taken and delicately modified from its animal origins, helps him cast off injury and toxins fast. He’ll never get cancer now. That was a human thing.

Another Volunteer never had the kind of money that would open the door to elite labs. He rode that edge where you couldn’t technically call him homeless. He mostly couch-surfed, and when he couldn’t find a place to stay, relied on meth and willpower to avoid sleeping at all. He was blessed with exceptional intuition. He always knew when a deal would turn bad, or when the cops would come knocking. Eventually, he parleyed it into a career as a psychic, combining his gift with a hustler’s patter. Every dollar went back to meth and gambling debts — his gift tempted him to play, but sometimes he was too high to listen to it. Bookies shook him down, but he knew where he could sell his blood, and wouldn’t you know, one of the technicians there was an old client — one he helped with his real intuitive abilities. The man took him aside, noted his shitty teeth and yellow eyes, and said there’d be a way to leave that all behind. People — an “esoteric society” — would pay him to use his gift, even help him develop it. He used to make up mumbo jumbo, but when the society put him in the circle and chanted, even though they told him it was “psychodrama” to help him build his “cephalist” abilities, he knew they were deadly serious — and they controlled the Presence he felt during the rite. It still watches him, even now.

She got Remade for the bonus. She knew they’d never give her tenure, and student loans pushed her from archeologist to thief, specializing in artifacts demanded by a select circle of collectors. Nobody else wanted to enter the site; after a fellow educated thief never came out of the pit, they offered her a year’s income to follow. She descended, and found the thing: an ancient design, rendered in anachronistic steel, slick with the blue oil it was submerged in. As she climbed back, agony gripped her limbs. She looked in a mirror and screamed at the alien face that greeted her.

“Mutation,” said her contact. They knew it was going to happen. She didn’t stick around for the next offer.

Going Renegade: Few Epimorphs really know what they’re getting into. They volunteered to seal up the holes in their lives, and even if they were told about the changes and sacrifices due, couldn’t anticipate the reality of being Remade, from its physical and psychological demands to the costs imposed by the conspiracies that took them. Some of them rationalize terrible scars and callous demands as the price of doing business, or volunteered for reasons so pressing that any pain is worth it. They stay Devoted.

Epimorphs who rebel see these arrangements as exploitative, no matter what they got in return. At the very least, they know they deserve to be treated with basic dignity. For some, it takes the pain of Divergence to force them to value their own lives. Sometimes they lose everything volunteering won them. They blow their money escaping, or turn their backs on loved ones they wanted to help. Sometimes these factors provide further complications. The conspiracy knows all about the Volunteer’s debtors, and uses them as catspaws, or holds family members hostage.

Origin Factor: Volunteers sought out Divergence, though they didn’t always know their actions would lead to it. Nevertheless, their needs defined why they changed, and those connections linger, giving them an extra dot of Loyalty. That proactive drive also provides one Scar-free Magnitude of a Subtle Variation, as part of them braced for the consequences of their actions.

Character Concepts: super-soldier, street hustler, executive, gambler

Exomorphs: The Unwilling

You had no right.

Strapped in. Injected. Trapped. None of the Remade transform easily, but they changed you against your will. Everyone reacts differently to an experience like that, but it’s never something to shrug off. At the very least, it offends your sense of justice and free will. The conspiracy, and your Progenitors, devise all kinds of lies to rationalize it. Maybe you were slated for death, by the state, criminals or some rival conspiracy, and they say that by saving you in any form they have the right to do whatever they want. Maybe they frame it as punishment for a crime, or a chance to redeem yourself. Maybe they appeal to progress — by taking you, they can help others with cures, technologies, or progress toward some esoteric goal.

Go Renegade. Know that they’re lies, even if the conspiracy believes in them. Especially if they believe in them. Beneath ideologies and rationalizations, it’s about what people do to each other. They’ve wronged you.

But remember: Divergence gives you power. You’re not always sure what that power is, because the conspiracy rarely cared if you knew what they were doing to you. And no matter what they tell you, the power is yours, despite any Scars, and despite how it was given to you.

Nicknames: unwilling, donee (a genteel term used by conspiracies)

Beginnings and Divergences: The stories of three Renegades illustrate what it’s like to be one of the Unwilling.

He was an expert in multiple fields, but not the fields they grant PhDs in. Working with precision manufacturing equipment, biohazards and volatile chemicals required detailed training and honed instincts — things the facility’s “brains” ignored with a single keystroke up in their

offices, while he was exposed on the production floor. Machines rumbled. Substances hissed. He screamed. When he woke up, he wasn't in a hospital, but another wing of the building. So much of him was missing. Through their masks, people he'd never seen assured him they could fix him with "invasive protocols." He realized there was no way it had been an accident — and the smells and feel of his new parts? He knew them from the floor. The adaptive materials of his new flesh, part tissue and part machine, could never have existed without his work. It all belongs to him — and now he's out, he needs to make careful plans for his return, to take it all back.

She had every reason to believe it was the end. She'd killed a lot of people for the Family, to the point where their faces merged into a brutal caricature. Just that sort of face belonged to the man who put a bullet in her leg. The other syndicates had pooled their money to hire him. He laughed about it, because he was going to double even that. "Nobody'll know I didn't make the hit," he said, "because they promised nobody would ever recognize you." Two women came in. One produced the needle. After that came the Blue Room, and a body like quicksilver, atoms malleable and swift, though they could never remake her old face. An "effect of the mutating presence," they said, as if it made sense. They said they owned her now, as if it made sense, too. At least she understood why she'd been picked, beyond the ease of faking her death. They wanted a weapon; she obliged, until she realized the "benefactors" weren't as all-seeing as they pretended.

They called him "Moonchild:" something out of the family's old religion, repurposed for affection. They weren't observant, and he'd only flipped through the books and their strange symbols, since he couldn't read the words. It influenced his art, however, as he added the spirals and seal images to his paintings. The night his family saw his show was the last he saw of them. He was only 16. After they vanished, family debt claimed everything — then unfamiliar relatives claimed him, saying he was "owed" (not owed, *was owed*, like an asset) to the family and the faith, which were the same. Strong cousins dragged him to the altar, and its familiar designs, and they bled him a long time, until he saw the auras he painted. When he met other Renegades, they called it "a Coactive Divergence," but he just took solace in wings of smokeless flame, propelling him to safety. But the family, the faith, was bigger than he dreamed. They're still looking for him.

Going Renegade: A lucky few Exomorphs escape the conspiracy almost immediately after being remade. This usually happens when their Progenitors see their work as the fulfilment of some prophecy where the act of Divergence is success enough, or when they believe that somehow, the Unwilling will be grateful. Most conspiracies harbor no such illusions. They confine their subjects to remote labs, estates and ritual spaces, or let them loose with strict controls in place. They might hold family and loved ones as hostages, implant tracking devices, or send along a team of monitors.

Devoted follow the rules and get used to the routines they impose. Many become dispirited, but few possess true loyalty. Renegades would be the majority, if enough of them survived rebellion.

Origin Factor: The Unwilling gain one Scar-free Magnitude of an Overt Variation — power from a less than cautious Divergence, and the anger that accompanies how it was done. Exomorphs also start with an extra dot of Conviction, in defiance of what their conspiracy did to them.

Character Concepts: street kid, fugitive, gangster, industrial worker

Genotypals: The Born

I knew. There were no words in the beginning, but I always knew.

Did they know? Your parents? The doctors? The priests? That affects how you were treated. Some families might have hidden you, so you either moved constantly and learned to use a new name whenever you did, or you grew up in isolation, staring at cabin or basement walls. Others treated you as nobility or a messiah, tempering discipline with worship. You weren't so much raised as trained for your role.

Not everyone Remade in the womb (or in some stranger pre-birth environment) enjoyed family ties. You might have been raised by scientists or monks, revered or treated as an experiment. If you were lucky, they gave you a name instead of a title or number. In most cases, you couldn't help but develop a bond with whoever raised you, even if it conflicted with how you should feel, because of how they treated you. This doesn't necessarily impose lingering affection. Fury burns away unwanted attachments.

Nicknames: born, germlines

Beginnings and Divergences: Three Remade and their heritages may have elements that speak to you.

She was born into flickering hospital fluorescence like so many others, but this was no hospital, and she knew no other illumination until she escaped. Life was all corridors with rails, recycled air, and white walls, yellowing like old teeth as she grew up. They didn't give her a name until she killed one of the staff for finding her makeshift cloth doll. The power cracked the tiled floor and burst the lights; they bricked up that wing and gave her a new room. It was an accident; she was angry. After that, staff brought her clothes and colored pencils and construction paper, showed her old movies and told her their names. She never killed anyone who wore hospital scrubs again, but they made her practice on animals, then sick-looking people who didn't speak her language. Her power crackled up, red deeper than fire, and they broke. She didn't have enough empathy for them, until the other girl came. People in suits and armor and guns put them in a room together. The girl could speak without speaking. She told her things she heard in the others' heads: "Exposing the coactive and cephalist candidates is the next logical step." And together, they noticed the armed people and the once-people in charge were *not* wearing hospital scrubs.

He grew up wandering the old corridors of a doddering great estate, one whose residents had forgotten about more rooms than they inhabited. There was gray light within, and gray outside, among misty wood and coast. Townspeople brought what the family needed, and volunteered a few of their own as servants. He knew it was a dated custom from television and the internet, both supplied via an antenna cluster installed once he'd exhausted the library — one smaller than it looked, since so many books had rotted. That's how he discovered his diet of live, hunted flesh was unusual. By the time he was grown, they had to restock the woods with deer. He ate, and studied, and grew stronger, and hungrier. As for his parents, one father never spoke to him, and the other cleaned his face of blood and comforted him, but never smiled. They knew how hungry he'd become. The day he stalked the one who'd raised him, he wept the whole time, but the compulsion was too strong. And when he cornered the father who loved him, his other father arrived from behind, and before locking the door on both, said his first and only words: "There are worse things than you in this world."

Their Mom and Dad knew how to do a little of everything, and their child learned fast enough to keep up. To be a new person, one had to pick up new skills and habits. They learned how to answer to a new name as if they'd been born with it, and even though masquerading as a boy or girl never captured who they really were, they pretended to be whatever their parents asked. The trick was to never be too clever, to know a lot but not so much of anything that anyone would pay attention to them. "You've got to lose your fair share," Dad said, and he was right, because otherwise, there were a few things they would always win at. Always. They saw the puppet strings on people, and knew you could pluck them with words, gestures — even a well-timed glance. That's how they ended their first fight; when one of their bullies couldn't explain why he'd crushed the other's windpipe, it was time to leave town, get new names, and learn new things. By their teenage years, they could recognize the sturdy cars tailing them, and people who tried to hard not to notice them. When the conspiracy closed in, and Mom and Dad vanished into black truck, they decided to get very unfair indeed.

Going Renegade: Becoming a Renegade might have meant rejecting family, or escaping a strange lifelong environment — and dealing with the world everyone else knows, and you don't. Their Variations and Scars mean something special, as they either grew up with them, or treated their manifestations as life stages. Genotypals are more likely to manifest their Scars and Variations in childhood. Young Renegades tend to leave... messily. They destroy facilities and hurt people. And their close ties to Progenitors and conspirators works both ways. They're hunted by vengeful parents and minders determined to recover the project of a generation. Born Devoted keep these family ties, and stand among the Renegades' most driven enemies.

Origin Factor: Genotypals' bodies and minds adapted to their states from birth, so they gain one Scar-free Magnitude of a Subtle Variation. The Born gain an extra dot of Conviction, won in the effort to assert themselves in the face of lifelong control.

Character Concepts: cult messiah, escaped experiment, identity thief, student

Pathologicals: The Accidents

My eyes were never meant to be opened, but I see it. I see you.

Responsibility. The conspiracy will say anything to pass it on to you. They might call it "unknown potential." They accuse you of trespassing, opening their machines, being in the wrong place at the wrong time. They didn't mean to make you what you are, but now they want to own you, though they might frame it as medical care, a job, compensation with strings attached. Your Progenitor never meant to Remake you, and may not even know how it you came to be, though they're hardly blameless — they opened doors to dangerous forces with little regard for the consequences. And if you really did do it to yourself? Your experiment is their path to power.

You sense their urge to confine and control you, but you know that beneath their confidence and titles and resources, there's fear. They don't exactly know what you're capable of, or what you *know* you're capable of. They might send people to test you by attacking you and the people you care about, or they might recruit people close to you to observe your behavior, and watch for your growing abilities.

Nicknames: accidents, unfortunates

Beginnings and Divergences: Anyone can become a Pathological. The following stories represent only a fraction of the ways in which you might be accidentally Remade.

In sarcastic moments, she thinks the worst thing about her Divergence was the embarrassment. She was a very, very good thief, and should have known about the complications of stealing from such a wealthy mark. She carefully researched him, tracking his auction purchases and the people with losing bids, who'd be eager for another chance to get the artifacts. Defeating his security was easy enough, and she knew the layout, including the location of walk-in vault, unusual for a private citizen. It was open. The hospital bed stood inside, the most valuable item atop its disturbed sheets. She grabbed it immediately, before seeing the layer of fine ash coating the walls — and she burned. But she had a will the target, the victim, never had. She contained the fire, locking its coactive energies in her heart, but not before burning the rest of the mansion down. The police investigating the fire are trying too hard, and know too much. They're on her heels, and she *never* leaves evidence at the scene.

She was the one you went to whenever you needed something fixed. Mechanical, electronic — it didn't matter. She always had the parts, hoarded in bins. Her stash came from recycling centers, junkyards, and the occasional unattended loading dock. A friend told her about a lab clearing out its equipment, and after she cut open the fence, she found a treasure trove: a weird mix of vacuum tubes and next-generation circuit boards. She climbed inside something that looked like a weird MRI machine and pried a panel open, but there were no magnetic coils. There were stones, and symbols that twisted when she looked at them. She ran, and when the nausea and bleeding hit the next day, she suspected radiation poisoning. But she knew when she was being followed, using the same intuition that had helped her evade a hundred junkyard guards — and more. She saw their faces, and in their eyes, she saw her image, from an old picture. Maybe the sickness will never stop, but she's looking for her face in other people's minds now, and seeing where they go, and hearing-but-not the phrase “cephalist awakening.”

“You can't teach an old god new tricks.” Her boyfriend, that smug asshole, was basically right, though he didn't mean to do anything more than denigrate her interest in esoterica. It was an obscure stone circle, a long-fallow field in England where the roads had withered and died before cars existed. You needed to hike to get there. Old men had said people once pricked their thumbs and made wishes over these squat, knee-high rocks. The old men died, but anthropologists kept the tapes of their stories, and she listened to them. Her boyfriend was tired from the hike, angry and hungry. When the local gang came out of a stand of trees, he decided to shout and shove, and one of them pushed back. A trip, and his head dashed against the stone, so much more blood than from a pricked thumb, and she wanted to kill them, and the old god had no sense of context, she guessed. Someone had pulled some magic lever hard, and the wish must have been granted like the twitch of a muscle, and she killed them all, so easily. But they keep coming, those people from the stone circle: cousins and scientists and robed madwomen, and some are as fast and lethal as her.

Going Renegade: Accidental Remade are almost always Renegade by default. No conspiracy expects them, and some of them form only after the Divergence, when they become aware of the Pathological. This doesn't mean every one of them approaches the Renegade life with conviction. They're among the Remade most likely to isolate themselves in remote wild places and urban wastelands. They need solitude to protect themselves from the conspiracy and explore their Variations.

Confused by unguided Divergences, some Pathologicals surrender to conspiracies immediately. Seeking guidance and protection, they make desperate deals and soon find themselves among the Devoted. The longer they're in, the more they realize that their own, initial fear and confusion set the conspiracy's trap for them. Self-hatred is common.

Origin Factor: Due to their diverse histories, Pathologicals gain one Scar-free Magnitude of any Variation (Subtle or Overt) and an additional dot of either Loyalty or Conviction. However, as no precautions were taken to help them withstand their Divergence, they begin the chronicle with one additional medium Instability (p. XX).

Character Concepts: homemaker, maintenance worker, security guard, lab technician, thief

Clades

Origins are how you went into the Divergence; Clades are how you broke. Which of the five Clades a Deviant belongs to depends on how her mind and body adapted to the process that fractured her soul.

While individuals within each Clade transformed along similar pathways, every one of them is unique and carried specific variances into their transformation. The Divergence brought the inevitable conclusion that the human subject would be altered into something inherently inhuman, either through dying or breaking and accepting becoming one of the Remade. While the outcome was unavoidable, the specifics were never certain. Despite any similarities that may exist in appearance, function, or powers of Broken within the same Clade, every transformed is unique. Each survived the Divergence in their own way and came into their Variations and Scars as individuals. No one within a Clade need have consistency or predictability with their peers.

Every Deviant has three **Adaptations** — two as a function of their Clade, plus Stubborn Resolve (p. XX), which is universal to all Remade. However dissimilar various Broken are, the Adaptations denote shared experience in surviving the horrors. For some Remade, the fact that others share their Adaptations is the only comfort they have in knowing they're not alone.

Cephalists: The minds of these *Psychics* lashed out at the trauma of their Divergence, reshaping themselves as their souls cracked and giving them power over the world through sheer mental will, beyond anything a Baseline would understand.

Chimerics: Also known as *Hybrids*, these Remade combine human and foreign species to try and gain the best of both worlds. Hybrids may incorporate animal organs, plant genes, hastily attached limbs, or play host to voracious pathogens and parasites to merge human and other and see what results.

Coactives: The *Infused* blend the intangible with the solidity of human flesh. The precise power bound to the Broken that shattered her soul could be nearly anything. One harnesses deadly levels of electricity or radiation while another channels angelic light or demonic darkness. The intangible source is irrelevant to belonging to this Clade, only that the human controls it.

Invasives: The *Cyborgs* gained power as their flesh grew around invasive, inanimate matter, taking it in and incorporating it to be one with the human. Some Invasives benefit from shiny technological marvels, while others make do with tarnished jury-rigged devices, but gadgets aren't the sole province of this Clade. Magical artifacts, alien devices, and other exotic materials bonded with human meat also mark Invasives.

Mutants: Something in the genome of the *Grotesques* rebelled at the horror of the Divergence, rejecting whatever was trying to force change by responding with a change of their own. As the Mutant's soul cracks, his body becomes something more, something with the ability to refuse the alternative insult to his flesh.

Classifying the Unclassifiable

Conspiracies focus on Clades because it gives some predictability to the Divergence, but this is far from perfect. It may be somewhat logical to think that slicing open a subject and surgically implanting mechanical parts produces an Invasive, but the victim's body may reject the cold metal and latch onto the warm electricity inside the machines, becoming Coactive, instead. Or some quirk of genetics may force her body to violently destroy the foreign substances and rewire her Mutant physiology to be inimical to all machines. The stimulus of the Divergence is impersonal, while the response of Clade is nothing but personal.

Clades are not truly random, as statistical clusters do exist. The individual subject is important but not the only factor. Divergences appear to follow certain trends based on the events that brought about the rupture of a Broken's soul. As an example, overcharging energy supplies — even with ephemeral energies poorly understood by science — while performing procedures may help skew results towards producing Coactives. Implanting living biological material is best-suited to achieving a Chimeric result, just as grafting machines to human flesh most often gives an Invasive, when it delivers anything at all.

Progenitors who work under controlled conditions tend to have some level of repeatability to their methods, or at least try to limit the variables as much as possible to channel the results down the pathway they desire. To help deliver the control they so desperately crave, conspiracies specializing in producing certain Clades may use psychological profiling and genetic screening to identify those subjects with similar characteristics to what has previously yielded favorable results. What worked to make one subject of given background and health characteristics may work on another.

Despite these efforts, the Divergence is more art than science and any method can just as easily result in psychic Cephalists or genetic Mutants, instead. Overall, Progenitors know every population has its outliers and statistical anomalies. Sometimes, accidents just happen. Ignorant bystanders or isolated observers in the right place at the right time can undergo the Divergence as readily as carefully prepared subjects. In the end, which Clade a Deviant joins depends largely on the physical, mental, and spiritual state of the transformed herself.

Cephalists: The Psychics

My will over all.

Cephalists embody the supremacy of human will over the world. Their mental faculties are open to possibilities — and terrors — that Baseline humans will never experience. Conspiracies crave Cephalists for their unique ability to apply themselves with a focus other Deviants can't match. Many Psychics find some kind of home within the conspiracies, and not always at the bottom of the pile. The transformed can never forget they are tools to achieve the conspiracy's goals, but among the Broken, Devoted Cephalists are among those who most frequently climb the ranks and achieve power — and inflict the misery they avoid on their own kind. This perceived betrayal draws the ire of many Renegade Psychics whom the conspiracies would force into

service. Being enslaved by their own only inflames the fires of hatred and their drive for revenge, and makes the traitors targets for the Renegade's own focused power.

Mental Supremacy

Cephalists are the dominance of the human mind in controlling the world. Where other Deviants adapted to the trauma of Divergence, accepting and incorporating whatever the Progenitor did to the character, each Cephalist refused through sheer stubborn defiance and will so powerful it fractured their soul. With this break came the power to back up the refusal, rejecting the intended changes. For many Psychics, this is a source of personal pride — proof that they were either able to thwart their Progenitor's plan or to guide the course of their Divergence, however subconsciously.

Because of this, Cephalists often project some degree of superiority over the Baselines around them, and even their fellow Broken. Though her post-Divergence existence may be no more comfortable or pleasant than any other Deviant's, the Psychic insists that she triumphed over her tormentors once, which fuels her belief that she can do so again.

This self-assurance is skin deep. A Cephalist may not admit her trauma, and she might not show visible signs of it, but the damage is nevertheless there. The rage is there. The sense of alienation from everyone is there. The fear that she might be victimized again — either by those responsible for her transformation or others who seek to dictate how she uses her powers — is always there. Whether she hates those who inflicted the Divergence upon her or desperately seeks their approval, the Psychic is not a whole person. She is a survivor, a victim of an experience, a trauma, she would not wish on anyone (well, almost anyone).

Intellectual Property

Conspiracies see Psychics as tools of control and power, particularly those whose Variations let them command others. Corporate and political conspiracies gain advantage by knowing their opponents' next move, or understanding how they'll react to the conspiracy's actions. Cult-like conspiracies use Cephalists to draw in flocks of people to donate financial and other resources. That they feel compelled to worship a being of unearthly attraction is a carefully-nurtured bonus. Loyal transformed can live a luxurious life inside the gilded cage of these conspiracies, as long as they don't start buying into their own legends.

Cephalists' power is a double-edged sword for conspiracies, who often take extra precautions to ensure they're in control of the Psychic, not the other way around. Cautious conspiracies build multiple layers of failsafes in case the Broken try to think for themselves, but Cephalists can focus their will towards a task unlike anyone else — given enough time they'll apply this advantage to picking apart obstacles designed by lesser minds.

Simple destruction is too gentle a revenge for most Cephalists. These Deviants can and will devote their focus to determining how to undermine the conspiracies agenda and turn it to their own ends. Devoted simply gloat in the knowledge that they are the spiders at the center of these webs, whereas Renegades can either take the opportunity to subvert the conspiracy under their own rule, or simply escape and try their chances on the outside.

The Cephalist Character

Many Cephalists favor Social Attributes as primary, with their Variations demonstrating a tendency towards manipulating and controlling others. This is partly why conspiracies expend

considerable resources towards acquiring Cephalists, and how these Remade thrive in such environments. Secondary Attributes are divided equally between Mental and Physical, depending on what Variations the character displays. A Psychic is just as likely to be able to mentally reinforce her strength and speed as she is to be able to boost her thinking to genius levels and calculate as quickly as a computer.

Merits: Cephalists tend to focus on Mental Merits that demonstrate the power of their minds or their success in retaining a sliver of their Baseline humanity. Bleeding Heart, Good Samaritan, Hypervigilance, Indomitable, Investigative Prodigy, Multilingual, Patient, and Shared Suffering are all common Merits. Psychics rarely have Physical Merits, and Social Merits are usually limited to those that keep the Deviant one step ahead of the conspiracies, such as Anonymity or Safe Place.

Scars: Cephalists typically manifest Scars that affect their minds, thoughts, and self-control. Scars that weaken the body at the expense of their minds are also common. Controlled Scars are commonplace, but Persistent Scars also appear frequently. Addictive Variation, Amnesia, Concentration, Hemophilia, Murderous Urge, Perilous Variation, Thin Skin, and Tribulation are common Scars.

Adaptations: *Stubborn Resolve, Focus, Iron Will* (p. XX)

[RELATIONSHIP DIAGRAM TEXT]

Cephalists→Chimerics: Do you dominate nature, or does it dominate you?

Cephalists→Coactives: We both have power, but I rely solely on myself.

Cephalists→Invasives: You're tough but all matter breaks.

Cephalists→Mutants: So, you had an allergic reaction to the Divergence, and I'm supposed to be impressed?

[END RELATIONSHIP DIAGRAM TEXT]

Chimerics: The Hybrids

Listen to your instincts.

Survival of the fittest; kill or be killed. All life follows these rules, whether plant, animal, or something in between. The amalgamation of nature's savagery with human know-how is what many conspiracies crave. Overcoming human frailties and limitations with the best nature — or things beyond nature — has to offer. Where humans have weak skin and nails, animals have claws and armored scales. Where humans die from lack of food, plants make their own nourishment from sunlight and trace elements. Evolution is too slow for Chimerics, incorporating the best of other life into themselves aiming for perfect recombination, but where perfection is elusive, they want to fail fast and move onto the next iteration.

Unfortunately for frustrated Progenitor and discarded Remade alike, the human body rejects many of nature's advantages, or assimilates them imperfectly. The most successful Hybrids discover their own ways to combine humanity with whatever else they carry. They overcome the frailties inherent in both their donors and their Divergence and achieve greatness as better than human.

Gutter Mongrels

Many Chimerics cannot help but advertise their patronage with obvious displays. Even the most precise combination of human and other tends to show traces of the source. A cat-like Chimeric may have strangely oval pupils and yellow eyes, while a Hybrid combining plant and human may have a sickly green tint to his skin. These tells are even more apparent around the transformed's Variations. Form follows function for Hybrids. Keen hearing requires oversized or strangely shaped ears. Detecting minute traces of scent needs extended nasal passages.

Chimerics also often possess twisted additions or painful conglomerations of features. Bones, muscles and joints all behave differently between humans and animals. Few are lucky enough for all their limbs and hide to be perfectly even. Scars that take the form of asymmetric limbs, with perhaps one human and one animal leg, or parts of each combined in each limb, are common. This mismatching inevitably requires uncomfortable, and sometimes painful, effort for the Broken to overcome the limitations and obtain a semblance of functionality.

Not all betray their nature so physically. Many instead exhibit the habits and behaviors of their donor species. A prey Hybrid animal may still fear its natural predators, even though the Chimeric is too large for them to be a threat. Or a cat Hybrid might exhibit a feline's standoffishness and fastidiousness. Such mismatched nature may come across as quirks, albeit strange ones, but others attract far more attention than a mere raised eyebrow would suggest.

Chimerics invariably learn to ignore their suffering when they need to, and may excel at blending in with each of their parent species — both socially and, if necessary, mentally and physically. Animals are creatures of instinct and reaction, not cool reason. Evolution engineered their brains to understand and harness their gifts, while the human brain and body must find harmony between detailed planning and unthinking action. Plants are even more remote to humanity, operating on timescales related to weather patterns and light cycles. And for those Hybrids gifted with genetics from other, stranger, sources, working out how to satisfy both halves is a constant struggle.

This war between human and inhuman keenly highlights the cost of Divergence for Chimerics. Never will they be alone with themselves, as the war between nature and nurture rages forever in their shattered souls. Understanding urges and needs is difficult enough for much of humanity. Trying to reconcile those needs with those of a myriad of genetic donors can be too much for many.

The Menagerie

Harnessing animal instinct and ability to human will is the story of human history. This is what matters to conspiracies when it comes to Chimerics, with the added advantage of having non-human abilities with human ability to reason and follow orders. This is a key hypocrisy of conspiracies exploiting Chimerics. The conspiracies benefit from the transformed's more-than-human abilities, while treating them as little more than animals.

Few Chimerics rise to positions of power within conspiracies. Conspiracies treat even the most loyal Devoted as second-class citizens, simply resources to be used and discarded if they break. Humans control animals by asserting dominance and never allowing the beast to realize its claws and fangs are more than a match for the fleshy ape. Such it is within the conspiracies. Constant reinforcement of the Chimeric's lowly status forges control. Beyond the need for control, many conspiracies do consider Chimerics to be subhuman, deserving of no better treatment than animals.

The Chimeric Character

Chimerics typically favor Physical Attributes as their primary choice, with Mental and Social Attributes being equally preferred as a secondary choice, depending on what foreign genetics are in the character's makeup.

Merits: Chimerics favor Merits that represent gifts from their inhuman donors. Physical Merits could include Fleet of Foot, Hardy, Iron Stamina, and Seizing the Edge. Likely Mental Merits are Direction Sense, Fight, Flight, Freeze, Hypervigilance, and Tolerance for Biology. Social Merits aren't usually a focus for Chimerics, but many can instinctively find a Safe Place, and their exotic genetics lend themselves well to Striking Looks. Voice of the Wild is also a common choice for Chimeric characters.

Scars: Chimeric Scars frequently manifest as physical deformities or animalistic traits and instincts that are noticeably different from human norms. Persistent Scars dominate in this Clade, reflecting permanent physiological and psychological changes. Alternate Persona, Conspicuous Appearance, Murderous Urge, Native Environment, Phobia, Relentless Variation, and Thin Skin are all common among Chimerics.

Adaptations: *Stubborn Resolve, Untamed, Adrenaline Surge* (p. XX)

[BEGIN RELATIONSHIP DIAGRAM TEXT]

Chimerics→Cephalists: Human thought is such a limited experience.

Chimerics→Coactives: What whispers to you at night?

Chimerics→Invasives: We both know what it is to have alien within.

Chimerics→Mutants: You adapt, we endure.

[END RELATIONSHIP DIAGRAM TEXT]

Coactives: The Infused

Power of the unseen.

Everything is energy, if you look closely enough. On the smallest level, matter is just vibrating strings of energy given solid form. This physicality traps energy for the briefest of moments before it escapes once again. This applies whether the energy is something within human understanding or not. The binding of the soul to crude flesh to empower life counts as energy beyond scientific knowledge. Energy can be neither created nor destroyed. It can only transform from one state to another, but this doesn't explain magic that creates fire or lightning from nothingness, or how ephemeral 'Essence' forms from the resonance of something simply existing. Coactive Deviants can come from the human surrendering to the power and accepting any of these energies, or those even more esoteric and unknown—possibly even unknowable. The energy source doesn't matter to the Clade, what matters is that the Infused burn with the power of the universe, that sears flesh and bone in its need to explode into the world.

Much like energy, Coactives weren't destroyed by their Divergence, but were transformed into something else. When exposed to the source of her future power, the Broken didn't burn and die like other humans would; instead something inside her reached out and embraced it, welcomed it, and harnessed it for her own use. The effort cracked her soul, but surely this was a small price to pay for what replaced it?

Burning Brightest

To be Coactive is to feel bursting with potential. The power inside them may be something known to science, a product of the truths underlying strange, inhuman realms, or follow principles beyond human understanding, but every cell within the transformed's body resonates with it. The Infused constantly know their immense power yearns to be free, to change the world through its action. The transformed must beware, though, for the greatest consequence is usually the emptiness and regret she quickly feels after such release.

Coactives learn to release the power in somewhat controlled bursts, lest it burn their flesh and boil away their blood on its outward trajectory. The power doesn't want to be restrained, and it doesn't want to be slowly vented like a pressure valve. It wants all or nothing, and the Coactive who gives into what her power wants can reshape or destroy the world, but may destroy herself in the process.

This forms the quandary of the Coactive's existence. Her energies always want to flow and move. Overfilled reserves of mundane power want to explode outwards, and surly ethereal beings cooped by the Infused to borrow and channel their powers are most belligerent and impossible to drown out when energized. The Coactive's existence is a study of contradictions. She constantly wants to revel in her power but knows the pain that comes with her greatest displays. When she uses her power, she craves more despite the agony. Her broken soul needs the energy to feel whole, even if just for a while.

Harnessed Power

Conspiracies want Coactives the same way nations want nuclear deterrents. By having the biggest, most powerful, and most destructive weapons, they can keep their enemies at bay — for a time, at least.

The human body can only store energy by consuming and processing food. Everyone knows this. Also, by any strictly mundane scientific measure, vibes and other such energies don't exist. The conspiracies know better. They know that humans are the best instruments for detecting, studying, and storing impossible energies. They also know that the right Remade can harness incredible reserves of normal energy, in amounts that would injure or kill a normal being. The conspiracies don't know the exact paths or reasons that the human body can be adapted in these ways, but they are very interested in finding out. Harnessing, controlling, and projecting such power is humanity's future, and the conspiracies are determined to be at the forefront of this future.

The Coactive Character

Coactives embody the irresistible lure of humans to power, like moths to the flame. The Coactive character often has Social Attributes as primary, to better talk his way out of trouble. This is especially true for those Broken who have difficulty controlling their powers.

Merits: Coactives prefer Mental and Social Merits. Physical Merits are rarer, though destructive Merits such as Demolisher are suitable, as are those that represent the Deviant's supercharged body, such as Fleet of Foot. Mentally, her awareness of the flow of energy lends itself well to Area of Expertise or Direction Sense. The Coactive's energetic allure make networking Social Merits such as Allies, Contacts, Fast-Talking, and Status common, while their volatility reinforces Air of Menace and Armed and Extremely Dangerous. Stabilizer is an often critical Supernatural Merit for Infused.

Scars: Coactives typically exhibit Scars related to energy, self-control, or lack thereof. Involuntary Scars are particularly common among the Infused, although Controlled and Persistent Scars still occur with some frequency. Alternate Persona, Involuntary Stimulus, Misfortune, Perilous Variation, Power Build-Up, Power Failure, and Unstable Variation are all common in Coactives.

Adaptations: *Stubborn Resolve, Consume, Living Conduit* (p. XX)

[BEGIN RELATIONSHIP DIAGRAM TEXT]

Coactives→Cephalists: Your laser to my bonfire, both are useful.

Coactives→Chimerics: The natural world is only the smallest part of existence.

Coactives→Invasives: Doesn't that matter slow you down?

Coactives→Mutants: Flesh burns no matter its form.

[END RELATIONSHIP DIAGRAM TEXT]

Invasives: The Cyborgs

More than human.

Humanity is a tool-using species, taking advantage of other creatures from the ability to fashion and use tools. Humans have always looked to objects and devices to simplify or improve existence, or to make sense of the darkness and mysteries surrounding them. Humans wield tools to overcome obstacles, kill enemies and opponents, or display faith, ritual, and otherworldly power. Humans express their control over the world through tools.

Invasive are conduits for the tool to instead use the human. The objects, items, and substances within the cyborgs need the flesh bond to impact the world. For some cyborgs this is straightforward — a mechanical arm or leg replaces her original and functions as if it was always part of her body, perhaps with a few additional features. For other Invasives, the item is more esoteric, the function less obvious. A magic jewel can only fashion objects out of nothing when fed a steady supply of fresh blood, and where better to find this than a living subject? The mysterious liquid found beneath the ocean alters probability at random and can only be controlled by a living brain.

Optional Extras

Simply put, Invasives are the products of incorporating foreign bodies into their physical beings. These additions may be mechanical, organic, or mystical in origin, but without them the transformed is merely human. However, simply adding items to the human body is far from a sufficiently transgressive act to trigger the Divergence. Human traditions of piercings, scarification, and body modification are as old as culture; humanity has never shied away from modifying the body in the pursuit of aesthetics or function.

Once constructed, Cyborgs are forever separated from humanity. Unlike Baseline prosthetics and replacement parts, which provide a minimal function to the impaired person, Invasives subsume their foreign parts. The breaking of the Remade's soul binds the inanimate object to his flesh, forcing function as if it were an inseparable part of his body — which it now is.

This doesn't mean an Invasive can simply go back to his previous life by removing the offending additions; the Divergence bonds organic and inorganic. This doesn't stop some Invasives from

trying, as the reality of their transformation sets in and the pain becomes unbearable. Unfortunately for the Cyborgs, the alterations to their bodies are highly resistant to removal or even permanent damage and impairment. The substances themselves impart a robustness to the Broken.

To survive, Invasives must learn to live with the horror of knowing that something alien is now physically part of them. Few have the luxury of ignoring their implants and simply living their lives. All too often, their Scars carry a price of maintenance for the implant, some special procedure or condition needed to keep the unpleasant side effects at bay. Even cyborgs with easy-to-tend augmentations rarely lead the quiet life. The constant searching of the conspiracies and the rage inside the Remade call out for her to use the tools, before the tools start to use her.

Materiel Assets

[‘MATERIEL’ IS THE CORRECT SPELLING IN THE HEADING ABOVE — WE’RE RELATING THIS TO A MILITARISTIC FEEL.]

Most conspiracies hunt Invasives because they want what’s inside them. Some created the machinery bonded to the Cyborgs, while others just know it exists and want it for their own purposes. Unfortunately for Invasives, conspiracies often see the human element as an inconvenient accessory for what they really want. To the conspiracy, the human host is interchangeable, and if the Deviant won’t cooperate, they will provide a new vessel. Conspiracies generally only learn that some inanimate objects required something unique from the specific host after it is too late for the Remade they tore it from.

The materials bonded to Invasives make them a valuable resource, but the durability all Invasives share is what makes them useful tools. A loyal Cyborg can execute the conspiracy’s commands despite considerable resistance, wading through dangers and harm to achieve the mission goal. Invasives can succeed where other transformed fall short. The price of so much damage is temporary reduction of capability, so mission planners consider how much the Cyborg’s Variations need to come into play for mission success.

This ability to withstand incredible damage before stopping often makes capture of Invasives difficult. Capturing a Cyborg involves hitting hard, and hitting fast. The conspiracy looks to overwhelm the Broken’s defenses and wound her weaker human flesh, knowing whatever foreign substance is inside her will shield her from debilitating injury at the cost of its own function. Without the human, it can’t affect the world, so it works to keep the human as intact as possible. Conspiracies need to be careful to find the balance between just enough devastating violence and too much. However, conspiracies are often satisfied with their intriguing new toy even if the host dies. After all, they can (almost) always find another one to take her place.

The Invasive Character

Invasives tend towards Physical Attributes as primary. Surviving the integration of foreign objects into their body means Invasives tend to either have high or low Stamina, with few exhibiting average human endurance. High Stamina Invasives conquered the procedures, but at a cost to other areas of their physique, while those with low Stamina barely survived the process, but gained new capabilities at the cost of their health.

Merits: Some Invasives demonstrate a broad spectrum of Merits, in keeping with the Clade’s Variations. Mental Merits often grant broad utility, such as Investigative Aide, Language,

Patient, and Professional Training. Physical Merits frequently reflect the Cyborg's durability and utility with tools, such as Crack Driver, Demolisher, Hardy, Iron Stamina, and Quick Draw. Invasives prize, but often lack, Social Merits, especially ones that represent human connections who can aid them, such as Allies, Contacts, Lifeline, Mentor, and Retainer.

Scars: Invasives carry Scars related to their bodies and the procedures they endured. No particular activation method dominates here, but Scars often reflect the limits of the Cyborg's implants. Cooldown, Depletion, Involuntary Stimulus, Maintenance, Power Build-Up, Power Failure, and Subliminal Conditioning are common

Adaptations: *Stubborn Resolve, Redundancy, Overclock* (p. XX)

[BEGIN RELATIONSHIP DIAGRAM TEXT]

Invasives→Cephalists: You only get one shot, make it count.

Invasives→Chimerics: How can living material be less compatible?

Invasives→Coactives: You only took part of what was offered.

Invasives→Mutants: So malleable, so fragile.

[END RELATIONSHIP DIAGRAM TEXT]

Mutants: The Grotesques

Adapt and survive.

Every Mutant is a miracle, a statistical anomaly that, by rights, should have died as a result of the Divergence. Somehow, they didn't. Their body rejected the cybernetic implant, or transplanted organ, or infusion of exotic energy as though allergic to it. Then it went a step further, transforming into something that would never suffer another such incursion. Unfortunately, this aggressive immune response still splintered the Grotesque's soul.

The Mutant can endure almost any environment, for a time. Grotesques only rarely encounter situations that they can't adapt to overcome. If a Mutant doesn't have what it takes to thrive at that moment, she can change herself and triumph. If the Grotesque needs some advantage to save the day — or tear down a conspiracy — she will adapt and make it happen. These changes carry a cost — always a cost — but many Mutants are willing to pay this price if it advances their cause.

Welcome to the Freak-show

Mutants embody humanity's adaptability to overcome any situation, including the Divergence. Regardless of whether the Remade was willing and prepared for the transformation, something within her genome refused to obey. Her body changed to survive, developing its own way of coping, and rejecting what was on offer.

Most Progenitors agree that this surprising immunity has roots in some quirk in the Grotesque's DNA, but they argue vociferously over whether it would have occurred in the face of a different Divergence trigger. In short, no one knows with certainty whether the Mutant's genes would have reacted the same way to a nanotech injection as it did to the implantation of a unicorn's heart, or even whether the heart of a lion would have succeeded where the unicorn's heart did not. Genetics might predispose a person to mutation, but it is equally reliant on the much less

likely possibility that she is exposed to a Divergence-triggering stimulus that will unlock this potential.

Inhuman Resources

The very adaptability that refused compliance is what conspiracies want with Mutants. Every loyal Grotesque is a wildcard giving power to the conspiracy. Rivals may plan for attacks from many fronts, but they can never fully prepare for the Mutant dedicated to the conspiracy's disruption or destruction. This unpredictable power makes Renegade Mutants just as terrifying to the conspiracies they've betrayed. Even Mutants who have worked within a conspiracy for years as Devoted could return for vengeance from any direction and despite the obstacles placed in their way.

This risk and uncertainty prompts smart conspiracies to approach identified Mutants carefully. Recruiters would rather proffer the carrot than the stick, enticing the Remade to join on her own terms, and under what she at least believes is her own free will. The cost of keeping a Grotesque onside and at ease is usually far less than forcing her to comply. Among several conspiracies, Mutant assets enjoy a freedom unmatched by other Clades, and coexist with the organization as a valued freelancer or consultant rather than a slave. The main question is how long can the Mutant turn a blind eye to the treatment and propagation of other Broken in the conspiracy's clutches before her maladjusted conscience realizes the truth of her 'business partners'?

The Mutant Character

Mutants don't display any preference towards which Attributes are primary. Attribute priorities and Merit choices for Grotesques are entirely individual and based on the character's background and needs.

Merits: Mutants often choose Merits that exemplify diversity and utility. Broad Merits that provide advantages in a range of situations are common choices. Many Mutants choose Physical Merits such as Fleet of Foot or Iron Stamina. With Mental Merits, Mutants often display Hypervigilance to know what's coming. Similarly, Grotesques often favor loose social networks to keep them informed and help them out when needed; Contacts and Fast-Talking are common. Additionally, as masters of their own fate, many Mutants retain their humanity more readily than other Remade, making Bleeding Heart and Blood on My Hands common Merits.

Scars: Mutant Scars are just as varied as the Mutants themselves. While no true pattern exists, Mutants sometimes demonstrate mental or physical conditions that can often be hidden or explained away as genetic diseases. Bane, Conspicuous Appearance, Fragility, Glitch, Hemophilia, Murderous Urge, and Thin Skin are common Scars.

Adaptations: *Stubborn Resolve, Unpredictable, Forced Growth* (p. XX)

[BEGIN RELATIONSHIP DIAGRAM TEXT]

Mutants→Cephalists: Why stop at just the mind?

Mutants→Chimerics: All the tricks of nature and still less than I.

Mutants→Coactives: Your extra power isn't worth the cost.

Mutants→Invasives: You accepted it, now make it work for you.

[END RELATIONSHIP DIAGRAM TEXT]

Adaptations

Every Deviant has three Adaptations — Stubborn Resolve, plus two others based on their Clade. Calling upon an Adaptation is a reflexive action.

Universal Adaptation

- **Stubborn Resolve:** Forcing any Deviant to act contrary to a Touchstone, even by supernatural means, is difficult. Once per chapter, if the character is acting in support of a Touchstone (pursuing a Conviction one or helping a Loyalty) and is trying to avoid being persuaded or mind-controlled away from acting on that Touchstone, she may increase any Resistance Attribute by the Loyalty or Conviction rating for purposes of not being persuaded or controlled for the rest of that scene.

Cephalist Adaptations

- **Focus:** Once per chapter, the Cephalist can increase the potency of her power through sheer will. The character increases the Magnitude of one of her Variations by one for the remainder of the scene. She can push this further by spending one point of Willpower per additional level of Magnitude added to the Variation. This is an exception to the normal limit of spending one point of Willpower per turn.
- **Iron Will:** The Cephalist may spend a point of Willpower to use a once-per-scene or once-per-chapter Variation or Adaptation that he has already used during the current scene/chapter. This is an exception to the normal limit of spending one point of Willpower per turn.

Chimeric Adaptations

- **Untamed:** Chimerics have an unmatched endurance when it comes to survival, ignoring pain and suffering to reach their goals. Once per chapter, a Chimeric character can reduce the Magnitude of one of her Scars by two. She may push this further by spending one point of Willpower per additional reduction in Magnitude. The Chimeric retains full access to the entangled Variations, even if this reduces the Scar's Magnitude to 0.
- **Adrenaline Surge:** The Chimeric may choose to suffer a point of bashing damage to use a once-per-scene Variation or Adaptation that she has already used during the current scene. She may choose to suffer a point of lethal damage to use a once-per-chapter Variation or Adaptation that she has already used during the current chapter. Any damage she suffers from this Adaptation cannot be healed by supernatural powers, including Variations (such as Healing Touch and Rapid Healing).

Coactive Adaptations

- **Consume:** The flame that burns twice as bright burns half as long. Coactive characters can increase their output at personal risk. Once per chapter, a Coactive character can increase the Magnitude of one of his Variations by one for the remainder of the scene. He can push this Variation further by accepting one point of lethal damage per additional Magnitude. Any damage caused by this Adaptation cannot be healed more quickly through Variations or other supernatural means.
- **Living Conduit:** The Coactive may spend a point of Willpower to use a once-per-scene or once-per-chapter Variation or Adaptation that he has already used during the current

scene/chapter. This is an exception to the normal limit of spending one point of Willpower per turn.

Invasive Adaptations

- **Redundancy:** The extra equipment Invasives carry within gives their bodies additional ability to withstand punishment. Once per chapter, an Invasive character can reduce the Magnitude of one or more Variations (to a minimum of 0) to heal the same amount of lethal or bashing damage. Variations damaged this way ‘heal’ at the rate of one Magnitude per day.
- **Overclock:** The Invasive may choose to suffer a point of bashing damage to use a once-per-scene Variation or Adaptation that she has already used during the current scene. She may choose to suffer a point of lethal damage to use a once-per-chapter Variation or Adaptation that she has already used during the current chapter. Any damage she suffers from this Adaptation cannot be healed by supernatural powers, including Variations (such as Healing Touch and Rapid Healing) and Adaptations (such as Redundancy).

Mutant Adaptations

- **Unpredictable:** Mutants are terrifyingly adaptable, capable of manifesting new abilities at a moment’s notice. Once per chapter, a Mutant character may exchange one of her Variations for a Universal Variation of up to half its Magnitude (rounded up) until the end of the scene. The activation method and entangled Scar remain the same. This exchange cannot be terminated before the end of the scene, nor can a temporary Variation be swapped out for another temporary Variation.
- **Forced Growth:** The Mutant may choose to suffer a minor Instability to use a once-per-scene or once-per-chapter Variation or Adaptation that he has already used during the current scene/chapter.

Chapter Two: Setting

Mr. Owen suggested to me that the production of monsters... presents an analogy to the production of species.

— Charles Darwin

What is the difference between a person and an object? How can some of us look upon our fellow human beings and think of them as merely *things*, as subjects to be twisted or tormented or manipulated without regard for their feelings? How can any of us treat another sapient entity with such callous disregard as to suborn their very existence, viewing them solely as tools or gross, raw matter to be shaped and sculpted as we see fit? History is littered with the grim wreckage of man's inhumanity towards man. Are we a fundamentally broken species, to visit such cruelty upon ourselves over and over again?

Deviants are the manifestation of this fault-line through humanity, split asunder by the transgression of Divergence. Each of the Broken has stepped beyond the limits of what it is to be human — or has been forced to. Many of the Remade are victims, transformed into monstrosities against their will. Yet whether this violation of the sanctity of flesh and soul was voluntary or not, those who go Renegade burn with the need to lash out, to fight back, and to prove they are more than just objects to be toyed with or controlled by others.

Divergence

If the evolution of life is a tree of many boughs, then Divergence is the sickly offshoot cracked from humanity's branch. Divergence is a process neither natural nor gentle. Those who travel down that jagged fork are changed, Remade into something new and different, and they suffer for it. The Progenitors and conspiracies who inflict Divergence have a hundred different names for it, and perform it through uncounted methodologies and means, but most do not realize the common thread that binds all Deviants together. Divergence breaks its victims and sets them apart from Baseline humanity.

A man screams as gleaming scalpels descend upon his flesh. They cut a new truth into the very fabric of his being, a gospel of altered blood and lymph. He wakes in a fluid-filled glass prison, and his body no longer heeds petty notions of constancy from moment to moment. Bone shivers and meat flows in response to his horrified thoughts. From without, inscrutable faces watch and analyze and iterate. He is not the first, and he will not be the last. He is just raw material.

A woman sits in rapture, the cult's fevered prayers writhing around her. The words and thoughts coalesce as a carmine chrysalis around her. When she tears free, dripping with crimson ooze, she is changed. Shapes swarm beneath her skin, clicking with clockwork malice. Unexpected pain wracks her tortured body, and her scream calls a legion of brass locusts forth from invisible spaces. The cultists exult but she, privy now to the true whispers of the brass hive, oh, she *regrets*.

The researchers douse the test subjects in a humming tank of carefully-harvested infinity, a genie's lamp of impossibilities that scours at their young minds. Sterile white rooms, unending tests and abusive attempts at discipline define the children's existence, but none of the expected psychic phenomena manifest. The program is disbanded and covered up, the children released into orphanages where no-one believes their tale. Years later, an adult lashes out in anger and

self-loathing. The dimensional energies, still coursing through his now-mature nervous system, flow with his feelings. Glass shatters and brains blister.

These, and countless others like them, are moments of Divergence. They are the catalysts by which the Remade are broken and shaped into something new. Divergence is the chrysalis that takes the caterpillar, tortures it into screaming liquefied substrate, then rebuilds it as a warped mirror to the ghastly ambitions of a Progenitor.

Unnatural Selection

The different strains of Divergence vary hugely. Each corresponds to the intent, talent, and means of a Progenitor, the particular human responsible for inflicting such a transmogrification upon the Remade. For almost every single Broken, Divergence traces back to a single such person; the one who flipped the switch, or cut with the scalpel, or uttered the fateful prayer.

Divergence is often the culmination of an obsessive attempt to realize a Progenitor's ambition through the raw material of the human species. Such a Progenitor usually uses others as the test subjects for his grim work, although desperation or principles drive some to rely on their own flesh, blood, or psyche as the canvas for their artistry. Occasionally, a Progenitor stumbles into his role when pursuing an entirely different goal — creating a Remade when attempting to heal a sick patient, or ritually sacrificing a victim at a moment of entirely accidental occult significance. A rare few Progenitors and Broken are entirely unwitting actors, caught up in Divergences forged from sheer happenstance and ill luck.

Although the transformed share underlying traits, the different methodologies and implementations of Divergence do matter. A military laboratory that threads invasive nanotechnology through subjects' nervous systems, a cult that carves the mad jabbering of the Void Testament into the skin and tongue of ritual sacrifices, and the carefully-managed insertion of psychic-active DNA into newborns at a hospital, can each wreak enough change upon their subjects to create true Deviants. The subject's willingness can also shape the outcome of Divergence. The rich and powerful might seek out a Progenitor for cutting-edge experimental treatments, but the victims of Divergence more often come from among the forgotten, the unwitting, or those whose absence goes unremarked.

Because Progenitors often toy with unreliable, experimental, or misunderstood methodologies, Divergence is frequently a one-off achievement. Unstable genetic code, volatile chemicals, or even the unseen alignment of eldritch auras, can all cause catastrophic failure in attempts to reproduce the results. Even Progenitors who achieve repeat Divergence and have the means to assemble a production line process face failures, irregularities, and complications that they will struggle to predict or understand. These failures come with a body count, either during Divergence or shortly thereafter, as individuals fail to survive Divergence or cannot cope with the enormity of what has happened to them. The greatest variables are always the human beings involved — Progenitors and victims alike.

Splintered Souls

Given the difficulties of replication and the wide variety of forms that Deviants take, Divergence outwardly has no rhyme nor reason connecting its many manifestations. Despite this, Remade pupated through wildly different procedures do, in fact, share certain traits. They are prone towards incredible, sometimes irrational stubbornness and determination. They suffer a breakdown in their ability to understand and relate with others, manifesting as obsessive focus

and vengefulness. The wider the gulf yawns between the Broken and humanity, the worse the effects of Divergence grow. The link that binds these traits together is this: Divergence does not just twist mind or flesh or bone. It rends the very soul.

Most Progenitors are unaware of the soul's existence, let alone that Divergence wounds it. Nestling within almost every human being is a blazing pearl of spiritual identity, a symbiotic energy anchored in the flesh and thoughts and sweat and disappointment of the bearer's life. A soul is both ember and anchor, a gobbet of awareness woven into the human's sense of self. Even those who discover the soul's existence possess few answers as to how a soul takes root, where souls come from, and to what bleak or scintillating destination they pass after death. The soul is the ineffable mystery at the heart of Divergence.

A human who has her soul wrenched from her withers away into a hollowed-out shell, deprived of drive and sense. Divergence, though, does not tear the soul entirely from its tethers. Instead, the process cracks the soul, fracturing it, and this damage separates the Remade from the merely altered. Once a Progenitor transforms his victim into something *other*, he damages the spiritual connection with the soul that is part of being human. The soul breaks, and from the crack flows power. It is not clear whether this raw energy of the soul spills forth because of such a wound, or if Divergence stokes the embers to such intensity that it invariably breaks the Deviant's soul as a side-effect.

The contained energy of a Deviant's soul washes forth into the alterations that have forced Divergence and gives unpredictable, unreliable power to those very changes. Where a Progenitor's reach has exceeded his grasp, it is this raw energy from the soul that makes his impossible intentions real and functional. The constant state of conflicting power is a self-amplifying process, a feedback loop that serves as the unstable foundation upon which the Broken exists.

Two-Tone World

The soul's wound manifests in a change to how the Deviant perceives herself and others. The power spilling from her spiritual injury fills her with purpose and drive, a need to act and lash out. The Remade finds she cannot settle easily into a neutral state, let herself go with the flow, or allow events to wash around her. Instead the Deviant, feeling the push of the river, *pushes back*. Fighting against the tide eases the tumultuous currents of her splintered soul.

It's easy for a Deviant to feel alienated and isolated after her Divergence. The Variations and Scars she bears grind at her psyche with the repulsive understanding that she is no longer fully human. Her own body and mind have been rendered unsafe, violated, and changed. For the Broken whose limbs are now cold and unfeeling chrome, or who can turn her skin to gnashing and hungry mouths, or who now labors under crippling addictions to improbable substances, she is caught in a horror movie where she is both monster and victim. Baseline humans will struggle to understand her experiences, at best, and may just flee in terror from the more outwardly disturbing manifestations of Divergence.

The Deviant's injured soul means that she cannot easily internalize the anger and fear stemming from this betrayal by her body and mind. Instead, she turns that fury outwards. Anger comes easily to the transformed. Having been mutilated and re-sculpted in ways she cannot come to terms with, the Remade's rage locks on to those she blames for her current state. Most Broken

develop an obsessive hatred or bitterness towards their Progenitor, or towards another human being whom they blame for the events that led to Divergence.

The damage to the Remade's soul changes her perception of the world around her. She loses any instinctive sense of bonding with her peer groups. She breaks the world down into those who are for her, and those who are against. She discards nuances as too forgiving for the intense emotions that fuel the Deviant's changed sense of self. Anyone holding the middle ground or trying to stay neutral is clearly just dissembling because they're really in the against camp — they just don't want to admit it.

Trust and friendship do not come easily to the Remade, but those bonds she does forge are incredibly strong, and her loyalty to them is a vital anchor. Whether born of old ties, desperate need, or hard-won acceptance, her loyalties are what keep her obsession with vengeance from becoming all-consuming and allow her to keep sight of the wider world. Most Deviants have many enemies and few friends, but it is these few who remind the Deviant of who she once was, giving her something to fight for rather than just against.

If a Deviant slips away from humanity, if she lets those threads snap and allows isolation to become a great chasm between herself and other people, the wound upon her soul becomes more unstable. It cracks further, breaks, and floods her with more of its volatile power. As her mind becomes alienated from the rest of the species, so does her body. The Variations and Scars of Divergence grow in intensity. Unchecked, this power blazes bright before it consumes her utterly.

Scar Tissue

The Deviant's cracked soul also manifests through one or more Scars, the outward signs of the power that flows through her. Scars are like chains that shackle the Deviant in some way — a cruel price for changes that the Remade likely never desired in the first place.

Sometimes, a Scar is a simple expression of monstrous nature, an appalling display of inhuman flesh or an unsettling manner that further drives the wedge between the Remade and other humans. It may be a cruel hunger or compulsion that the Broken must satisfy lest she face crippling privation, or a burden that drains her of time or energy. Some Scars are minor nuisances, but others can maim or kill the Deviant or anyone unlucky enough to be around her. Divergence without Scars would not be Divergence at all, but rather would be a pure act of genesis that yet remains beyond the grasp of humanity.

Every transformed bears at least a single Scar. Cruelly, the intensity of the Scarring that the Deviant bears is commensurate to the depth of the changes wrought upon her. The most potent of Deviants labor under a mass of Scars, each a horrific manacle of compelled behavior or alien phenomena that prevents her from living and acting as she desires.

As manifestations of the soul's state, Scars grow worse as a Deviant loses control over her unstable nature and becomes alienated from humanity. They gouge fresh tracks through the Remade's life, erupting with new and nightmarish complications. In turn, the Deviant's Variations grow more intense, marrying her isolation with strength and the drive to lash out. Twisted by her Scars and empowered by her Variations, the Deviant risks falling into a cycle of feedback that will end with her death as Divergence entirely consumes her.

Variation

When a Deviant emerges from the chrysalis of Divergence, she bears changes that mark her split from Baseline humanity termed Variations. While Scars are the manifestations of the Deviant's wounded soul, Variations are the more direct outcomes of the process used to induce Divergence, whether intentional or accidental. When a man is fused with the essence of a mosquito through some violent abuse of science, his increasingly insectoid appearance and appetite for fresh blood are his Scars, but the incredible strength and resilience that he now possesses are his Variations.

Selective Pressure

The intended purpose of most Divergences is to induce one or more Variations. A cracked soul and twisted Scars are usually unfortunate side-effects, the necessary cost of painting a nightmarish masterpiece of Variations upon the fabric of the victim. In many of these cases, the changes wrought upon the transformed are intended to meet the creator's specific purposes. An intelligence agency's off-the-books program of genetic tampering refines latent psychic potential with the aim of creating Deviants who can pry the secrets of rivals loose with remote viewing. A secure corporate lab modifies infiltrators capable of mimicking both mental and physical traits of targets for industrial espionage missions.

Depending on the control the Progenitor possesses over the Divergence process, a Deviant could end up with anything from a shopping list of hand-picked Variations tailored perfectly to her intended application, to whatever best approximation is available within the restrictions of the chosen methodology. When all a Progenitor has available is a hammer, she tends to treat all her problems like nails.

Not every Progenitor triggers Divergence for practical reasons. Some alter the Remade from a Baseline human state just to see if they can, or to prove a point, or for other aesthetic or philosophical purposes. The Deviant made by a government program to serve as a super-soldier has the benefit of retroviral-cocktail Variations that make him tougher, stronger, and faster; the poor victim of a mad occultist who treats her chimeric creations as a form of artistic expression, though, finds himself with a seemingly random patchwork of bestial traits assembled on a whim. The researcher who dunks convicted prisoners into a tank of extra-dimensional slime just to see what happens is delighted when the only survivor begins to exude poisonous sludge from her skin. That discovery might one day help create other Remade with that specific Variation in mind — but this first victim is more a scientific curiosity than a finely-honed tool.

Then there are the Divergences that have no apparent oversight or directing purpose at all, the accidents and whims of cruel happenstance. Human action still has its place in this process, but it is unwitting and subconscious. An executioner flips the switch with no notion of the unusual occult confluences centered around the electric chair that day. The prisoner whose mind suddenly courses with stygian energy gains eldritch Variations shaped as much by her regret and guilt as by the jabbering specters that now swim through her mind. In such cases, it is often the transformed who invents a rationale behind or link between the Variations she has gained, to make some sort of sense of what has happened.

Emergence

With some methods, Divergence is a brutal and revelatory arrival — a car-crash of change through the Deviant's life. She is traumatized, violated, rent apart, and Broken. Her new life shears away from her old. Once the blood has stopped flowing or the eldritch machines ceased their shrieking, she is left indelibly marked. Perhaps fleshy wings curl around her, impossible to

ignore and reacting reflexively to her thoughts. Maybe she can see the pulsing surges of vivid electrical ghosts all around, whether in the nervous systems of her captors or the crackling circuits of her holding cell. Perhaps she speaks, and those near her immediately buckle and fold to her will. For such a Deviant, the presence and nature of her Variations are immediate. It may take some time to control them and learn their limits, let alone truly understand them, but the break between Baseline and Remade is sudden, extreme, and clear.

Not every Divergence happens so swiftly. Even during intentional Divergences, the process can be lengthy and sustained. A series of alchemical treatments intended to turn the ritualist's prisoner into a guardian invunche has to be applied day after day over months. The changes are gradual in that gloomy cell, with one Variation after another slowly twisting the horrified captive's flesh with accompanying Scars. The volunteer for WellBeing International's new prosthetic replacement program goes in for repeated surgery across a year, each visit replacing another of her failing organs with a cutting-edge NewYou™ synthetic node. After the fourth surgery, when they network the various nodes via a hub installed at the base of her skull and start interweaving her consciousness with their own shackled-AI administrator, her soul fractures and she becomes Remade, but the ensuing visits continue to build up her integrated Variations. She slowly becomes more aware of her enhanced mental processing power, and only realizes there is an intelligent, artificial cohabitant of her consciousness months after leaving the GetWell™ clinic.

For victims who are unaware they are undergoing Divergence at all, its slithering influence can be a nightmarish transformation that is nonsensical in its emergence. The insistent insurgence of the Deviant's own mind or body against him gnaws at his perception, before supplanting his former reality entirely. The young man who was adopted as a child after the 'orphanage' burned down doesn't just wake up one day to find he has the arm of a monstrous lizard. Something, some flash-point or catalyst, triggers the defiled scripture hidden in his blood, and then the changes creep up on him. One day, the skin of his arm starts to itch and peel. The scabs never seem to quite heal, a keratin canker that thickens and hardens as the weeks pass. Fingernails lengthen. His vision blurs and changes. Peering into the mirror one day, he recoils in shock as he sees the shape of his pupils is changing. He does his best to hide it, stops going to work, stops meeting his friends. Weeks pass; there's a knock at his door, and severe-looking men in black suits outside. They breach the apartment, rush in and corner him. Panicking, he scuttles up the wall to hang from the ceiling on the scaled pads of his hands and feet. If he thinks rationally, he could make a break for it out the window and down the building's flank. Instead he hisses, gripped by fear and confusion, as the men raise their tasers and drop him from his perch with an overwhelming jolt of electricity.

Adaptation

It would be a stretch to call them fortunate, but those Remade who pupate under the yoke of powerful conspiracies or goal-obsessed Progenitors are the most likely to experience a rigorous regimen or program to awaken, understand, and control their Variations. A Deviant created through invasive cybernetic enhancement may have a literal instruction manual scrolling in front of her vision when she recovers from the anesthetic, projected via the heads-up display of her new mechanical eyes. The would-be monster-hunter who has turned his body chemistry into a veritable cauldron leafs through alchemical texts detailing the precise elixirs needed to trigger specific reactions in his blood. The sacrificial victim reborn in the pit of flies has a constant

humming whisper in her head, a buzz that recites the syllables she must repeat to warp flesh and shatter bone in those whose death the droning song desires.

Even with an instructor or guide to help the newly transformed, adaptation to Variations can take time. Like the freshly-emerged butterfly gingerly flapping its fragile wings, Variations can leave the Remade with a confusing new set of sensory inputs, changing parts of her body or psyche so that years of ingrained reflex and memory no longer apply. She finds that she does not know her strength; vat-grown muscle implants let her tear the door off a car by mistake, or new psychic talent slips from her control and scours the minds of her instructors. Variations based around movement can be particularly dangerous for the new Deviant as she learns the extent of her capabilities.

The transformed may end up without any instruction or explanation of her new Variations at all. She escapes her creators, yearning for freedom or fleeing her scheduled termination. She never knows her Progenitor at all, or has Diverged due to seemingly random circumstances. Such a Deviant must fend for herself when it comes to exploring and understanding the changes wrought upon her. Some Remade in this situation keep their cool and slowly feel out the extent of their capabilities, learning carefully. A Deviant with machine empathy might be freaked out the first time she finds that a lock reacts directly to her angry curses at it to *just damn open* but, once she has established that she isn't hallucinating, she carefully catalogs which machines will easily fold to her will, which ones are trickier, and just how simple a device has to be before she can't affect it at all.

Some go the other way. They lose their shit, freak out, panic, or retreat into denial. This can be extremely dangerous for the Deviant and for anyone unfortunate enough to be nearby. A pyrokinetic who refuses to admit that she can conjure flames ends up burning down a school when she is provoked into a rage. She avoids confronting the power her Variation has given her until it's too late, never learning how to control and limit it.

Those Renegade Deviants who survive the early days after Divergence aren't always successful in coming to terms with their Variations. In some cases, a transformed explores just enough of her power to be able to achieve basic control but flinches back from embracing it out of fear, or the hope that it's all just a bad dream that will go away. Some Variations simply remain hidden; the Deviant adapts to the strength of his intrusively-rebuilt prosthetic limbs, but doesn't realize there are additional subsystems built into them. Faced with unknown limitations, a Remade may end up seeking out others who do have knowledge — kidnapping a Progenitor or the agents of the conspiracy that pursues him and forcing them to give up what they know, or looking for experts at the cutting edge of the fields that led to the Divergence. Sometimes, unexpected patrons bring their attention to bear on the Deviant. A whistle-blower from the corporation who wants to help the Broken get revenge leaks scientific data to him, or a voice in the song on the radio whispers secrets in brief moments of crackling static.

Not every Variation *can* be adapted to. Some unlucky victims are burdened by Variations that they simply have no control over, or Scars that twist the potential benefits of their powers with bitter consequences. Deviants with involuntary powers are the most likely to descend into a spiral of madness and self-destruction. Even those who flee contact with other human beings to avoid causing harm are only agitating the problem, as their wounded souls grow inflamed by the isolation and pour more power into the Variations and Scars that have caused the situation in the first place.

And therein lies the rub. Variations are born of the methodology that causes Divergence, but they are linked to the splintered soul that afflicts the Deviant with her Scars. As a Deviant grows more unstable and begins to lose control of herself, so her Variations strengthen — or entirely new ones spring forth. A vicious feedback loop forms, gifting the Deviant with even more power to lash out at the world and her enemies, pushing her further from humanity, and cracking her soul even more. Variations may seem like gifts, but their infliction is an unfair exchange, never truly balancing the Scars and the suffering that comes with them. Worse, it is the power of Variation that brings Deviants to the attention of the true beneficiaries of Divergence — the conspiracies worming through the fabric of society, spinning webs of pain and control.

Conspiracy

A secret history of the world lurks in the scribbled marginalia of discarded chronicles and secure archives, in the cold smiles that mask unspeakable sacrifices, in the places that are hidden not because they are concealed but because society has been trained not to look. It's a history of power, and the unfettered craving thereof, of desperation and the lengths it will drive humans to, and of doors that should have remained closed. It is built on occult atrocities and scientific blasphemies. There is no single author of this history, for it is an account of the innumerable conspiracies that have sought to control and direct the progress of humanity. It is amid the grinding gears of these conspiracies that the Remade are caught, crushed, and recreated anew.

Incubators and Parasites

Uncounted conspiracies pepper the fabric of human society. Some last for hours, born from opportunity or burning emotion and collapsing just as swiftly. Some persist for millennia, the ancient sinews of civilization. Their formation seems to be a part of human nature. Put three people in a room together, and two will conspire against the third.

The majority of mundane conspiracies have nothing to do with Deviants, of course. The lines between those conspiracies that create, pursue, or persecute the transformed and those unaware that Divergence is even possible are not drawn according to size, or scope, or means, or wealth. They are carved instead by opportunity, chance, and ambition. One corporation might throw untold millions of dollars at a genetic research program without success, where another stumbles into results through raw luck or a moment of brilliance on the part of a Progenitor. Intelligence agencies suffer institutional senility on the topic as they spin off blacker-than-black research operations, or firewall the knowledge of psychic and esoteric possibilities into deniable projects. Then, when these schemes implode or go off the leash or are shut down in a cover-up, everyone involved who understood what was going on is dead or on the run, and so the cycle starts up again. Corrupt cops sell criminals who cross them to grinning doctors with razor smiles. Mad cultists witness Divergence and think it's divinity bleeding into the world. A cabal of respectable musicians carefully record strange music that rewrites the very mind of victims who hear it.

Conspiracies hoard what information on Divergence they may come across. Once a conspiracy whets its appetite with the discovery of the Remade, it learns to look more closely for the signs of Deviants and Progenitors, and hunts for sources on Divergence according to the methodologies and philosophies that it adheres to. A conspiracy's influence can be far-reaching, worming through society into other schemes and plots, and so actions that seem far removed from a conspiracy's heart can feed back to it with remarkable speed. For a Deviant, this can lead to a state of paranoia. The eyes of the conspiracy she escapes are everywhere, their agents waiting for a single slip-up to reveal her presence.

The secretive nature of the world of conspiracies leaves many with a woefully incomplete understanding of Divergence. Some conspiracies only encounter one or two Clades of Deviant, and think these are the only ones that exist or matter. Conspiracies quite willing to believe in Psychics may scoff at the idea of Coactive Divergence as delusional nonsense. Others attempt to interpret all Broken through the lens of their particular ideology or scientific models, or wildly misunderstand what a Remade *is*, thinking them alien infiltrators or hidden demons or some sort of supernatural disease that must be rooted out. A conspiracy may even hide the existence or nature of its Deviant creations from some of its own members.

Some conspiracies hunt Deviants, hoping to exploit the power of Variations. Hunters who prefer the carrot to the stick lure the Broken in with promises and a veneer of kindness, aiming to acquire a Devoted servant. Dealing with a Deviant is always risky, though, and so the mask is usually paper-thin. Lack of compliance is met with force. A Remade taken by force can still be worked on, coerced, cajoled, brainwashed — and if she can't be persuaded by any means, the conspiracy can still benefit. Intractable Deviants are an opportunity for study, analysis and dissection, after all.

Recruitment is not the only possible motive. Some organizations fear the damage and destabilization a Deviant can inflict on society's fabric. A Broken cohort's machinations can crash through the finely laid plans of a conspiracy's existing schemes. A specific type of transformed may offend religious or philosophical sensibilities, the conspirators declaring them abominations worthy only of annihilation. Particular Clades can become targets, as a cybernetic research division goes after invasively-created Deviants to pry their plating loose and peer at the cutting-edge work of rival companies. Sometimes hapless Remade are mistaken for the agents of a rival in a war between conspiracies, caught in the crossfire of a power struggle where they need to pick a side or take cover.

What is almost always lacking on the part of a conspiracy is any sense that a Deviant is a person. Conspirators see Remade as an opportunity, a tool, a threat, a chance for discovery, or just raw material to be rendered down. Even the Devoted servants of a conspiracy are usually on the leash of Baseline conspirators, not agents of their own destiny. The conspiracy where Remade rule outright is a rarity indeed — and even then, the very nature of their damaged souls affords no guarantee they will treat other Deviants with more humanity than a Baseline conspirator would.

Splicing and Evolution

Engineering Divergence directly is difficult, even for the most powerful conspiracies. Few would-be Progenitors are successful, and Deviants are a rarity. No shared libraries of knowledge exist, only the hard-won scraps gleaned from tangling with other organizations or from the bodies of the Remade. Conspiracies with a greater purpose will often lavish promising lines of research with all the resources they can muster, going to great lengths indeed to secure success. Just as often, though, entirely new conspiracies grow up around a successful Progenitor. The biotech firm doesn't start out as a conspiracy to genetically engineer monstrosities. That comes after a lab project goes off the rails under an over-ambitious doctor's supervision, and soon enough, threads from the top to the bottom of the company and beyond. In these cases, Divergence comes first and the purpose comes afterwards, shaped by the capabilities of the Remade thus created.

Where Divergence is successful, the form that it takes can seem wildly at odds with the nature of the conspiracy. The Deviants spawned from a cult's schemes aren't necessarily horrors of

demon-infested flesh. A sect could rebuild a wounded adherent with limbs of gleaming steel and nerves of squirming wires, albeit with hot metal quenched in spinal fluid and computer code written with infernal ciphers. The old conspiracy in a new tech company maintains ancient rural traditions. Every midwinter there's a 'team-building exercise' out in the woods where bloody rites initiate a new haruspex. The chosen executive lives for a year in a secure compound, forced to read omens and portents for the company's stock market prospects as his instability grows wilder and psychosis consumes his mind entirely.

Outbreak and Containment

A vigilant conspiracy does everything it can to confine and control the Deviants it possesses. There's no universal means for doing so, but some precautions are relatively common. Conspiracies usually hold untrustworthy or uncooperative Deviants in the most secure available location, and hide their existence from wider awareness. Experiments and tests occur under watchful supervision. Conspirators often purge Deviants who grow too powerful or are deemed too difficult to control. More cooperative Deviants might earn limited freedom, but on a leash — tagged and tracked, watched, given only limited resources, conditioned to obey, or otherwise hobbled in their ability to act independently.

Any precaution is only as good as the human element involved, of course. Plans go awry and errors of judgment creep in. Underneath the concrete scab of a city's surface, a series of subterranean labs make an excellent prison. They run off the wider electricity grid, though, and so a power-cut opens a brief vulnerability. A zealous group of true believers can't see how or why the victim they chose to feed into the maw of their 'god' could possibly resent them for the glorious changes inflicted on her. A Remade dropped into a combat zone for a test run is believed killed in action. He does nothing to challenge that assertion, disappearing into the shanty towns of refugees once he recovers from his wounds.

Whether hunting a Renegade they created or pursuing rivals' rogue agents, conspiracies have the upper hand in the hunt for free Deviants. A conspiracy's nature is to spread its influence into society, and to reach for the levers of power. Sometimes, this takes the form of soft power — an attempt to control behavior, belief, and perception. The Remade on the run must deal with lies spread about her being a criminal or delusional. Supposedly trustworthy figures inform on her when she confides in them, and pillars of the community turn against her. Some conspiracies have the reach to bring harder power to bear. From the proverbial black helicopters and men in suits, to frozen assets and evidence vanishing from the justice system, the Broken finds the world actively turning against her, littered with traps that she must maintain vigilance against to have even the faintest hope of evading capture. She may even face her own kind in the form of Devoted agents, with their own armory of Variations and all the resources a conspiracy's support can buy them.

Ultimately, a conspiracy's foremost duty is to its own continued existence, and that means maintaining its secrecy. Resourceful and persistent Deviants can sometimes drive conspiracies away by threatening to tear the veil that hides their activities. Alternatively, the Broken might try to cause so much disruption and expense that it is no longer worth the cost to bring them in. Such attempts to reach a detente carry a risk. The conspiracy may come to see the existence of the Deviant and her powers as a danger that no promise or threat can balance against. A Deviant who is too much trouble on the pursuit may well find the conspiracy turns its entire strength toward annihilating her.

Divergence gives power, though, and a burning drive for vengeance. Detente or disappearance into a half-life in the shadows does not sit well with most Remade. There comes a time when the Deviant stops running, turns, and fights back. Not every conspirator is well-prepared for this moment, and it can be the catalyst that brings a whole conspiracy crashing down in pieces.

Renegades

Conspiracy members can track every credit card transaction someone makes, and there are cameras everywhere, including in everyone's cellphone. Today, it's exceptionally easy to find someone and increasingly difficult to stay hidden. Also, newly escaped Remade rarely understand how many resources or connections the people hunting them possess. Some attempt to resume their previous lives, but conspiracies can use land deeds, mortgages, credit card records, shipping addresses, and many other details to find someone. Conspiracies can also attempt to locate someone by locating their friends and family, many of whom now conveniently appear on the person's social media profiles. Instead, most Renegades who remain free must choose some strategy for how they are going to avoid the attentions of the conspiracy or conspiracies who are hunting them.

Down and Out

One of the least pleasant facts about being a Renegade is that the easiest way to successfully hide from pursuit is to become invisible by becoming destitute and homeless. If you don't have a credit card or a fixed address, you're impressively difficult to find, and while most convenience stores have security cameras, there's no central database for them — at least not yet.

Of course, in addition to the obvious risks of exposure, hunger, disease, theft, and violence by bored teens or overly aggressive police and security guards, you also are unable to own anything you can't carry with you, and you aren't going to have much time or money to spend tracking down the conspiracy you hate. Anyone living like this needs to spend much of her time surviving, and is lucky to have money for anything other than minimal food and clothing.

That said, this is a way of life that more than a few people manage. Remade who can look and act sufficiently like ordinary people can make money at day labor, and may even be able to save up for the occasional bus ticket to help them follow leads about their conspiracy. Also, while homeless people used to be profoundly cut off from the world around them, many public libraries offer free internet use, and anyone who can save up even a relatively small sum of money can acquire a used low-end smartphone from a pawn shop and buy a prepaid mobile plan. One of the paradoxes of the modern day is that even if you're living under a bridge and eating scavenged food, you can still get access to the internet.

Of course, while access to the internet can be a boon for Renegades researching the conspiracy they're hunting and attempting to keep in touch with their allies, using email or even the web too carelessly can attract attention. Even if one of the Broken is squatting in an abandoned house and stealing a small amount of electricity from the building next door, if they are online, someone can still track them, and their enemies might find them. In addition, being homeless or living as an illegal squatter is exhausting, unpleasant, and any morning, the Renegade could wake up and find her money and her few possessions stolen by others more desperate than her. Also, the police could simply arrest one of the Broken and destroy or confiscate his possessions. The details of his arrest could also easily alert the transformed's pursuers.

Off the Grid

Some Remade have a dream: build a cabin in a remote area, dig a well, learn to farm, maybe even buy some solar panels or a windmill and have running water and electricity. A few even hope to found some sort of isolated and secret intentional community where a dozen or more of their kind can live free and in peace. This is a lovely dream, and a nearly impossible reality. Instead, the best most Renegades can manage is living in a tumbledown shack or an old trailer in the middle of nowhere. One problem is that anyone attempting to set up and maintain a well-built and well-supplied building or small community requires considerable quantities of money and at least a moderate amount of specialized skills. Few Renegades have easy access to either. Also, this sort of life usually requires deeds, property taxes, and either regular trips to town or equally regular mail deliveries. All these points of contact with the outside world can attract notice. Even in rural areas, people are curious about their neighbors, and these days, gossip about the strange neighbors can include posts and photos or videos showing up on social media sites.

It is possible to live in an isolated region like much of Alaska, where there are no neighbors for more than a hundred miles, but at that point, complete self-sufficiency is necessary for survival. Normally soluble problems like a broken arm or even a broken generator can prove to be gradually and brutally fatal. Also, few are willing to live in the squalid pre-modern conditions that this type of lifestyle necessitates. One possible answer is to live in an isolated area and to take a vehicle into the nearest small town every month or two for supplies. Paying a local store to mail order items that you pay for on your next trip to town permits Renegades to lead isolated and marginal lives, while still having access to electricity, spare parts, antibiotics, and toilet paper. Everyone in the town knows that there's some reason you are living out on your own or with one or two other equally strange individuals, but if you don't cause trouble, the inhabitants of many such communities won't ask too many questions. Also, if you break your leg or your vehicle someone might come and check on you. The balance between isolation and civilization is an essential feature of living off the grid, and all the options have notable risks.

A Life of Crime

The most obvious alternative to either living on the grid or being too poor to attract notice is living and making money in ways that are outside of the normal economic system, which means committing crimes like robbery, theft, extortion, prostitution, illegal gambling, drug dealing, or even murder for hire.

A few especially skilled and ruthless Remade make a good living hunting and robbing their Progenitors and other members of the conspiracy pursuing them. However, while few Renegades see any moral problems with this way of life, there are immense practical problems. If you murder members of a conspiracy, there's little reason not to rob them, but stealing anything too valuable, like a car, fancy jewelry, or expensive art requires both risk and skill to dispose of, especially since these valuables are tied to a murder. Simply robbing members of the conspiracy may seem safer, but robbing people who are already actively hunting for you is an excellent way for them to capture or kill you.

Robbing other wealthy people is no easier or safer. One of the most unpleasant truths about crime is that it's far easier to rob poor or working class people than the wealthy or even members of the middle-class. A crappy convenience store in a bad part of town, with a broken security camera is relatively easy to rob, as is the home or car of someone too poor to have good locks, a security system, or enough power to convince the police to take much of an interest in their case.

Of course, any Renegade who is making a living in this fashion is preying on the defenseless, much like a conspiracy preyed on her. Perhaps the fact that she's using some of the money she steals or extorts to fight back against her oppressors is a good enough reason, as long as she doesn't think about the people she hurt, the job they may have lost, or the medicine they were unable to afford.

Another more lucrative, but equally unsavory, option is organized crime. Even for Renegades without existing criminal skills, the ability to rip thoughts from someone's mind or metal doors off their hinges can be worth significant money to the right people. Of course, the right people are typically violent criminals who murder their rivals and threaten or maim anyone who does not swiftly give into their demands. A few Remade have done exceedingly well for themselves in such circumstances, especially since most successful and well-run criminal gangs can create good fake identities and are especially skilled at money laundering. However, in addition to the obvious moral and ethical downsides, unusual abilities, like a Renegade's Variations, attract attention. A rival criminal gang might try to kill a Remade to hurt his employers. Also, while a mid-level criminal might be entirely unwilling to give up his boss or cousin to the police, in return for having all charges dropped, providing information about the weird freak that started working for the gang a couple months ago may be a very different matter. A few criminal organizations foster a tight sense of loyalty, even to their most unusual members, but most do not, especially if the police threaten the gang member with lengthy imprisonment. Also, for many Renegades, the difference between working for a criminal gang, and being their slave can prove tricky, especially since some criminal syndicates are already part of the Web of Pain.

Faking It

Some Remade don't want to dumpster dive for their supper, live in a hut in the middle of the woods, or join a criminal gang. While a few try to resume their old life and perhaps expose the conspiracy that tormented them, most who try soon vanish as their conspiracy kills or recaptures them. However, identity theft is a booming business. A few Renegades possess the skills and contacts to create fake identities, and make a modest living doing so, and others know criminals who supply such fake identities for the right price. Even the best fake ID carries the risk that the police will arrest the ID's creator and the conspiracy will learn about them, but most such people keep no records of their work.

Once the Remade has acquired a good fake ID, he has the option of living like anyone else, within limits. Fake IDs almost never come with money or jobs, and because such information is easy to check, few have anything more than a work history filled with defunct businesses and an education that either stops at high school or, at best, includes a low-end local college far from the Renegade's current location. Graduate degrees, extensive work histories, or professional licenses are only available for fake IDs created by governments or equally powerful organizations. As a result, regardless of their previous life, Remade who use fake IDs are mostly restricted to performing low-end service work for poor wages. This lifestyle can work well, but every interaction with the government or any large corporations, including applying for a new job or getting a traffic ticket, carries the risk that someone will notice that the Renegade's identity is false, and at that point, the police may begin asking exceedingly difficult questions.

Living and Hunting

Combining any of these lifestyles with actively pursuing a conspiracy can be even trickier. Living on the streets involves having very little money, which makes preparing to investigate or

attack a conspiracy exceedingly difficult. The other options are a little easier, since the Remade has some money and a place to live and plan. However, all such attempts involve leading a double life. While resting, planning, and waiting, the Renegade or cohort live as homeless people, criminals, ordinary citizens with fake IDs, or wilderness-dwelling recluses, but when the time is right, they leave this life behind and go out to attack the conspiracy.

The difficulty in this lifestyle is avoiding having the two halves of the Renegades' lives touch. A chance meeting in another city or a face caught by a security camera can expose the other life of even the most careful Remade. Even if they avoid capture, they must then build a new life, which is why many Renegades carefully hide what wealth they possess and live on the streets. With a shower and some good clothes, most people won't recognize them as the homeless person they passed and never really saw.

Trust & Cohorts

With powerful enemies and the need for constant secrecy, Renegades find that trust is an especially precious commodity. The Broken also find it difficult to establish, even with others of their kind. Remade who escape from a conspiracy together often trust each other implicitly, because they understand what each other have been through, and know that they all willingly escaped captivity. However, meeting other Renegades is considerably more fraught. Some are violent and dangerous, and a few either make money or avoid the attentions of the conspiracy that is after them by turning in their fellows. Also, any unfamiliar Remade could secretly be one of the Devoted who reports on their unsuspecting comrades' every move and conversation.

Other Remade gain their freedom when one or more Renegades free them during an attack on the conspiracy. Being liberated from bondage by another Remade creates a strong emotional bond, and for many creates a debt that is especially deep and lasting. Remade almost always trust and sometimes even idolize the Renegades who free them. In addition, the former captives are also likely to trust their rescuer's allies and anyone else their rescuer vouches for.

However, outside of these immediate personal connections, finding other Remade who are worthy of even a modicum of trust is difficult and dangerous. Many Remade share information with one another on secret online message boards and mailing lists that Renegades can only learn about from members or by searching online for topics that few others would know to ask about. Even once they learn of such a forum, most of these online sites require one or more members to invite Broken to join it. Before joining, prospective members typically must respond to a series of emails designed to determine if they are truly a Renegade and not one of the Devoted or a member of a conspiracy pretending to be Remade.

Although having others of their kind to communicate with is an invaluable source of information and support, trusting the individuals they are in contact with can be very difficult. Whenever a Renegade learns of a safehouse or gains information about a conspiracy, they must consider whether this information is designed to lead them into a trap.

Agreeing to meet someone else who claims to be a Renegade requires even greater trust. Members of a conspiracy could be monitoring any such message board or mailing list, and while everyone there claims to be a Renegade, any of them could secretly be an enemy. Even a few careful and paranoid Remade vanish when meeting someone they think could be an ally. However, most such meetings are between two or more Remade. If the meeting goes well, the

sudden joy of knowing that they have found someone who understands their experiences and shares their fears and motives can cause everyone at this meeting to become close allies.

Even on online, on message boards where no one uses their real name or openly reveals their location, one of the most valuable assets any Renegade has is his reputation. Other Remade who he has personally met or who have benefited from information he provided to them serve as living proof that this Remade is worthy of trust and might be safe for others to meet. In contrast, newly escaped Remade who find others of their kind online must take time to build the trust of their fellows, since they possess no easy means to prove they are actually who and what they claim to be.

Many Renegades regularly share valuable information with other of their kind, both in person and online. This often includes a wealth of advice about how to navigate various practical issues, like getting a job without an ID, suggestions for how to live off the grid, sources for fake IDs, or ways to make money in a particular city that don't require any proof of identity. Remade members often share this information with others that they assume are fellow Renegades.

However, most Renegades keep specific information considerably more secret. Three of the most common types of secret information are information about allies, safe havens, and, of course, conspiracies. Some Remade are only willing to share these secrets in person, while others exchange such secrets online, but only via private means like email, rather than posting them to online forums that might later be hacked or infiltrated. The rise of communication apps that delete posts after a set period has proven to be a boon to many tech-savvy Renegades. Unfortunately, the largest and most powerful conspiracies often have access to government intelligence agencies, and thus have little trouble with even the best commercial encryption.

Allies

A few humans learn about the Remade and wish to help them. Some do this because they want to fight against the monstrous conspiracies that created and exploit them. Others know that the Remade have unusual abilities they might use in exchange for money or a service most Renegades find difficult to obtain. These allies can be a valuable source of funds. However, some allies ask Remade to commit crimes to earn their payment; others pretend to be allies while they seek to enslave particularly useful Remade. Also, various conspiracies are willing to pay or threaten such people into helping them, so even trusted human allies may not remain safe.

Safe Havens

Safe havens are locations Remade can safely stay for a few nights or perhaps longer. Abandoned houses or other vacant buildings that are in relatively good shape are popular locations, especially if they are out of the way and not yet occupied by other squatters. Others are places where transients and the homeless gather, but which are safer than many such locations, and where the oddities of some Remade will not raise too many questions. Finally, some people permit Renegades to stay in a building they own, usually either as an attempt to atone for some misdeed associated with the Broken, or in return for the Remade providing some service.

Conspiracies

Most Renegades wish to strike back at those who created or imprisoned them. Because few conspiracies only made or captured a single Remade, Renegades can sometimes find allies with matching animosity who are willing to join forces with someone who has a solid plan. Also,

many Renegades keep detailed files on their own conspiracy and others closely connected to it in the Web of Pain. Some are willing to share this information with other Remade they can trust, either freely or in return for some favor.

Forming Cohorts

The two easiest ways for one of the Remade trust another Renegade enough to join their cohort is to either escape from a conspiracy with them or for them to rescue that Remade. However, a conspiracy hunting two or more Renegades can draw them together as they see one of their kind fighting the same foes they are. Also, transformed who attack a conspiracy together often form lasting bonds.

In the first case, the Remade must rely upon each other to avoid capture or death. In the second, two or more Remade may initially only trust each other sufficiently to make a single strike against a conspiracy before planning to go their separate ways. However, as soldiers throughout history have learned, shared risks draw people together. Remade who have endured such trials by fire together also share the joy, triumph, or perhaps simply grim satisfaction of either surviving or dealing a significant blow against those who imprisoned and enslaved them. These shared emotions and joint victories cause many Renegades to not merely trust one another with their lives, but also to care about each other and often to value the others' lives almost as much as their own.

Mentors

Mentorship is another path to the sort of lasting trust that can lead to the formation of a cohort. Life as a Renegade is especially challenging shortly after the transformed escapes from their captors. In these early days of freedom, many Renegades expect their conspiracy to recapture them at any moment. One of the best ways of remaining free in these circumstances is to have help, and such help is just as useful when plotting ways to strike back at their Progenitors or at the conspiracy that is hunting them.

Sometimes, Remade find ordinary people that teach them the skills they need to survive while living on the streets or off the grid in rural areas, but these individuals rarely understand the special challenges and dangers of being one a Deviant. The best mentor for a newly escaped Renegade is a more experienced Remade. Sometimes, one of the Broken is lucky, and escapes from captivity because of the efforts of an experienced Remade, who then agrees to teach them the basics of survival. Most Remade are not this fortunate. However, meeting another Renegade who is willing to serve as a mentor, even for a short time, often means the difference between freedom or renewed captivity. Transformed who lack experience at being fugitives can accidentally betray themselves in countless seemingly innocuous ways, and often the only way to avoid such a fate is either luck or someone more experienced who shows them how to avoid common pitfalls.

Old School Tradecraft

Before their escape, a few Broken served their conspiracy as covert operatives or criminals, and learned a variety of older techniques for secret communication that serve them well once they become Renegades. Others either used these techniques during their previous lives or learned them from a Remade mentor. Also, determined Deviants can learn the basic methods of what spies commonly call tradecraft online or in books. Regardless of how they came into the

knowledge, most Remade discover that learning at least some aspects of tradecraft is essential to retaining their freedom and their ability to fight back against the conspiracies who pursue them.

One of the most basic techniques is a dead drop. The basic system is that one Renegade leaves a message or package for another at a pre-arranged location, preferably one where they can communicate the location in a way that isn't obvious to anyone else. For example, one Remade might email another that an important message is in a small envelope next to the statue in the park where they first met. Even if someone intercepts this email, no one but the intended recipient is likely to be able to find the message. Also, the Renegade dropping off the message is in almost no danger of being picked up, especially if they drop the message off before sending the email.

In a modern variation of this technique, the Broken emails someone they haven't met in person, and tells them where to pick up a message or package containing something of value. This Renegade then watches to see who retrieves the message and what they do. Especially skilled Remade, or those with Variations that can assist in remaining hidden, may then attempt to follow the individual and see if they report to anyone or do anything else that looks particularly suspicious. These sorts of indirect interactions, rooted in caution and careful observation, can lead to partnerships between Renegades.

Other Deviants create private codes based on shared experience or simply write messages in a circumspect and non-obvious manner and place them in locations where members of a conspiracy are unlikely to notice them. Options include disguising covert messages as posters for a public event and taping them to streetlamps or posting them on community bulletin boards. Also, most Renegades soon learn the value of using inexpensive "burner" phones for communication. Individuals with skill with electronics can even use these phones as wireless video cameras that allow them to keep track of safe houses and other locations that they wish to remain secure.

Devoted

Not all Remade are willing to endure a life of being hunted, or at best struggling to survive. These Remade possess a multitude of reasons why they are willing to trade their freedom for security and remain with their creators or owners. Some fear the consequences of a failed escape and never try. Others are sufficiently useful and obedient that they obtain various minor benefits, including medicines and treatments that mitigate their Scars. A few escape and then willingly return, seeing any consequences they might suffer as less bad than the miserable, constantly hunted life they endured while free.

Most Renegades regard the Devoted as fearful wretches, cowering in their cages, afraid to walk out, even if someone leaves the door open. While many Devoted are like this, some manage to gain at least some measure of their captor's trust. However, despite the lies they tell their captives, conspiracies consider even the most trusted Broken to be valuable tools, not employees, or even people.

Some Devoted possess extensive freedom and various comforts within the laboratory complex in which they live, but are not allowed to leave. In return, the conspiracy expects them to freely comply with tests and tasks, including using their Variations for the conspiracy's benefit. However, despite being slaves, many Devoted enjoy some degree of freedom and access to the outside world. While most have tracking devices locked on or implanted in their bodies, they live

in normal housing and can go shopping and perform other ordinary activities, as long as they reveal nothing about their nature or situation to outsiders.

In addition to making for more compliant test subjects, conspiracies can more easily ask Devoted living in this fashion to use their Variations in a variety of situations, ranging from ripping thoughts from a captive's mind to acting as a bodyguard to one of the conspiracy's senior members. Rewards for exceptional performance are common, and some Devoted believe their lives to be little different from those of government employees with extremely high security clearances, who also must endure restrictions on travel, regular surveillance, and negligible privacy. However, the reality of their situation is that they cannot quit or retire, and their conspiracy considers them to be expendable assets, not loyal agents

A few Devoted possess even greater freedoms, but in return are required to perform dangerous and often morally dubious tasks, which can range from espionage or assassination, to infiltrating the ranks of the Renegades. These latter Devoted must pretend to be Renegades, so they can provide their masters with information they can use to capture them. Some Devoted must also perform these captures. Renegades regard these Devoted as traitors and usually kill any they discover in their ranks.

The rarest they of Devoted are those with actual power within their conspiracy. For reasons that can range from a keen scientific mind to a preexisting relationship with senior members of the conspiracy or years of exceptional service and large amounts of luck, a few Devoted have some degree of status and power within their conspiracy. Much of this power is illusory, because the conspiracy's leadership regards them as property or beasts, but this knowledge and access can still allow the Devoted to wield notable influence.

However, conspiracies will swiftly revoke the privileges from even the most "trusted" and "important" Devoted, if the Devoted's superiors decide that she is too "erratic" or that they have grown tired of providing any Remade with the illusion of power. The Devoted's rivals in the conspiracy will usually be more than willing to use such arguments to defeat or destroy her. A few Devoted who wielded real power have gone from executive meetings and luxury apartments to cages and invasive laboratory tests simply because their rivals wished to eliminate the competition. As a result, some of these privileged Devoted strive to continually prove their worth and loyalty to their conspiracy, while others do their best to obtain compromising information on senior members of the conspiracy, and the cleverest Devoted pursue both of these options.

Regardless of their history with their conspiracy or how they became Remade, the twin drives of most Devoted are some combination of safety and loyalty. If a particular Remade makes herself sufficiently useful to her conspiracy, the conspiracy often keeps her relatively safe, both from harm and from hunger or other forms of privation. In addition to being exceptionally difficult to give up, this safety also engenders loyalty in most Remade, causing them to regard even a particularly capricious and cruel or uncaring conspiracy as their protectors, whom they will defend from all threats. Sometimes, this loyalty is consciously self-serving. Some Devoted help their conspiracy to ensure that the conspiracy treats the Devoted reasonably well, and continues to provide them with necessary medicines. In some cases, Devoted give their loyalty, because the only alternative to extreme loyalty is being caged, experimented on, and possibly even dissected.

However, spending long enough pretending loyalty often creates actual feelings of loyalty and devotion. As a result, many Devoted passionately care about protecting their conspiracy. Many Remade see the Devoted as fawning sycophants who praise the conspiracy for not punishing

their mistakes as severely as it could have. There is some truth to this, since many Devoted lead lives of wretched servitude. Often, poorly treated Devoted burn with envy at Renegades who escape from their conspiracy and lead free lives. Those who have sufficient courage join the Renegades in freedom, but Devoted who either lack this courage or are otherwise unwilling to give up the safety and security that even their unpleasant lives provide to them turn their envy at Renegades into anger, hatred, and a conviction that if they cannot have freedom then no other Remade should either.

Devoted with more pleasant lives are often genuinely grateful for their nice apartment, salary, or expense account, and the medicines that help keep their Scars from killing them. Some Renegades claim that these Devoted aren't even aware they are slaves, and while this is true for a few, the vast majority are completely aware of their condition, but for a variety of reasons are willing to accept the conditions of their life. Other Devoted make very different trades.

Many Elective Remade were researchers who either experimented on themselves or volunteered to allow their team to experiment upon them. Some of these researchers are Devoted because access to their conspiracy's funding and equipment, in order to complete their research and find a way to stabilize or reverse their condition. While almost all find their quest to be utterly in vain, few of these Devoted are willing to give up the promise, or perhaps the illusion, of success that easy access to scanning electron microscopes, gene sequencers, supercomputers, and vast array of similar devices provide.

Other Elective Remade who were subjects and not scientists are especially loyal Devoted, because every day members of the conspiracy promise to return them to normal or to stabilize and improve their condition. These same promises also convince Remade with other Origins to remain loyal, but any of these Devoted who find clear evidence that the Conspiracy either has no interest or no ability to cure or improve their condition swiftly lose their loyalty to the Conspiracy, and can become especially violent and merciless Renegades.

The pangs of Loyalty also drive Devoted to attach themselves to others within the conspiracy, whether it is a supervisor, a coworker, or other loyal Remade. The Broken might even be a true believer in the conspiracy's stated goals, swallowing its propaganda and living its mission statements with an uncritical eye.

Shifting Loyalties

Some Devoted eventually decide to choose freedom over safety and become Renegades. Also, a few Renegades surrender to a conspiracy, either the one that created them or one that makes the best offer. Remade who are considering this latter option understand that they are more likely to be accepted if they return bearing gifts, like captive Renegades or the locations and abilities of other Broken.

However, the possibility of changing loyalties doesn't mean that the decision to change them is a simple one. A handful of the Remade make this change in a few minutes. Suddenly discovering that their conspiracy is lying to them and using them can unravel years of loyalty in minutes. Many Renegades respond to the death or capture of a close comrade or a loved one by the conspiracy hunting them with a renewed desire to make the conspiracy pay for all they have done. However, a few simply snap and decide, out of despair or perhaps cold pragmatism, that they have no future as a Renegade and that their only option is becoming one of the Devoted. Nevertheless, for the vast majority of Remade, the decision to attempt to go from being Devoted

to a Renegade or the reverse requires weeks or months of agonizing deliberation, often followed by days or weeks of planning.

While many Renegades hate their captors and dream of escape, some do not, and only cease being one of the Devoted when their conspiracy betrays them or they learn of horrors it has inflicted. On rare occasions, a few of the most trusted Devoted who infiltrate Renegade organizations and retrieve escaped Remade learn to truly understand why some Remade flee and rebel, and do so themselves. Even more rarely, Renegades who escape from their conspiracy grow weary of an uncertain and dangerous life on the run and return to their conspiracy, begging for forgiveness. Since few conspiracies are particularly kind to rebels, most of these returning Devoted must either trade information on their fellow Renegades or capture one or more Renegades in return for avoiding dissection or other equally horrific fates.

Because of these occasional betrayals, Renegades who regularly interact with others of their kind periodically worry about traitors. Similarly, captured Renegades and Broken who attempt to infiltrate a conspiracy desperately attempt to convince any Devoted they encounter to either understand their desire for freedom and let them go or join them in rebellion. Of course, this same tension is not lost on most conspiracy members who work with Devoted or hunt for Renegades.

Most conspiracy members are vividly aware that Devoted sometimes change their loyalties and become Renegades. As a result, some conspiracy members who work with Devoted regard them all as beings who may, without warning, try to escape, killing or maiming anyone who gets in their way. To prevent such catastrophes, conspiracy members are inclined to lie to and conceal information from even the most loyal Devoted to prevent them from learning anything that might cause them to turn on their captors. This tactic can work exceedingly well, until the Devoted discovers the truth, at which point they become even more likely to renounce their loyalty and become a Renegade.

Members of a conspiracy are even more distrustful of Renegades who renounce their freedom and become Devoted. In addition to the chance that an inherently unstable individual who has already drastically changed her allegiance at least once may do so again, some especially fanatical Remade seek to pretend to become Devoted in order to attack a conspiracy from within. While conspiracies may offer all manner of promises and reassurances to convince Remade to surrender, these promises are often lies. Instead, many conspiracies provide the Remade with a well-guarded cell, or perhaps a thorough interrogation, followed by a shallow grave.

Some surrendering Renegades are sufficiently useful that the conspiracy provides them with at least a modicum of freedom and comfort in exchange for their cooperation. However, to make certain that the Remade is not attempting to fool them, most Conspiracies ask Renegades who seek to become Devoted to prove their loyalty by betraying or killing other Renegades. In addition to the obvious utility of the Renegade's assistance, such betrayals serve as both a test of loyalty and a way to ensure the Remade cannot easily return to the embrace of other Renegades.

Manticores

The same transformations that create the Remade can also alter animals, which conspiracies and Remade call Manticores. Manticores, like Deviants, are often a conspiracy's deliberate creation, but some arise by accident, either when an animal breaks into a lab containing powerful

mutagens or wanders too close to a location charged with potent mystical energies or other exotic phenomena.

Although many Progenitors wish to create exceedingly bright Manticores that understand almost any command, increasing a Manticore's intelligence above the level of a great ape requires making the creature's mind more human, which not infrequently results in fully intelligent and free-willed creatures that more closely resemble Deviants than other Manticores — complete with a vestigial or shattered soul. As a result, few Manticores are smarter than a chimpanzee or a gorilla, and the majority possess the intelligence of a particularly smart monkey or parrot.

Manticores possess one great advantage over the Remade: almost all are genetically stable and do not develop new Variations or increasingly severe Scars. Even the bizarre symbionts that attach themselves to human flesh are stable, but can cause their hosts a variety of problems. As a result, Manticores are often far safer to work with than the Broken. Most conspiracies begin working on Manticores before advancing to the human tests that create the Remade.

Conspiracies create most Manticores for specific reasons. They can be roughly divided into five categories: guards, hunters, pets, spies, and symbionts. The sixth type of Manticores are the accidentally created wild things.

Guards

Like Remade, Manticores can be exceptionally dangerous, and many conspiracies have found ways to harness this danger. While most such creatures are large animals like dogs, wolves, or bobcats, some conspiracies have enhanced chimpanzees, crows, eagles, or even snakes to create impressively deadly guards. The particulars differ from one animal to the next, but the goal is usually the same — to create animals that won't harm authorized personnel, but will capture, kill, or incapacitate intruders or dangerously disobedient captives.

Of course, like the Broken, Manticores are prone to being at least somewhat unpredictable. As a result, conspiracies use guards less frequently than the leaders of some conspiracies wish. Many researchers are generally unwilling to work next to monsters that could suddenly transform their gleaming and expensive workplace into something out of a survival horror video game.

The majority of Manticores created as guards are not used to keep intruders out, but instead to keep Remade captives in. Since Remade have strange and often unexpected abilities, designing technologies to keep them in their cages can be exceedingly difficult, and so researchers sometimes use animals with similar abilities, in the mostly accurate hope that the animal will be easier to control than the Remade captives it guards.

Hunters

The Manticores that Renegades fear the most are animals that a conspiracy has transformed into preternaturally good trackers, which can potentially follow a scent or some other, less obvious, trace left days or weeks after the Remade departs. They are also one of the rarest forms of Manticores, since a good private detective and either legal or illicit access to law enforcement and intelligence databases are excellent ways to find anyone who hasn't dropped entirely off the grid. As a result, most conspiracies have better things to do with substantial amounts of their time and money than to create methods of tracking escaped Deviants. Humans may not be quite as effective, but they're a lot cheaper, especially since Remade who don't want to be found are likely to attack anyone looking for them, and so Renegades frequently kill hunters.

This is not to say that hunters are never used. Instead, conspiracies usually only use hunters when they *really* want to find a particular Deviant. Generally, this means that the Broken possesses knowledge could seriously damage the conspiracy, Variations that they desperately need access to, or, more commonly, that the Remade has been successfully attacking the conspiracy, and the survivors need to kill or capture the Renegade before it kills or exposes them. Some Deviants take pride in a conspiracy sending a hunter after them, because this means that they have done serious damage to the conspiracy.

Remade who have dealt with these creatures understand that hunters are not always obvious. While most Deviants think of dogs or perhaps cats that can track and which accompany hunting parties, many other options are possible. A small, swift-flying hunter can cover far more ground than people on foot or in cars, and if it carries a radio tracker, the conspiracy knows precisely where it is at all times. Attach a camera, a microphone, and a speaker to the tracker, and the people monitoring the hunter can observe and even negotiate with the Broken. Something the size of a hawk or a crow can easily carry all the necessary electronics. Also, some hunters either possess Variations they can use aggressively, or are fitted with small tanks of anesthetics, or perhaps even a small bomb, that the conspiracy uses to incapacitate or kill especially dangerous Remade.

Pets

Many of the leaders and wealthy plutocrats funding conspiracies are exceedingly eccentric, and some demand equally unusual pets. Conspiracies design many of these pets are to be useful. One such Manticore might be a dog or cat that emits pheromones that makes everyone nearby more trusting and agreeable, except of course the pet's owner, who regularly takes an antidote to these pheromones. Another could be a small pet like a cat or miniature dog that sits in the owner's lap and quivers or twitches in a distinctive manner if someone nearby knowingly tells a lie. These pets can provide a valuable and nearly undetectable edge in business. However, almost as many special pets are simply creatures created to be gorgeous, loyal, and exceedingly impressive companions.

Most Manticore pets appear relatively normal, like a large housecat with stripes like a tiger that understands and follows commands as well as a bright and exceptionally well-trained dog. However, winged serpents, cats with metallic gold feathers, and other similarly exotic and obviously unnatural creatures are favored in some circles. Also, all but the most sociopathic individuals desire some form of close emotional connection, and an unusually bright and loving pet can provide that to conspiracy leaders who have little reason or ability to trust the people in their lives.

However, the desire for an intelligent and loving pet can sometimes go awry, especially when the resulting Manticore is too smart. Such creatures often resent their owners treating them like semi-intelligent slaves. More than a few of these intelligent Manticores have attempted to escape, and those that succeed occasionally meet Remade and form an alliance.

Spies

Learning others' secrets can be exceptionally valuable, and some Progenitors are convinced that while a careful opponent can discover or jam electronics, people are far less likely to consider small creatures a security threat. A hummingbird, or even a cat, or a small, friendly dog with keen hearing that can repeat anything it hears, can provide information difficult to obtain in other ways. Other more invasive creatures also exist, including animals that cause people to fall

unconscious or asleep and then either rifle through their minds or cause them to become extremely suggestible. Give the same creature the ability to speak or send its thoughts, and it can provide a detailed report on a rival's plans. Animals that can "hear" and decipher electronic signals, like cell phone calls, exist, as do ones that can both speak and gain information in a variety of paranormal means.

Symbionts

One of the strangest and most potentially problematic Manticores are the symbionts. These creatures feed off or are otherwise physically connected to a human host, providing them with the benefits of one or two Variations. Most conspiracies want to gain the benefits of some of the more useful Variations, but without the risks or Scars, and many see Manticore symbionts as an excellent intermediate step towards this goal. However, connecting animals that researchers have subjected to radical genetic engineering to your bloodstream and your nervous system is not for the faint of heart. Some researchers, and a few exceptionally wealthy individuals that they work for, have successfully halted, or in a few cases, entirely cured, fatal illnesses. Other symbionts have produced a wide variety of additional abilities, including extreme strength and the ability to move with inhuman speed. However, some symbionts also induce serious side effects in their hosts.

Although symbionts do not suffer from the instability that afflicts the Remade, some of them inflict Scars on their users. A few symbionts always inflict the same Scars, but others that have never previously caused Scars can suddenly begin causing them, and these Scars sometimes swiftly increase in severity. In addition, long-term, symbiont users occasionally, and without warning transform into one of the Broken. Some conspiracy members see these risks as worthwhile, and bond with Manticores symbionts to become enhanced bodyguards or spies, or simply regain their lost youthful vitality, but a few Remade once lived similar lives until their symbionts stole their humanity. As long as they have not become too physically divergent, Deviants can also use symbionts, but suffer all the risks of symbionts inflicting additional Scars on them.

Wild Things

Animals who become Manticores when they are accidentally exposed to the chemicals, radiation, or similar phenomena are the least predictable. No one created them to fulfill some purpose. Instead, their bodies warped and changed due to random chance. Some transform near a laboratory where conspiracies create Remade. Traces of the chemicals, tailored viruses, and radiation may leak out, or a wild animal might break in. Also, the same strange locations which occasionally spontaneously transform humans into Remade often also turn animals into Manticores.

These accidental Manticores are very different from deliberately created creatures, in large part because most are wild animals that have had no training to obey humans. Some avoid all human contact and live strange, wild lives, occasionally being spotted by hikers to become the source of strange urban legends. Others are predators that develop a taste for human flesh and hunt anyone who comes into their territory alone. Stories about these creatures can provide Remade with information about locations where someone is creating others of their kind, but sneaking into a remote and secret laboratory becomes considerably more dangerous if a hungry Manticore is stalking you.

Manticore Companions

Some Manticores break free from their creators. Others escape due to the efforts of Remade who are determined to leave no captive behind, regardless of species. A few befriend captive Deviants and help them escape. Some of these Manticores are nearly as intelligent as humans. However, most are relatively bright animals that developed a strong bond to one of the Broken, because their once-human companion treats them as an ally and not an experimental subject or a living tool. All types of Manticore can become a companion to one of the Remade, but symbiotic companions are relatively rare and wild things are even rarer. Some Broken find that their relationship with their Manticore companion is the first close relationship with any creature since their transformation, and for relatively isolated Remade, the Manticore may be their only friend.

Instability

As a Deviant learns to use her newfound powers, as she strives to protect her loved ones from the horrors that have befallen her, and as she seeks revenge upon the conspiracies intent on using her, she must also cope with how her Scars affect her. At first, she might struggle to adapt to the changes in her physical and mental condition. Eventually, she comes to understand what actions and situations exacerbate her mutations, and what makes their manifestations unbearable.

Left unattended, a Broken's Scars may deteriorate beyond his body's ability to adapt, ultimately killing him. However, avenues exist to help stave off mutation's ill-effects.

Instability measures how profoundly the Deviant's Scars affect her. Her actions can bring relief or intensify their impact, though she can never entirely halt Instability's progress.

Causes and Mitigation

The Divergence steals something both subtle and profound from the Remade — a piece of the soul whose absence some Deviants notice right away, while it takes others months, years, or even their entire lifetimes to realize what has gone missing. The change tears a hole in her humanity, damaging her sense of self. What rushes in to fill the vacuum is twofold: a fierce protectiveness for the few people and causes that remain important to the transformed, and the burning drive to bring down the people who changed her or who attempt to exploit those changes.

Acting on these twin desires gives the Deviant something to cling to, provides her a way to reassert her humanity and even carve out a place in a world that's otherwise driven her out. Ignoring or neglecting these drives pushes her in the other direction, giving her Scars a chance to take greater hold and her Variations to run rampant, until she's a danger to herself and everyone around her.

Renegades often find the instinct to drop completely off the grid extremely attractive. How simple it seems, to run away from the conspiracies who would use the Remade for their own nefarious ends, or go somewhere she can't hurt her loved ones. But isolation — even when it's well-intentioned — breeds instability. The Remade needs human contact, whether it comes from a place of love or hatred. Without it, that tear in her soul widens faster and faster, and her mutations intensify at an alarming rate.

How a Deviant navigates the push and pull between isolation and interaction is deeply intimate. Many are driven by the need to bring down the conspiracies that hunt their cohorts. Others try to nurture the relationships that matter most to them.

Manifestation

If a Remade ignores the things that anchor her to her humanity and instead tries to go it completely alone, or if she acts counter to her Loyalties or lets a chance at revenge slip away, that neglect manifests in measurable — if not always visible — ways.

One of the worst feelings is the loss of control that goes along with Instability. Many Broken work for years to master their Variations: keeping one's size consistent, for example, or not lighting objects on fire with their bare hands. When the Remade's actions force him into a crisis of conscience, that hard-won control over his abilities slips, making him more likely to lash out with his powers by accident or with more intensity than he usually wields. Not only is it frustrating and frightening to lose that adroitness, it can also put the Renegade's friends in danger, or tip his location off to agents of a conspiracy.

Even when growing Instability brings about an increase in the Deviant's abilities, there's a downside. As his powers ramp up, so do the Scars entwined with them. These manifestations can be internal and hard to detect: The Remade goes from losing a few minutes' worth of memories any time he controls an electrical current to losing hours or even entire days. Or a Broken plagued by phantom voices suddenly sees people who aren't really there. He might be able to hide the onset of these troubles for a time, but eventually people close to him recognize signs of his distress.

Other times, the mutations are physical, as the Remade's body begins breaking down or reshaping itself in some way that aligns with her Variations. Her bones grow brittle, her skin sloughs off. Odd appendages sprout from her torso and reveal her as something no longer human. In the early stages, these mutations can be hidden with carefully draped clothing, or passed off as the result of an unlucky fall. But as her Instability increases, the changes get harder to explain away or hide, and place mounting strains on her system.

The Deviant's Scars may even be beyond a Baseline's understanding, like when a Renegade's skin blisters at the sound of a trumpet, or when fortune consistently serves up the worst possible outcome at every turn. Other times, her powers fail her when they're most needed, or using them causes her harm.

A Broken who suffers from such mutations is occasionally able to wrest control of her body back to a manageable state, usually by making a hard and successful push against the target of her Conviction or by shoring up her relationship with a Loyalty Touchstone. Regaining control is a relief, if often a temporary one.

Loyalty

The Deviant isn't the only one affected by his transformation. The changes have a ripple effect on the people in his life: family, friends, coworkers, neighbors. His powers hurt someone he cares about. His Scars put innocent bystanders in danger. Members of the conspiracy he's running from show up on his mother's doorstep, or in his boss' office.

Some people abandon the Renegade first — he gets fired, friends stop returning his calls, neighbors turn out the lights when he knocks. Other times, he's the one cutting the ties, both for other peoples' safety, and to prevent the sting of betrayal.

But there are those who refuse to let him ghost on them.

These are the people who offer crash space and a hot meal when he shows up, desperate and bloodied, no questions asked. The niece who stays in contact even after her mom has forbidden her to call. The friends who have hidden him away when unsmiling Devoted come looking, and are ready to do it again.

The transformed are capable of making new friends as well, people proficient at breaking through the instinctual distrust he's learned along the way. They may be other Renegades in his cohort, who share the same thirst for vengeance or understand what he's going through better than anyone else in the world. She may be a Baseline ally who's got it in for the conspiracy for reasons of her own. He might be a new lover, who only knows the Remade as he is now, and lets the Broken forget what he's lost for a little while.

These people are the Deviant's Loyalty Touchstones. Protecting them becomes a sacred duty to the Remade. They connect him to his humanity and give him a purpose beyond the burning hate he harbors. Often, they keep the flames of that hatred from consuming him utterly.

Of course, caring about someone that deeply has its own dangers. Mere association with the Broken puts his Touchstones on the conspiracies' radar. Some conspiracies make overt threats toward the Touchstones, aimed directly at getting the Renegade to fall in line or turn himself in. Other times, they work more subtly, pumping the Touchstone for information or tricking them into acting counter to the Renegade's plans. A Deviant who learns his friends have betrayed him — even unwittingly — feels the foundations of his world shake.

Some Broken grow deeply possessive of their Touchstones. They cling too tightly, hover too closely, for fear their enemies will take their loved ones away. This unhealthy behavior often puts a strain on the relationship, as friends and family feel stifled — or even threatened — by the Deviant's obsession. When two Remade become one another's Touchstones, this can turn into a feedback loop of codependence with each person feeding the other's fears.

Unhealthy Relationships

When determining the dynamics between Remade and their Touchstones, please remember to check in with other players at your table. Obsessive or codependent relationships may be a trigger for someone in your group, and should be approached with care and compassion.

Deviants often find themselves forced to choose between acting in support of their Loyalties and chasing down a lead toward one of their Convictions. Win-win situations are nearly unheard of, which makes these decisions all the harder. Something's going to break. The question is, which of those can be pieced back together?

Conviction

Hatred is as powerful an anchor for the Renegade as Loyalty. Someone set her on the path toward Divergence, or learned of its happening and tried to use her and her powers for their own purposes. The rage she feels — toward her Progenitor, toward a conspiracy, toward anyone who has wronged her — either makes her feel whole again or is so all-consuming she doesn't have time to mourn the part of her excised by the Divergence.

The Deviant devotes her time and what resources she has to destroying the conspiracy and preventing it from doing to anyone else what it's done to her. Having a cohort dedicated to the same goals is certainly helpful, but if she must burn it all down on her own, she'll find a way.

This drive can lead the transformed to make some dangerous and even self-destructive choices. Conspiracies tend to have money and influence. They can afford decent security. Some have Devoted and Manticores working for them, tasked with guarding the conspiracy from vengeance-seeking Renegades, or with finding them and bringing them in. While all of these are obstacles in the Remade's path, none of them are truly a deterrent. Her Conviction pushes her to find a way around, even if that means breaking some laws...or some skulls.

Members of a conspiracy consider few things off-limits when it comes to the Remade. Friends and family make excellent fodder, and undermining a Renegade's relationships sets the Deviant that much more off-kilter, makes them that much easier to catch.

Guardians

Many Deviants prioritize their hate and rage, preferring to let those things drive them rather than dealing with the nigh-inevitable heartbreak that comes with having people to care for and protect. Friends have a terrible habit of turning their backs, turning you in, or turning up dead, and who could blame a Renegade for thinking they're often more trouble than they're worth?

But some see a different path to keeping their Instability at bay, by focusing on protection over vengeance. A Renegade whose Loyalty is greater than his Conviction becomes a Guardian. He has found balance between the two drives, and is temporarily at peace. He no longer feels Instability hovering just around the corner, and in fact notices some of those troubles lessening. His mind is quieter, his flesh heals, and that awful bout of bad luck seems to have come to an end.

The Broken may believe he's come to the end of the conspiracy, or that burning the lab that created him to the ground has granted him closure. Now he can turn his sights on those friends who stood by him, and repay the countless kindnesses they've shown him during his quest for revenge.

But this condition cannot last. A new branch of the conspiracy rears its head, or the Renegade finds himself dissatisfied with destroying just that one lab. Paranoia is second nature, and he can't help but wonder who his Touchstone was on the phone with, and why she hung up so hastily when he entered the room. Betrayal is always lurking.

As soon as his Conviction equals or exceeds his Loyalty, the calm state of Guardianship is over, putting the Deviant at risk of Instability once more.

Ferals

While both Renegades and Devoted must attend to their Conviction and Loyalty Touchstones to keep hold on their humanity, some Deviants never even get that chance. Ferals are those Remade who have no Touchstones, and have yet survived their Instabilities. These Deviants have often mutated beyond recognition, their shapes monstrous and only vaguely human. The powers they display are wild and often uncontrollable. Renegades view them with pity — Devoted, with disgust. The conspiracies use them or discard them as need be, with little regard to the people they used to be.

Origins

A Feral's origin is much like that of his fellow Remade. The same lab that created other, more stable Deviants can also produce Ferals. Sometimes experiments go awry, or a Progenitor fails to take a variable into account, and the result is horrific. A cult draws ancient power down into their victim, and it's too much for her human mind and form to bear. A research student decides he wants the glory for himself, and injects his mentor's untested serum into his veins.

As the effects take hold, the Feral's Variations and Scars run rampant. A Feral who quickly grasps how to wield her newfound powers is a danger to those around her. The lab experiment destroys the facility in her wild attempt to escape. The sacrificial victim murders any cultists foolish enough to stay to negotiate with their new deity. The research student stumbles toward his rival's house to gloat, ignoring the pain as his bones crack and reshape themselves along the way.

With their powers outpacing their ability to adapt, or to begin processing what happened to them, Ferals continue to degenerate. She might have time to say goodbye to a loved one, but the protective drive that might make that person a Loyalty Touchstone is overwhelmed by the Feral's own agony and confusion.

Likewise, there's not enough time for the deep, burning hatred for her Progenitor or the conspiracy that made her to settle into her bones. A Feral who wakes up on the operating table or the altar might have time to lash out at her creator, but it's done more out of instinct and terror than from the seething fury that a Renegade learns to harbor.

The fear of going Feral is a threat even for Deviants who survive their transformations. Touchstones anchor the Remade to their humanity; losing them all sends the transformed spiraling. That ever-present danger makes her hold her loved ones just a little closer, or stoke the flames of her hatred that much hotter.

Conspiracies

The conspiracies tend to view Ferals as failed experiments or the results of botched rituals. They are a stepping stone on the way to perfection, the error in trial-and-error. For those who believe you can't make an omelet without breaking a few eggs, Ferals are the discarded shells. If their humanity is acknowledged at all, their existence is more likely to be covered up than mourned.

When the Remade turns Feral on the slab, and the conspiracy can catch and subdue her, they have a few options. The first is to put her in a cage and hold her for further experimentation. Here is a prime chance to study what went wrong, or whether any of her resulting mutations might be useful to build into future attempts at Divergence. From the safety of the other side of the bars, scientists can record the rate and method of the Ferals' deterioration and introduce drugs to slow down or speed up those effects. They may force the Feral to activate her Variations — usually with the scientist holding a sedative-loaded syringe, and an armed guard close by.

Conspiracies that gain some measure of control over a Feral — whether through drugs and devices or outright manipulation — also use them as weapons. Ferals are not as reliable or obedient as a Manticore, and they run the risk of turning on the conspiracy at inopportune times. However, as a single-use, throw-away instrument, Ferals make effective tools. Set one free in a crowded downtown area to sow havoc and fear, and the conspiracy's response team can swoop in and save the day. Send the Feral after the family of a Renegade in hiding and flush her out

when she comes to save her kin — if the Renegade kills the Feral in the ensuing battle, so much the better.

Whether the conspiracy holds on to them awhile for experimentation or puts them down immediately, Ferals are disposable. Labs cremate their remains, or save the useful parts in a morgue drawer and destroy all evidence of anything that might identify their subjects. Cults bury their victims in unmarked graves where no one ever goes. The Feral's identity and very existence is scrubbed to the best of the conspiracies' abilities, leaving their loved ones little chance for closure. It is the final indignity in a chain already heavy with them.

Escape

Some Ferals escape from the laboratory's mazelike halls, or flee the ritual grounds and outrun their pursuers. Others were never captured at all, but sense their change and realize they have to get away, fast. Once free, Ferals tend to avoid heavily-populated areas, keeping their distance from Baselines much the way the wild animals who are their namesakes do. They are keenly aware not only of the danger they pose to humans, but of the danger humans pose to them.

Many Ferals who retain memories of their humanity can no longer bear to be near people. Fear and shame drive them away from civilization. Whether that means the Feral makes a lair deep in the forest or claims a corner in an abandoned warehouse, the result is the same: she stakes out a safe place, and holes up there. Eventually, hunger and other necessities pull her back toward cities and towns, but even then, the Feral attempts to remain unseen, stealing clothes from unattended dryers in the 24-hour laundromat, shoving handfuls of protein bars in her pockets at an all-night convenience store. Some Ferals' Variations and Scars lend well to staying off the grid, aiding them in going undetected or slipping past security to snatch up what they need.

Others have no such luck — a trip into town is a nightmare scenario as soon as the Feral is spotted, and witnesses flee in terror from her monstrous appearance. The stress from such an appearance risks making the Feral's condition worse, triggering uncontrollable powers and Scars that endanger both the Feral and any onlookers who get too close.

Of course, isolation affects Ferals much as it does other Deviants. Although he has no Touchstones, the Feral still feels the effects of his damaged soul. He is caught in an untenable situation. Hiding away from others causes him to grow more unstable. But there's little benefit for a Feral to maintain human contact. Ferals cannot heal Instability by protecting people or seeking revenge. Often, doing those things comes with further risk of falling into madness and mutation. Any relief he feels when helping others is dashed by their revulsion. What satisfaction he gleans from vengeance is dulled by the knowledge that his monstrous acts are what people expect of him.

It's for these reasons that Ferals tend to burn fast and bright, as even their most benign actions run the risk of sending them into a spiral of Instability.

Ferals and Renegades

Renegades hear tales of Ferals and think "there but for the grace of God — or science, or sheer stubbornness — go I." Ferals represent a glimpse into the Deviant's own potential future, the Instability and decline awaiting him if he finally tips over that edge and can't claw his way back to solid ground.

When instinct, anger, and shame tell a Renegade to withdraw from society, he recalls the burden Ferals face and finds the strength to stay in the world a while longer. Some Remade even attempt to “domesticate” Ferals, seeking out family members who might become Touchstones, or pointing them at their Progenitors and hoping hatred takes root. This is often a lost cause, but someone out there took a chance on the Deviant and kept her grounded — shouldn’t she try paying that forward?

It’s rare enough for one Broken to find others like him. Seeking out a Feral is harder and riskier, though doing so can yield useful information for the Remade who earns a Feral’s trust. Those who are still capable of communicating can recall the layout of the labs, the names the cultists chanted and the position of the stars, or the contents of that one fateful syringe. A Feral has plenty of reasons to keep tabs on the conspiracy that created him. After all, he’d be a stain on their reputation if word of what they did to him got out. Or if he destroyed a city block while shouting the name of the conspiracy’s parent company.

A Feral is likely to keep detailed records on the conspiracy, even if he isn’t driven to use those records the same way a Renegade would. For a Renegade, information is ammunition. For a Feral, it’s a bargaining chip to be used to buy his freedom, or a way to stay one step ahead of the conspiracy’s searches.

Getting a Feral to part with her information can be fraught. How does she know the Deviant knocking on the door isn’t a Devoted looking to bring her back to her cage? How can she be sure the Renegade won’t come calling again, wanting her to get involved, to expose herself to the conspiracy, to act as bait? Helping out means putting herself at risk of getting caught and used and hurt all over again. Unless the Feral is, by some twisted miracle of fate, one of the Deviant’s Loyalty Touchstones, she fears she’s just as disposable to other Remade as she is to her Progenitor.

Yet, some Ferals can be persuaded to help, especially if the Broken has something the Feral desperately needs. Materials to repair degrading parts, a vial of a hard-to-procure remedy, food that doesn’t come from a supermarket’s dumpster. Though they’re further removed from humanity than their Renegade cousins, Ferals can still be moved by another victim’s plight and convinced to share their knowledge or offer their strength. Renegades should be wary of tricking or setting a Feral up to take a fall, lest they find themselves the focus of the wronged Feral’s rage.

Swan Song

A Feral’s fate is to die tormented by his Variations and Scars, his body and powers no longer obeying his will, or doing so in erratic and unpredictable ways. While some Ferals try to take themselves far away where their death throes can do no harm, others retain enough outrage to want one last shot at revenge. Still others are lonely and tired and desperate enough to go in search of comfort, regardless of how dangerous they’ve become.

Some of these Ferals join with other Renegades to attack the conspiracies that tore away their humanity. Rather than the conspiracy turning him into a weapon, the Feral decides to be one himself, aiming at a target of his choosing. These Ferals tend to give their comrades in arms one last order: if it goes too far, end it. Remade take this request seriously, knowing that someday they might ask a friend to do the same.

Other Ferals have less benevolent goals, wishing simply to make others suffer as they have. He wants his Progenitor to face her creation and take responsibility, perhaps. Or she might want to go out in a way that means she'll never be forgotten, no matter how hard the conspiracy tried to erase evidence of her existence.

Lastly, some Ferals have no plan at all. As they fall prey to the whims of their Instabilities, they're drawn to an area like moths to a flame. They sense the heart of the power grid, or see the lights of a city on the horizon, or hear the hum of the machinery that turned them into something no-longer-human. They turn toward these siren calls and go to investigate, bringing their hazardous flesh and terrible powers along with them.

The Web of Pain

It's all too easy for a Renegade to focus on the here and the now. Many a Deviant thinks in immediate terms, fueled by anger and driven to lash out at the enemy they know through whatever means are available. Survival and revenge dominate the Renegade's mental landscape, inflicting a narrow view of the conflict that plays out. It's the Broken and their close allies against the conspiracy and its pawns, and everything outside of the battleground between the two can be tuned out and ignored.

Things are rarely so simple. Unwelcome complexity intrudes on the Renegade's black-and-white view. Society isn't a clean set of clearly-divided units. It's a tangled mess, a web of threads reaching beyond obvious perception, each strand forged by personal alliances or enmities and reinforced by passion or pain. Unseen feuds and allegiances run throughout the fabric of civilization, focusing around the conspiracies that draw them in like spiders. Pull at a thread, and the consequences can be felt far and wide throughout the web. Tear a thread away entirely, and all the connected strands reverberate like an alarm. Crushing the enemies she can see will not win the Deviant the reprieve she hopes for. The web is wide and deep, and there is no easy way to escape it.

Hidden Threads

Conspiracies attract other conspiracies, becoming entangled with alarming ease. Sometimes they combine completely, creating a new singular whole, like a sinister fraternity in a state police department with the influence and pull to forcibly unify the other groups of crooked cops under one banner. Often, though, entangled conspiracies attempt to influence or dominate each other without merging entirely. A coven of occultists in state government has direct lines to half a dozen lesser conspiracies — the crooked police, company owners carving up the construction contracts, the weird rat worshipers in the sewers, and others besides. The coven keeps its membership exclusive, but it needs the resources and reach of the other conspiracies. It reinforces its grasp through blackmail and bartered influence. Sooner or later, an even bigger fish will notice the coven, and the occultists will get a pointed lesson in the limits of their own power.

Then there are the times conspiracies go to war. These conflicts rarely play out in the open, instead fought in the shadows, the back-alleys, the exclusive soirees, and the churches. Warring conspiracies may have fundamentally incompatible goals or beliefs, or refuse to compromise over desired resources. Regardless of the depth of hostility, they are just as bound up in the Web of Pain as any other group. Their struggles tie them together tightly.

For a Deviant, discovering the depth and complexity of this web is a gradual, and often painful, process. It starts simple — there is a conspiracy responsible for the Renegade's Divergence, and

they must pay for what they've done. Except it turns out that the street gang was just given the mutagenic drug by someone else, a chemist-kingpin whose very name terrifies the thugs that pushed the needle in; or the company never actually existed, just a hollow shell for the puppeteers to hide behind; or the cult leader is just one of an entire cabal, and there are other nightmare sects scattered all across the country, other innocents being tormented just as the Renegade was.

Conspiracies are secretive by nature, and often one conspiracy values another on the basis that it can serve as a deniable asset, a cell that can be severed and left to its fate if matters go awry. As such, the Deviant faces the challenge of piecing the connections together. Often, revelation comes only in glimpsed fragments. An enforcer turns up, sharp-suited and tooled up with cutting-edge armaments that can stop even a Remade in her tracks, but the mafia foot-soldiers only know that he's from 'back home in Sicily'. A cohort gets ready to tangle with corrupt cops, only to run into an entirely different conspiracy of mad-eyed rat-worshipping lunatics — a seemingly bizarre alliance of police and cultists they could not predict, because the Deviants can't yet see the occultists who hold both conspiracies' leashes. Perhaps foes always seem to be well-equipped with crates of gear from a single mysterious source, a strange benefactor who remains in the shadows but for the identifying mark of the scorpion on the manufactured hardware.

As the Renegade picks away at the scab of conspiracy, they reveal more and more of the festering truth. Divergence was a very personal tragedy for the Deviant, yes, but they may find it was just the endgame of a very long chain of decisions and choices. In some cases, this can be terribly humbling or even crushing, when a Remade discovers that their individual pain is just the footnote in a scheme that may have been going on for centuries, or just another digit on a spreadsheet. Even when the process and Progenitor of Divergence were intimately close to the Renegade, just dealing with that trauma does little to clear away the knowledge that others empowered the Progenitor in the first place, or profited off the Divergence and the Renegade's suffering. Unless a Deviant can achieve balance in their wounded soul, the urge to grab the frayed threads, to pull and tear at the whole web until it comes apart entirely, can be a powerful and dangerous drive.

Tense Connections

Where two or more conspiracies are webbed together, they often connect around the personal relationships of a few specific individuals. Most of the mafia family only know that the patriarch has 'connections', and they've learned not to ask deeper questions than that. The company employs the 'Special Executive' to handle a discretionary budget of off-the-books payments for 'troubleshooting' purposes, and she's the only one that knows the details of the paid muscle — with the rest of the board specifically not wanting any incriminating information. The contract between government military and a cybernetics research division is really about the personal links between the head researcher and a few of the generals that she has persuaded of her ambitions — as well as her ongoing enmity against several other high-ranking command staff.

Conspiracies make these personal relationships vital, because it's all about who can and can't be trusted with information. A conspiracy can't just run through regular government channels to acquire that contract, because they need people on the other side who understand and will quietly give the nod to the fact the research program will involve some ethical sidesteps or illegal materials. It's very hard for conspiracy members to trust outsiders when it comes to schemes that

are vital to the conspiracy. Trust comes, therefore, through mutual understandings and shared transgressions. Two conspirators each know that the other has a lot to lose if anything of an arrangement ever came to light, so each can feel at least some measure of assurance that the other will play along.

This, in turn, puts a lot of strain on those relationships, especially if anything ever goes wrong — and where Deviants are involved, it often does. When a Weaponized Human Organism breaks free from the Enhanced Soldier Program, the general demands the company woman clean the mess up as quickly as possible, and the company woman demands the general pull the levers of government to help cover it up. Prickly threats break trust down fast. Brittle strands might snap entirely.

When the threads prove strong enough, though, they can allow a knotted tangle of conspiracies to aid one another with remarkable effectiveness, rendering the whole greater than the sum of its parts. One conspiracy of modern-day flesh-traders has the dumb muscle needed to bring down a Renegade, but they can't find the escaped slave in the first place. They turn to the coven of tech-fetishists who sit behind the staring eyes of the city's surveillance cameras, offering an opportunity at trying their own flesh-tech Divergence on a future victim if they can just help track this escapee down first. Elsewhere, a payment comes into an untraceable bank account, and suddenly the Honorable Fraternity of Lawyers and Representatives has its legal staff working hard to stymie any attempt the Renegade makes to reach out to the law for help. Whether it's knowledge, influence, or leg-breaking, the trio of conspiracies can work to cover each other's weaknesses, to the benefit of them all — and to the detriment of the Deviants caught in their net.

Broken Strands

Deviants plow through the delicate network of the conspiratorial web with wild abandon, laying waste to old agreements and pacts. Like flies, they tend to catch themselves in too many strands to fully break free of, and end up the victims of the spider-like masterminds who command the most powerful and dangerous of the conspiracies. Sometimes, though, even the spider comes up empty-handed, and the fly rips through entirely.

The most straightforward way that a Deviant can damage the web is by weakening or destroying conspiracies. In its most brutish form, a Renegade might achieve this by simply hunting down and killing conspirators. This is particularly effective against conspiracies that are weak or lack the stomach and ability for violence, but brutal murders tend to attract attention. Sooner or later, a conspiracy that is well-gearred for confrontation will come sniffing around the blood-spattered crime scenes, and the Deviant will find themselves with more unwanted attention than if they had been more circumspect about their vengeance in the first place.

If a Renegade can gather enough information to piece together an understanding of the web's connections, they can attack those connections directly. Find out what one conspiracy wants of another, what resource the conspiracy provides to its benefactors, and take that asset away. Those occultists who trade their alchemical lore to the street gangs suddenly have nothing to offer when their library burns down. A ruined reputation renders worthless a conspiracy that relies on its social leverage to aid its allies. For those Deviants utterly determined to indulge in bloody violence, just knowing the names of the specific individuals in each conspiracy who make the deals can render a targeted attack vastly more effective.

Conspiracies themselves often wreak havoc in the web by striking at each other. As alliances and enmities shift rapidly, Broken find themselves caught in the crossfire. As a cohort finally closes in on the team behind the illegal experimentation that created the Deviants, the researchers' benefactors decide the Progenitors are now a loose end that needs to be tidied up, and so the Renegades find a kill-team executing the doctors with brutal efficiency. One conspiracy starts hunting down the Renegades of another, either mistaking them for active agents or intending to interrogate them for any information of value regarding the rival.

An organization might reach out to a Deviant with the carrot rather than the stick in hope of acquiring a Devoted. Offering a Renegade the chance to strike back at the ones who made her or hurt her is a tempting deal, especially if it comes with the full backing of an organization bringing more power to bear than she can manage on her own. Such an offer can be just as much a set of chains as those the Deviant escaped from in the first place, though, even if this time they'd be gilded by whatever benefits the would-be Devoted might glean from the deal.

Clashes between conspiracies and rents torn in the web by vengeful Deviants can offer opportunities to Renegades, but they can also serve as a danger. When two conspiracies tangle over assets or power, the victor may end up stronger and more influential than either was beforehand, and all the more able to mop up any loose resources of the vanquished. Finally laying waste to a Progenitor at the top of a hierarchy can be satisfying, but it may open space for a new conspiracy to flourish in — and possibly one that is now better-educated about Divergence and more ambitious in its goals. Tearing one conspiracy down brings the attention of its immediate partners and superiors against a threat capable of wreaking such destruction. For the beleaguered Deviant, it can feel as if every success brings more challenges, reveals more conspirators, and unveils more atrocities that must be set right. The world has no end of challenges to throw at the Renegade, and the burning drive of conflict and struggle brings only more pain.