



ELECTRIC GHOSTS

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by Raven Daegmorgan

Electric Ghosts

...a **Sorcerer** supplement ...
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Acknowledgements:

Ron Edwards, without whom
none of this would have been possible

Jared A. Sorensen and **Doug Bolden**
for their original thoughts on the subject

Todd LaRoche, for his excellent advice and
commentary on the bugs in the initial concepts

Keith Davies, **Travis Casey**, **B. Sheffer**, **Troy Gustavel** and **Gareth Martin** for their incomparable thoughts on cybernetics (and **Larry D. Hols** for his bit about the horses)

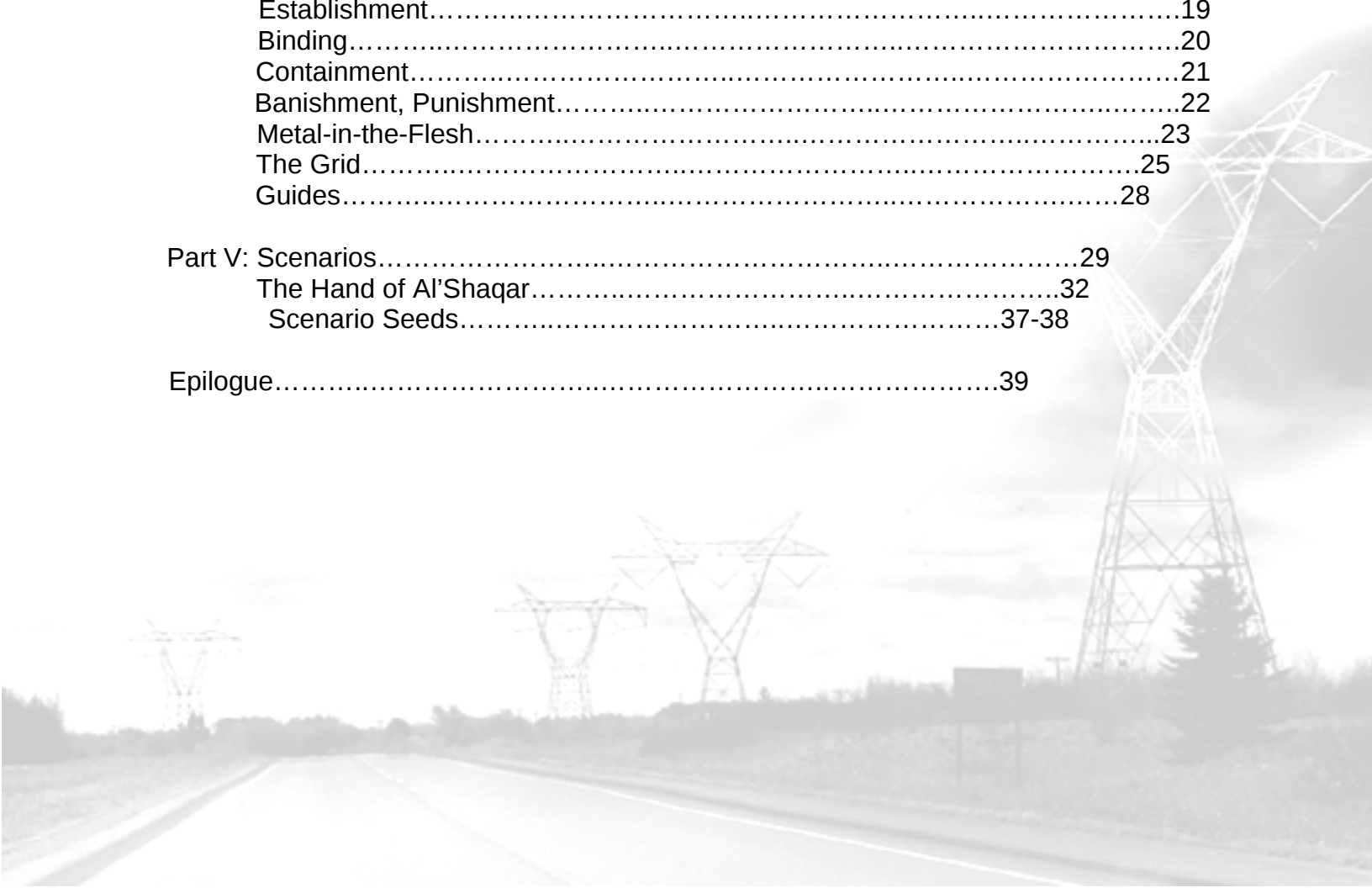
Dave Harper for adding the "car" scenario,
and promising to buy the first copy

Jenny and the kids, for putting up with me staying awake working until the sun rose for last few weeks, and with the dreaded "Sure, just a minute."

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Welcome

...to Electric Ghosts, a supplement for the role-playing game Sorcerer...

Electric Ghosts is a scenario idea, created as a way to play Sorcerer, not necessarily a complete package detailing an entire society, sorcerous groups, demons and all the things in-between. It presents the idea of how a game of Sorcerer might be run using the vaguely defined demons of that game as entities who exist due to man's control over electricity and his increasing dependence upon it.

Electric Ghosts is built from a variety of sources, from those as identifiable as the movies "The Matrix" or "2001: A Space Odyssey" to things as seemingly unrelated as the on-line comic "Sluggy Freelance."

Like the main Sorcerer rules, the information provided in this book is left deliberately vague and bereft of setting detail, so as to better make the ideas and the world you will create here your own. However, more concrete campaign ideas are presented in the final sections of this work as examples of how one might utilize the material as presented, even twist it a little and hold a funhouse mirror up to it.

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This book has been a labor of love...exhausting, demanding, childish, stubborn at times, but a labor I am glad I undertook, and I hope you enjoy this vision.



Part I: Introduction

Just beyond the boundaries of the physical world, touching it and interlaced with it, acting upon and acted upon by it, lies another realm. No, I'm not talking about some mystical world of hoo-doo, some spiritual realm reached via trances, drug-overdoses or other psychological alterations, full of spirits and beings of power and other mysterious entities and energies.

I'm talking about the world of electronics: the electric hum that underlies everyday life in the modern world, the things that run your car, your computer, your light switches, even your smoke detector and refrigerator; the informational highway that zips along the phone lines from country to country, computer to computer, interlacing the world, whirring along in the middle of the night whether you are awake or not, populated by men and women, a cat or two, and occasionally a clever parrot.

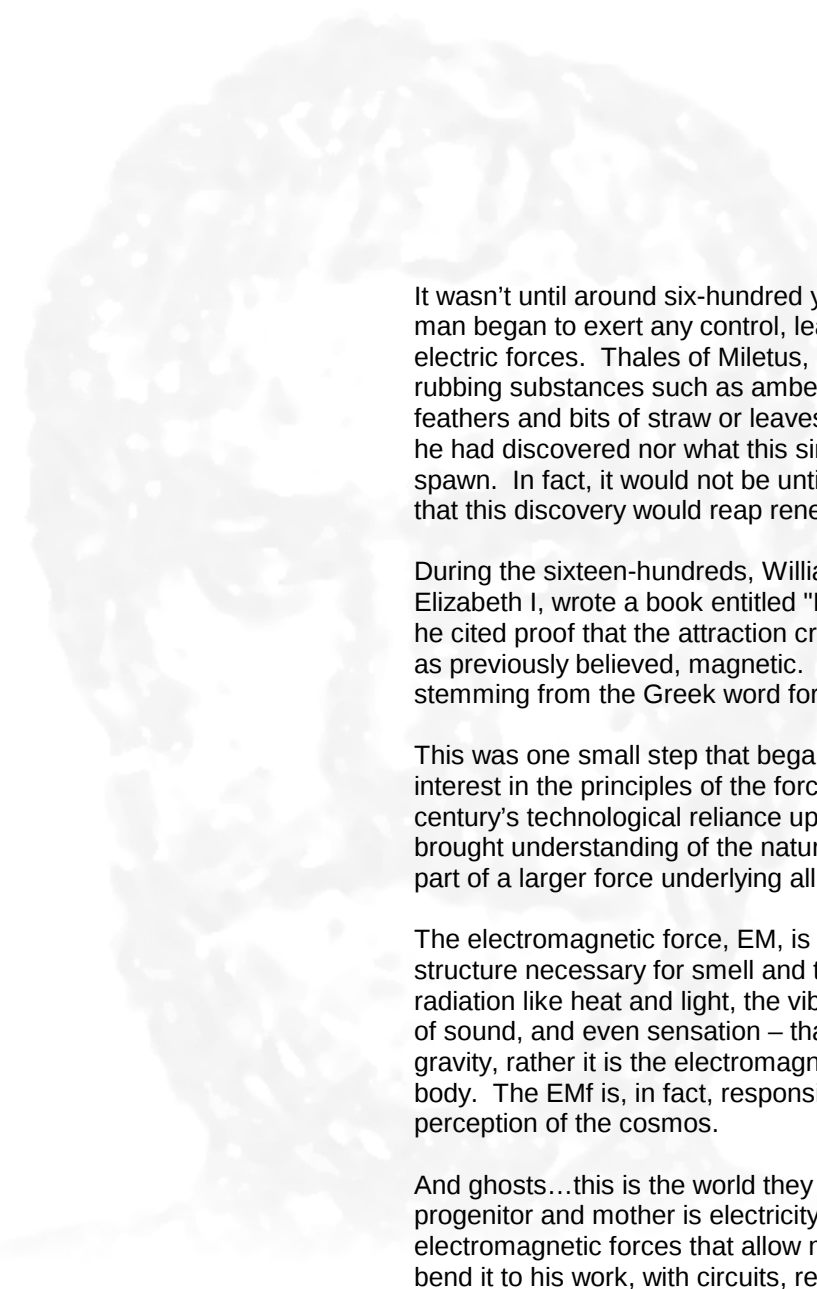
I'm talking about current, amperage and resistance...transistors, capacitors and circuits...I'm talking electronics...electrons...their world, their existence, their reality. Our reality.

Banking, commerce, research, defense, informational gluttony, technological comfort...endless streams of data internal and external: living, breathing, ever-present machines...the background hum of electricity and spreading electro-magnetic fields. A modern wonderland that has banished out primitive fears and superstitions within its embrace.

We used to think that when the lights went out, the ghosts appeared.

No, no...we had it all wrong. When the lights come on is when the ghosts come out to play.

***"And I lay a circle of amber and jet
round the machine."***



It wasn't until around six-hundred years before the birth of Christ that man began to exert any control, leastwise any knowledge of or over electric forces. Thales of Miletus, a greek philosopher, noted that rubbing substances such as amber or jet enabled them to attract feathers and bits of straw or leaves, though he did not realize what it was he had discovered nor what this simple discovery would eventually spawn. In fact, it would not be until more than two-thousand years later that this discovery would reap renewed interest.

During the sixteen-hundreds, William Gilbert, physician to Queen Elizabeth I, wrote a book entitled "De Magnete" ("On Magnets") wherein he cited proof that the attraction created by rubbing jet or amber was not, as previously believed, magnetic. He called this new force "electric", stemming from the Greek word for amber – "elektron."

This was one small step that began a two-hundred year explosion of interest in the principles of the force of electricity, leading to the modern century's technological reliance upon it as a source of power. And it brought understanding of the nature of electricity: that it was only a small part of a larger force underlying all reality...

The electromagnetic force, EM, is the facilitator for the molecular structure necessary for smell and taste, the generation of photonic radiation like heat and light, the vibration of molecules for the production of sound, and even sensation – that pressure beneath your feet is not gravity, rather it is the electromagnetic repulsion of the earth against you body. The EMf is, in fact, responsible for one-hundred percent of our perception of the cosmos.

And ghosts...this is the world they are immersed within...a world whose progenitor and mother is electricity and the underlying electron and electromagnetic forces that allow man to harness and control this force, bend it to his work, with circuits, resistors, magnets and capacitors.

Now, man lives with his inventions, unaware of the truth of what it is he has actually created...

***"Man does not control fire,
man is merely the keeper of a caged tiger,
wild and ready to devour its keeper at the slightest misstep."***

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Literary

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- "Neuromancer", William Gibson
- "Shadowrun", 3rd Edition
- Shadowrun, "Virtual Realities"
- "Mage: the Ascension", 1st Edition
- "The Island of Dr. Steve" Sluggy Freelance
- "The Man Who Made Friends with Electricity", Fritz Leiber
- "A Desk Full of Girls", Fritz Leiber

Film

- "2001: A Space Odyssey", Arthur C. Clarke
- "2010: Odyssey Two", Arthur C. Clarke
- "The House on Haunted Hill"
- "Ghostbusters"
(you try to tell me the machine in the basement isn't just a big-ass Contains).
- "The Matrix"
(there are ghosts within the machine...us. And the machine doesn't like us).
- "Tron"
- Star Wars' series ("Star Wars", "Empire Strikes Back", "Return of the Jedi", "The Phantom Menace")
(the Jedi are sorcerers, their lightsabers are their initial ghosts, Darth Vader is simply a sorcerer who became too much machine)
- "Weird Science"

Television

- Sun Microsystems "The Dot" commercial
- "Weird Science"
- "The Outer Limits", Final Appeal
- "Roswell Conspiracies: Aliens, Myths & Legends"
- "Tales From the Crypt", Report from the Grave
- "Scooby Doo, Where Are You?", Spooky Space Kook
- "The Scooby Doo Show", Watt A Shocking Ghost
- "Twilight Zone"

Part II: Denizens

“The world is inhabited by living, breathing machines.”

Main Entry: **ge·nius**

Pronunciation: 'jEn-y&s, 'jE-nE-&s

Function: *noun*

Inflected Form(s): *plural ge·nius·es or ge·nii* /-nE-"I/

Etymology: Latin, tutelary spirit, natural inclinations, from *gignere* to beget

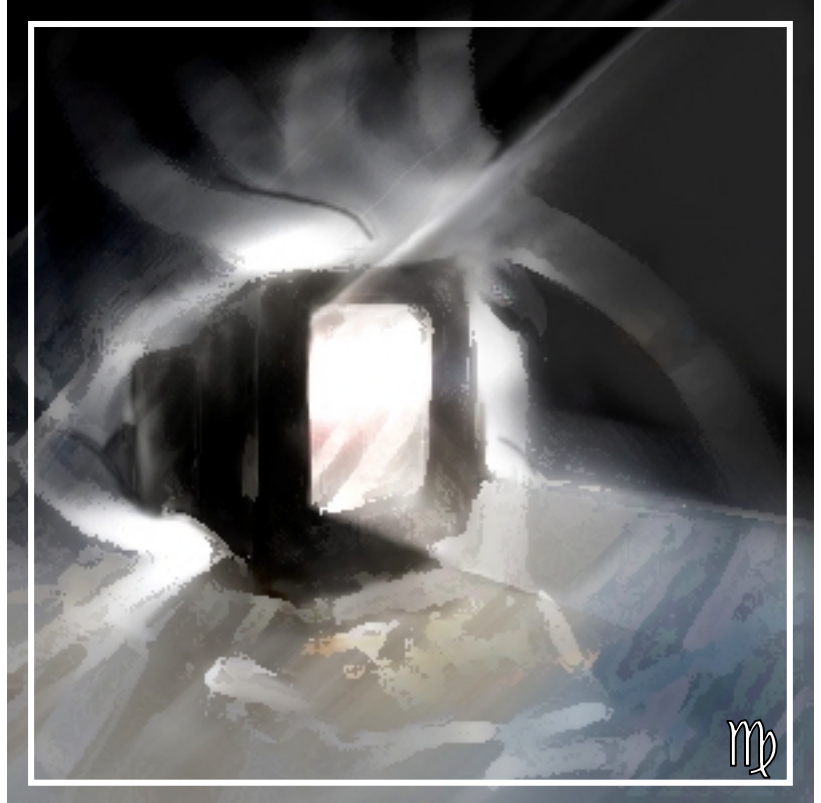
Date: 1513

1 a *plural genii* : an attendant spirit of a person or place **b** *plural usually genii* : a person who influences another for good or bad ; **2** : a strong leaning or inclination :

PENCHANT ; **3 a** : a peculiar, distinctive, or identifying character or spirit **b** : the associations and traditions of a place **c** : a personification or embodiment especially of a quality or condition ;

4 plural usually genii : **SPIRIT, JINNI** ; **5 plural usually geniuses a** : a single strongly marked capacity or aptitude <had a *genius* for getting along with boys -- Mary Ross> **b** : extraordinary intellectual power especially as manifested in creative activity **c** : a person endowed with transcendent mental superiority; *especially* : a person with a very high intelligence quotient

synonym see GIFT



Merriam-Webster OnLine: Collegiate Dictionary. 2001

Imagine waking up one day and discovering, realizing, that all the data you are working with, all the code you hack, all the buzzing equipment isn't clean; it isn't pristine and white the way you've been taught technology is, it doesn't obey the rules of logic the way you were shown it does, it isn't a glorious tool and it definitely isn't inanimate.

Imagine you find strange undercurrents of technology, inhabited (however loosely that term might apply) by ghosts, vague human-like spirits that may be the spirits of the dead; daemons, grotesquely inhuman electronic servant creatures; and gremlins, the uncontrollable destroyers and mischief-makers, the bane of all those who work with electronics.

Ghosts come looking for favors, for existence, for life and power. Some despise their existence, others are ecstatic about their state, but they all have needs, they all have desires and they all require the living to make sure these are met, because without the living, they can't affect the physical world.

Daemons are the sorcerous workhorses summoned forth from the grid, and though bound to specific systems and tasks, they are simple-to-please and can prove worthwhile.

With gremlins...all rules are revoked.

GHOSTS

Main Entry: ¹**ghost**

Pronunciation: 'gOst

Function: *noun*

Etymology: Middle English *gost, gast*, from Old English *gAst*; akin to Old High German *geist* spirit, Sanskrit *heda* anger

Date: before 12th century

1 : the seat of life or intelligence : SOUL <give up the *ghost*>; **2** : a disembodied soul; *especially* : the soul of a dead person believed to be an inhabitant of the unseen world or to appear to the living in bodily likeness; **3** : SPIRIT, DEMON; **4 a** : a faint shadowy trace <a *ghost* of a smile> **b** : the least bit <not a *ghost* of a chance>; **5** : a false image in a photographic negative or on a television screen caused especially by reflection; **6** : one who ghostwrites; **7** : a red blood cell that has lost its hemoglobin

Somehow, unexplainably, the spirits of the dead began to speak through the electronic highway, on telephones, through car radios, sometimes televisions or fluorescent lights and computers. Not every dead person, mind you, but a few, maybe more than a few. Somehow, the dead just appear, they're just there, free-floating minds inside the electrical network that supports modern society.

Ghosts can be anyone, or claim to be anyone...from the spirit of a deceased shaman from a thousand years ago, to the lost spirit of the little boy that used to live down the street, to an ancient bloodthirsty Aztec God (they are all ghosts of the past, after all). Different ghosts behave differently, like classical demons or spirits, as elemental or celestial beings, even like ancient Gods. But most often, they are the "typical" ghosts of fable and lore, the spirits of those who have passed beyond.

And they *aren't* alone.

Communication

Ghosts that can communicate in human languages, do (when they feel like it), utilizing e-mail, radios or televisions, telephones, newsgroups and other similar mediums to communicate clearly with text or voice, even the sizzle of a voice(s) heard in free electricity. Despite this, ghosts don't always talk in recognizable ways. For example, a ghost inhabiting the fluorescent lights of a building may flicker in strange patterns in order to announce its presence or to communicate, while that inhabiting a car may utilize the stereo, randomly changing stations until its message becomes clear, or at least obvious.

Abilities

The spirits of the dead can do strange, supernatural things...their existence as electrical beings gives some of them control over matter itself, electrons being a major component of everything we feel and sense. A ghost with enough power can destroy the repulsive force in the floor beneath your feet, and let you slip right through, where you become trapped in the ground and merged with the concrete or dirt, or drift right down to the fiery hell at the center of the world. They can make your skin fall off, they can turn your car into a literal pile of rust, they can blow up street-lights, and they can even flush your toilet for you (or at least make you think they have, for they are also masters of illusion and deception).

Of course, they can only do all this if Bound by a sorcerer, otherwise their connection to the physical world is tenuous at best and they lack the ability to affect it in an overt manner. Bound ghosts use their Stamina scores to affect non-electric items and entities when such interference is resisted, whereas unbound ghosts can affect only the electronic devices they reside within or which are connected to the Grid.

Even without being Bound, awakened ghosts can move through systems and through the Grid without thought, as easily as you or I might walk from this room to the next, as easily as we might walk down the street. As long as there is electricity they can travel with, they can move...thus they can move through the wiring of anything connected to a phone line or cable line, and through these lines themselves, but cannot travel along fiber optic wires or with radio-waves (though they can send signals through these sources, merely not move with them).

And they can watch the world beyond, even occasionally manifest some small change in the environment.

Anywhere the electrical Grid goes, anywhere there is power, you can find a ghost...though maybe not the ghost you want. Many ghosts are just as happy to haunt one system, even just one machine...or at least they appear to be. It is difficult to pin down a location on an entity that doesn't really exist in any physical sense.

Those ghosts trapped within devices that are not connected to other sources of electricity obviously cannot move around, though these are usually daemons, not ghosts.

**[Ldk {ado} LV1 : \$a!1 error code 375...
engaging service disconnection protocol...
\$3#45...disconnec\$4fl c x]**

Needs & Desires

Don't mistake ghosts for living, thinking beings, though, even when some of them seem to be. Oftentimes they are trapped in their own fantasies, their own last moments of life, their own dreams or nightmares, constantly reacting to those things, talking about them repeatedly, saying the same things again and again or repeating the same questions about them.

From these arise a ghost's needs, its desires: power, revenge, new life, data, and a host of other things oftentimes incomprehensible to the human mind. These worldly connections are what cause ghosts to enter into Bindings, demanding objects or actions -- perhaps something in the physical world they are incapable of doing or retrieving themselves, something that has come and passed already which plays some part of their fantasy world -- in exchange for a task.

Even then a ghost's desires are often confusing, things that appear to serve no specific goal or plan; certainly nothing as simple or cliché as "being put to rest."

Some sorcerers claim this behavior arises from the alien world ghosts live in they, where constant streams of unique data are running at wild speeds, and all this raw data affects them, somehow, driving the once human minds utterly mad within the new, alien existence.

Of course, no-one knows if this is really true, but it does seem to explain the inconsistent behavior of the dead...or maybe with all that access to nearly unlimited computational power stolen from hundreds or thousands of machines, they can plan the equivalent of a thousand chess-moves with the world as their pawns (...and knights, and rooks...).

...The ghost, or whatever it was, brought up two gnarled fists to rub at its eyes. "My legs hurt, I feel like shit. These doctors -- they're useless, eh? Did Maccino call you? I told him to send you some flowers, nice roses like you like. Did he call you?"

"Yes, Tinto. I got the flowers. What should I do if I can't get off-line, Tinto? What if it doesn't work and I can't get off-line?"

"Did those bastards screw it up?" He scowled, a toothless tiger. "I don't understand." Suddenly, it seemed he might cry. His bony face wrinkled around the eyes and mouth, and he shook his head like someone trying to wake up. "Goddamn it, my legs hurt. If you can't get out the normal way, Eleanora, you just walk out. Get to someone else's territory, use their gear. Take the canal --you can always get to the next place along the river. Either that, or...let me think, Venice...yeah, you go to the Crusaders or the Jews."

"You can't think of another way to get offline? More direct?"

He stared, trying to focus. "Eleanora? Did you get the flowers? I'm sorry I couldn't come see you, girl. They have me in this goddamned hospital."

"Yes," she said slowly, "I got the flowers." She took a long, deep breath, then lifted her hand. "Goodnight, Tinto." The image convulsed once, then vanished.

Elenora turned to Paul, her jaw set, her mouth a thin line. "He always asks about the flowers. He must have been thinking about them when..."

-Tad Williams, "River of Blue Fire"

DAEMONS

Main Entry: **de·mon**

Variant(s): or **dae·mon** /'dE-m&n/

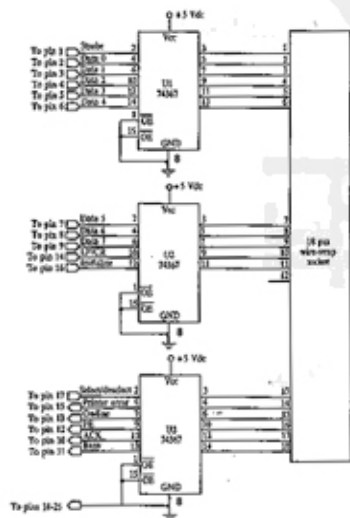
Function: *noun*

Etymology: Middle English *demon*, from Late Latin & Latin; Late Latin *daemon* evil spirit, from Latin, divinity, spirit, from Greek *daimOn*, probably from *daiesthai* to distribute -- more at TIDE

Date: 13th century

1 a : an evil spirit **b** : a source or agent of evil, harm, distress, or ruin; **2 usually daemon** : an attendant power or spirit : **GENIUS**; **3 usually daemon** : a supernatural being of Greek mythology intermediate between gods and men; **4** : one that has exceptional enthusiasm, drive, or effectiveness <a *demon* for work>

There are other things in there, too; more than just data or electrical impulses, creatures apparently spawned from the Grid, from man-made control of the electric force, servant creatures that have been nicknamed “daemons” by sorcerers. Easily controlled, easily baffled, limited in power but generally loyal to anyone daring and knowledgeable enough to entreat and Bind them, these are the workhorses of the sorcerous underbelly in the information age. They watch systems, they hack code, they run interference and gather data, all for their user, be it man...or ghost.



Communication

Communicating with daemons is equally problematic, for they exist so far outside of human experience the only way to communicate with one is in bit-code and ritual. Daemons speak in a highly structured, codified language similar to a cross between ancient tongues and machine language.

Some of the more powerful daemons on the 'net have managed to learn a number of programming languages, and can thus communicate through the creation of complex code snippets or programs...multimedia files and collages are often a favorite, even if all the parts don't make sense.

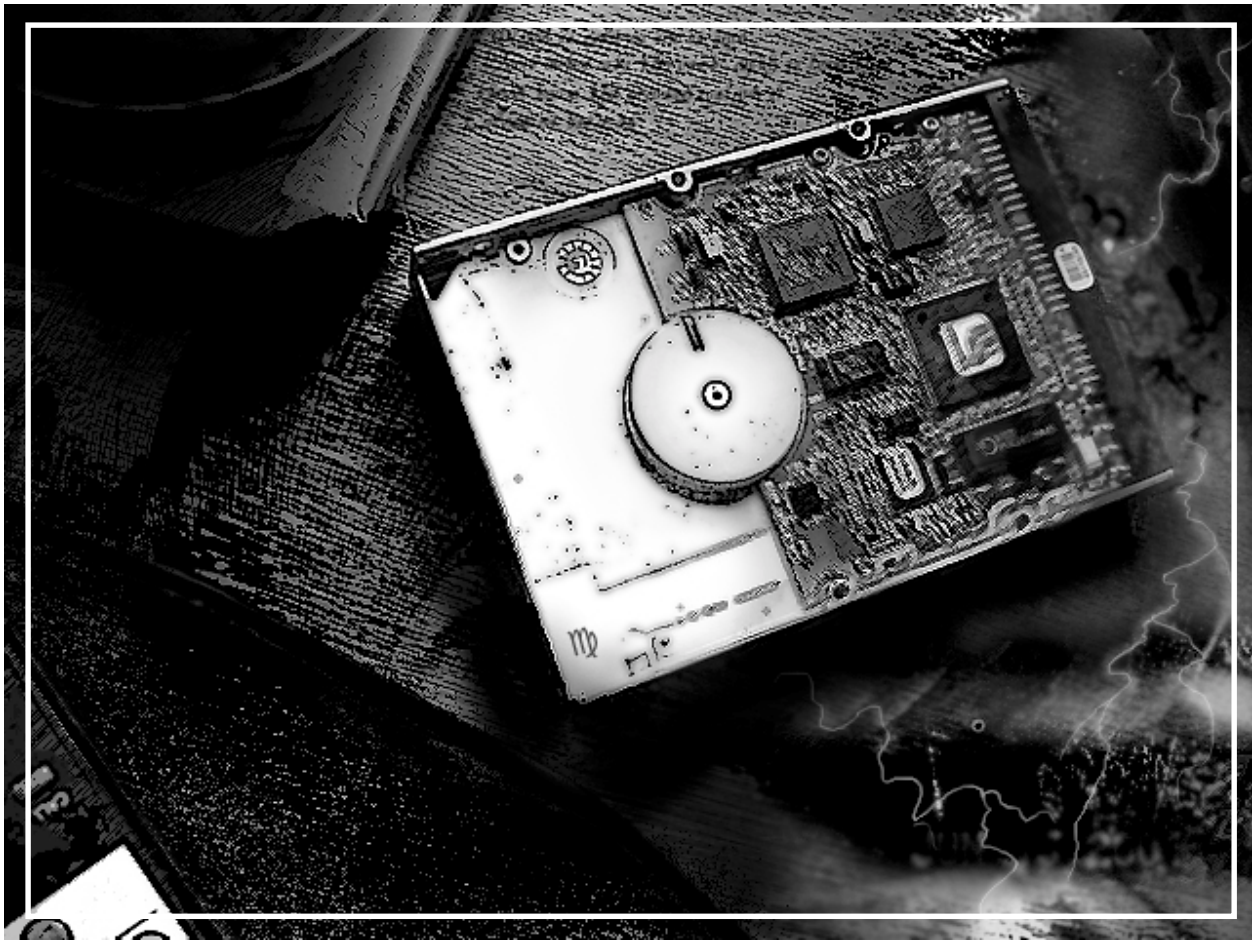
Abilities

Daemons are system or task specific, mostly system, living in one small, virtual area and performing a singular function for that area: an e-mail server, a starter for a car engine, etc. They can not be moved without destroying them, for they exist as the soul of machines, spawned by the electrical currents flowing through modern technology.

For example, knowing the daemon within your car's starter allows you to start the vehicle with a word or a gesture, another daemon unlocks and locks the power door locks, turns on the radio and flips stations and so forth (though to drive the car without needing to keep one's hands on the wheel, a ghost might be required).

Many daemons do not have to be bound in order to stay in the world, but do not tend to be overly powerful, either.

Daemons tend to obey everyone, creating some obvious problems for the security or privacy-minded, thus sorcerers rely more on ghosts to do their complex dirty work, since a daemon may very well begin the day performing a task for the sorcerer, be told by another to stop, and stop, quickly ruining any carefully laid plans. Even so, daemons are lower maintenance than ghosts are, having no difficult-to-provide Needs or Desires (they live to function).



However, daemons can be *compelled* to take orders only from a certain master with a Binding ritual, just like any other electronic entity.

Thankfully, binding daemons is less dangerous than binding ghosts because daemons don't understand a fuzzy, non-electronic world and are more like the technology they inhabit, whereas ghosts bridge the gap between the rational and the insane in strange, Lovecraftian ways.

However, this also means that daemons cannot be used in ghost-tech, for their soul or life or whatever part of the ghost it may be that allows man to bond with machine is simply incompatible with living flesh and minds in daemon-kind.

A sorcerer always gets bonus dice to their Humanity check after binding a daemon, the exact number equal to the sorcerer's Will. From that point on, the daemon will perform any task the sorcerer instructs it to without fail, even if commanded to stop by another sorcerer. Binding, in this case, is merely a lasting imposition of Will upon the poor servant-beast, not a true binding as it is with ghosts.

The only way to change a bound daemon's mind is to try and strip the binding from the daemon by punishing it, with the strength of the binding contributing to the difficulty.

The only ritual that needs be performed to order a daemon around is Establishment, and then, only once. The daemon and the sorcerer can clash, especially if the sorcerer is ordering it to behave against its function. Establishment is simply peering into the machine and seeing what its like inside, making friends, or slaves.

To successfully command an unbound daemon, the sorcerer pits his own Will against the Will of the daemon.

Needs & Desires

Daemons, by their nature, live to serve. If they are not functioning in their role and obeying commands, they begin to get cranky. Their desire is simple: to serve; their need is specific, to perform a particular, very specific task. Example needs for daemons are "turning on the car", "turning on the computer", "telling the time", "downloading porn", "verifying passwords" and so on and so forth.

GREMLINS

Main Entry: **grem·lin**

Pronunciation: 'grem-l&n ;

Function: *noun*

Etymology: origin unknown ; Date: 1941

: a cause of error or equipment malfunction (as in aircraft) conceived of as a small mischievous gnome

Merriam-Webster OnLine: Collegiate Dictionary. 2001

An infestation, or to those who believe that the electrical network is an unwelcome disease: an antibody. Wild, uncontrollable and devoted to wreaking mindless chaos, gremlins wink in and out of existence at will, sometimes they lurk, but usually they drop in, destroy, and leave, their behavior following no pattern or rationale other than mindless mischief.

These "creatures" are the underlying reason for unexpected glitches and errors, for brownouts and blackouts, for all the things that go wrong with a computer or a car or any electronic device...anything that shouldn't go wrong at least.

Communication

Gremlins aren't worth discussing in the sense of communication, for they have no language; and as far as anyone can tell, they are utterly mindless, akin to rabid animals... uncontrollable and unpredictable. However, they are mentioned here for an ignorant or unlucky sorcerer can accidentally summon one of these if they are not careful.

Wrecking a million dollars worth of computer components thanks to a bad Establishment isn't amusing to those in charge, nor to the ghosts escaping the ruined systems...they might just take it out on the foolish sorcerer, and anyone nearby.

Abilities

Gremlins exist solely to wreak havoc...they don't move through systems in any normal manner, appearing and disappearing as though the electric grid existed everywhere, throughout every machine in the world, even unconnected ones. They are responsible for system malfunctions, batteries going bad, programs not behaving as they should, wires crossing and shorting and numerous other problems commonly and not so commonly encountered in working with electronics.

Gremlins, almost without exception, cannot be bound. A sorcerer can *try*, if they'd like, and if they do manage to succeed, they are in for more than they bargained for. A sorcerer with a bound gremlin has very much put his own sanity

at risk, for gremlins do not behave or communicate rationally, nor do they have understandable needs and desires, and they rarely behave as commanded or desired, though this is not to say that their actions are necessarily detrimental to the sorcerer.

In practice, this means the Binding roll is *not* always successful, as it is with other entities. The sorcerer **MUST** succeed at their roll in order to bind a gremlin, and they gain no future bonus dice for a successful ritual as would normally be granted; additionally, a failed attempt should have generally disastrous consequences for the one attempting it.

Sorcerers sometimes contact and bind a gremlin when they attempt to contact and bind a ghost, when they are ignorant or have terrible luck.

See *Part V: Silicon Sorcery* for more information on failed rituals.

Needs & Desires

Gremlins, by their nature, live to wreak havoc. They are simply unthinking, anthromorphized occurrences of really bad luck, as it applies to a machine and its ability to function. This is the whole of their desire and need, nothing more, nothing less: chaos and destruction, not necessarily at once, but never necessarily one and not the other.

STATES

A distinction must be made, before confusion sets in, between the two states of the denizens of the electronic world, Those-Who-Watch and Those-Called-Forth; the former are those who seem to exist without needing to be created or contacted, the latter are those who fade away if not bound by sorcery.

Those-Who-Watch

Sometimes called Awakened – though this term could also apply to Those-Called-Forth – these are the beings from the Grid who are just *there*, the ones that don't need to a sorcerer's meddling in order to exist. These types often have some limited sorts of power even when not summoned by a sorcerer.

They are the powerful daemons that populate the Grid, spawned by the technology hooked to it and aware of the greater world beyond; they are the whispering ghosts wandering the electrical systems of your home and city, uninvited, curious, willful; and they are the spontaneously appearing gremlins that plague the electronic world (or perhaps they are not the latter). They are always awake, always aware, always watching.

Simply, Those-Who-Watch always have at least one die in Power, even when unbound.

Those-Called-Forth

Those-Called-Forth are understood to be those of the electric realm who cannot function, and may not even exist without the workings of a sorcerer. The argument remains unsettled as to whether the sorcerer calls up these beings from some other, deeper world inside the Grid (owing to the ability to contact them before they are bound and given power in the world beyond), or if they create these beings through code or belief or some twisted manufacture.

The ghosts and daemons themselves seem to have no knowledge of, nor desire to reveal the truth.

Those-Called-Forth must always be Bound or Contained by a Sorcerer in order to continue to exist, or face the near-certainty of fading away.

Main Entry: **genius lo-ci**

Pronunciation: -'lO-'sl, -'kE

Function: noun; Etymology: Latin;

Date: 1605

1 : the pervading spirit of a place ;

2 : a tutelary deity of a place

Merriam-Webster OnLine:

Collegiate Dictionary. 2001

TYPE

The inhabitants of the Grid appear and are both limited and empowered in a variety of ways. There are those who are bound to the Grid and those who can wander beyond the Grid in immaterial forms or by taking possession of a body, there are even those which inhabit machines grafted to the human body as replacement parts or enhancements.

But even so, the denizens of the Grid are often hard to categorize or classify into types, as form and existence are fluid and momentary, easily exchanged. A ghost may be a free-willed entity moving through the electronic world one moment, and bound as the soul of a piece of parasitic technology the next; may not exist until contacted, then suddenly come to life within a VCR and leap into the next person who watches a movie on it.

Thus these “categories” might more accurately reflect ghosts with certain sets of powers, or perhaps are powers in themselves available to certain ghosts.

Haunt

There is no such thing as a ghost without a physical component, at least in that all ghosts require electronic equipment in order to exist. Televisions, radios, computer systems, high-voltage lines, phone-lines, watches, refrigerators, electrical wiring, house or pool lights, stereos, VCRs, camcorders, cars, trucks, planes, smoke alarms, home and bank security systems, microwaves, arcades, home video-game systems and almost everything else in today's world houses or is capable of housing ghosts...

Haunts, thus, are those of the general populace of the Grid, contained within it, never moving beyond it nor beyond the boundaries of their encasing technology. Many daemons are of this classification, who are – unlike ghosts – part of the very machine itself, unable to exist independently of it.

In retrospect, then, this is not so much a power or type as it is the base description of any denizen of the Grid.

Manifest

Some ghosts are capable of creating a physical presence in the world outside the Grid, outside technology; these beings are known as Manifests. Appearing as men made of electrical energy, as shadows or globes of light, or as normal looking people or animals who suddenly vanish before one's eyes, they are not contained within or by technology. Despite this, in order to exist, these types do require some link to technology and energy nearby: a power line running under the street, electrical outlets in the next room, fluorescent lights overhead, and so forth.

Anything that isn't bound in technology, that is just strange and seemingly unexplainable, can be classified as a Manifest.

These ghosts can physically affect the world with their form as long as they still have at least one die in Stamina.

Revenant

There are things in the Grid are capable of possessing a living body and taking it for a short ride. Also known variously as Residents, Spooks, Zombies and Possessors, they steal bodies most often when a sorcerer has left his behind to explore of the electronic wonderland of the Grid; thus most sorcerers keep Bound guardian daemons behind to protect the uplink pathway to their body.

Spooks may also *share* the body of an individual, sorcerer or not, whom they have come in contact with, fully submerging the body's personality beneath its own or guiding the possessed subtly from behind the scenes.

Possession attempts are the painful insurgence of an alien mentality into the mind of a living being. The ghost rolls its Power against the possesse's Will; or if that mind isn't currently at home, a roll of the ghost's Power against the body's Stamina, where the results indicate bonus dice for use in holding on to the body once the most certainly irate sorcerer returns, demanding his property.

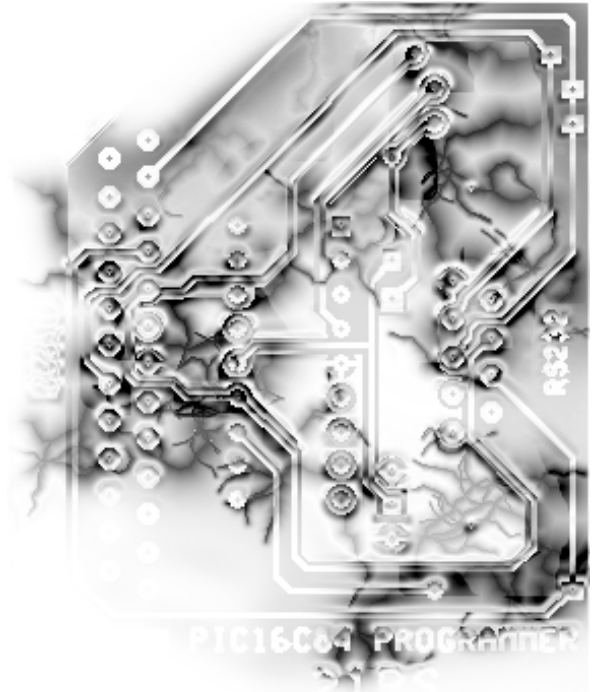
In either case, if the number of victories gained by the possessor is greater than the target's Humanity, the body's original mind is destroyed or forever locked out of its former body.

What happens to such a soul lost in the Grid is unknown...on rare occasions it is whispered that long lost souls have returned, but it is commonly believed that this is a fairy tale. If a sorcerer cannot locate and somehow retake his body in a short period, he becomes forever entrapped within the Grid, going slowly mad and fading away. Should they be one of the unfortunates locked out from their own body, as long as the ghost remains within, they have no hope of doing so.

Remote

These are things that take over machines physically, inhabiting not just the electrical systems, but the mechanical as well. They move keys, buttons, knobs or whatever, turn keys, release breaks, tighten screws and so on. They are something like possessors, except they deal specifically with machinery and robotics, and have more physical power than Haunts. Alternately known as Spooks, Residents, Poltergeists, Robots or (confusingly) Gremlins, in some instances they appear as highly advanced robots or successful attempts at AI, even androids.

Remotes always have at least one Stamina, which unlike other types, is a reflection of sturdiness, strength and durability. These things are bound to the very equipment they inhabit, destroying the equipment irrevocably destroys the ghost.



Ghost-Tech

When a ghost is burned into a machine, the two become something else, something more powerful than a mere spirit to be commanded or a simple piece of technology. The result is known as Ghost-Tech, an enslaved entity grafted to or merged with a host, granting them certain abilities without fail or question. It should be mentioned, however, that the host as often loses something of his soul to the tortured machine he has bonded with.

See *Part V: Silicon Sorcery* for more information on Ghost-tech

TELLTALE

Without exception all creatures from the Grid manifest in a specific way when making their presence known in the world beyond. This is the creature's Telltale, and is always something spooky: a face on a screen, hissing almost-talking static on a radio or television set, strangely flickering lights, the wrong numbers blinking on a watch, a twisted jumble of metal or spikes growing from the body, etc.

And as stated, some ghosts can manifest outside the Grid in the physical world, near sources or consumers of electricity; these are the flickers you see out of the corner of your eye: the shapes, the people, the animals; the weird stuff that, when looked at, isn't there...supposedly just tricks of the eye.

Of the other types, Gremlins are fairly obvious in their manifestations, often involving electricity and chaos or hardware failure and destruction, while daemons usually just look like parts of the system (and may be just that...a vaguely conscious portion of a specific program or circuit: living hardware, living software).

In all cases, the Telltale should be tailored to the type, power or history of a particular ghost. Even when subtle, for those with the knowledge it proclaims that the supernatural is at work. Of course, as all sorcerers know, the supernatural infests everything, arising from the innocuously rational...

ABILITIES

Beyond what was detailed above, each creature also has a number of abilities (or "powers") it can effect, as detailed in the main Sorcerer rules. Ghosts do not grant any powers to the sorcerer they are bound to, instead they utilize their powers in service to the sorcerer, either at whim or more often request; hence, the only way for a sorcerer to gain any *personal* supernatural power is for them to create ghost-tech and implant it within their body.

The number of powers a particular denizen has determines the Lore of the creature; ghosts are often high in Lore, a gremlin may or may not be (good luck harnessing its power, regardless), and daemons are often very low in Lore.

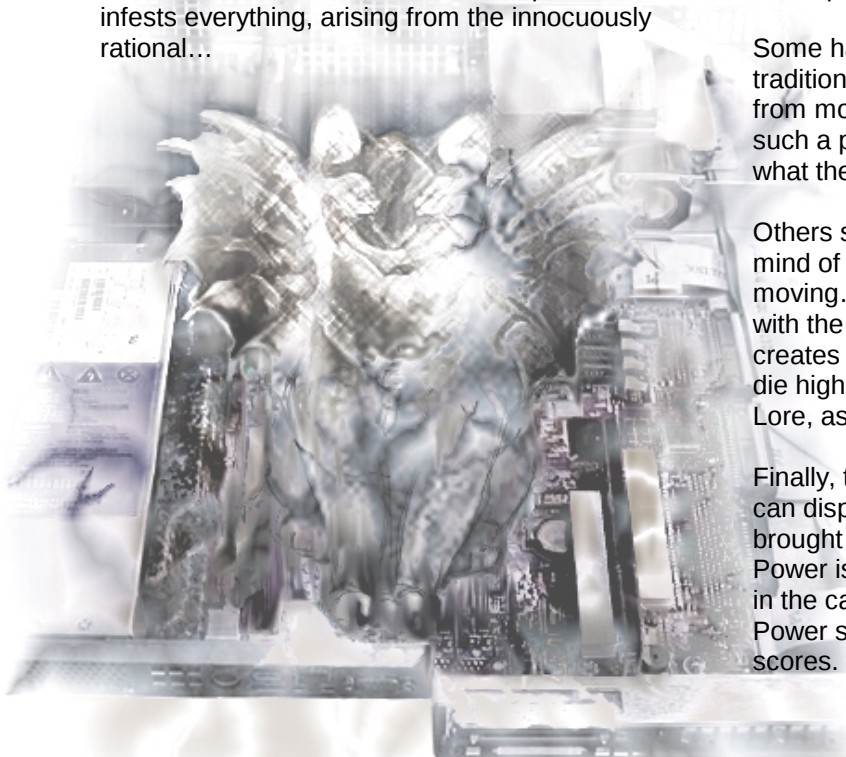
OTHER SCORES

Though all ghosts have a Stamina score, only those with some physical component -- Manifests, housed Possessors or Remotes -- have a "normal" score. Haunts and bodiless Possessors do not have a true Stamina score, instead for these Stamina does not reflect a physical trait but a trait of *existence*, how much resistance or interference the denizen can sustain before it is reduced to static...disrupted...destroyed. It is, essentially, how well they are Bound to the world, and should be set to the number of bonus dice either party achieved during a Binding.

Some have wondered if this is that which, in traditional tales of spirits and such, keeps a ghost from moving on to the "next world"...if there is such a place, and assuming ghosts really are what they claim or believe themselves to be.

Others state that it is the Will of the ghost, the mind of the thing, which keeps it alive, active and moving...that the strange meshing of human will with the electric realm while in search of a ghost creates and substantiates them. Will is set one die higher than Lore, not the higher of Stamina or Lore, as some ghosts' Stamina score fluctuates.

Finally, there is the Power of the ghost, the force it can display, the effectiveness its abilities, once brought to bear, have upon the world. A ghost's Power is equal to its highest score (usually Will); in the case of gremlins, however, they may have Power scores well above any of their other scores.



Part III: Sorcerers

"Your monitor is bleeding..."

In some respects, sorcerers have already been detailed as "anybody who has seen a ghost and now strives to control and understand the revealed world." But beyond this, they are a highly select group...there is no ritual of initiation, no choosing of apprentices, no little yellow "Sorcery for Dummies" textbook.

But sorcerers are just like you and me...well, almost. There's something that sets them apart from the rest of the world: that first moment of intimate contact with the world beyond the pristine technological illusion, that moment that shatters the illusion like a stone cast into a mirror. This is the moment of awakening to the truth, or near truth, and it gives the sorcerer his first point of Lore, however naïve they are in their new-found knowledge.

From that moment on, the man becomes a sorcerer, a man that speaks to the ghosts hiding in every machine, a man watched by presences in the electricity, unless he runs far away from humanity and all that race has created. Even so, even in the darkest, most primal jungle or most blasted, empty desert, the electronic presences could watch him with the satellites that circle the earth, a thousand eyes in the sky for a million invisible eyes.

But for the most part, there those who do not run and hide, or go mad from the realization thrust upon them; these begin to study, perhaps even understand, the interplay between technology and sorcery, and from this, they gain control of that invisible, constantly humming world that supports and intrudes upon our own in daily life.

Sometimes they gather in lodges or circles or groups to share experience, mostly they are utterly alone. There are not many of them, a handful -- no more than a hundred at most, if even that many -- across the world who have

noticed reality and not hidden themselves away, shaking in their beds at night when they have time to think, dismissing the experience and trying their best to write it off and forget it forever.

But it is 'the experience' that changes a man into a sorcerer, the experience few are privy to: a near death experience, hearing the voices of the dead in the radio, waking up in a cold sweat in the middle of the night because of all the eyes watching them in the dark, alive and humming.

Like the shamans and witch doctors of old, their position and their power is gained through fate, through chance or (if one believes in such things) divine choosing, with one notable difference: their powers are real, with the advent of electricity, their powers work. But just like their predecessors, they fight evil spirits (gremlins), speak to the dead and wander in unseen worlds (the Grid) seeking wisdom and new power. Like the magicians of old they search for clues to meta-nature of reality, summon up old spirits and bind them to their will and create talismans and glyphs in a coded 'language' through which they work their will upon the world.

Real sorcerers don't chant, boil strange stews, sacrifice babies and drip chicken blood all over in a big circle in order to cast spells...no, they do all that and more. A sorcerer is as likely to have a copy of "The Greater and Lesser Key of Solomon" as he is to have "The Complete Guide to Repairing and Upgrading Your PC" for they have come to understand, to some extent, the divide between technology and spiritualism, between science and religion. They've peered into the abyss between them and come to the horrifying realization that the divide is an illusion...logic is irrational; the irrational, the supernatural, the old laws of magic are what really run the glittering pinnacles of scientific achievement.

STAMINA, WILL AND LORE

As in the main rules, a Sorcerer begins with 10 points to split among Stamina, Will and Lore.

While the first two score descriptions do not change from the main rules, Lore does.

Any score higher than zero in Lore is reserved for sorcerers, those who have discovered or been shown the electric world and its ghosts. Lore entails knowledge both electronic and occult, and, more importantly, how these two mediums interact; the higher the Lore of the character, the more experience they've had, the more they understand the illogic that allows the bridge to be made between rational technology and irrational sorcery – and how they are somehow the same – the better they can cope with understanding the real nature of technology and utilize their knowledge of both to control the worlds.

But high Lore often has a high cost in Humanity.

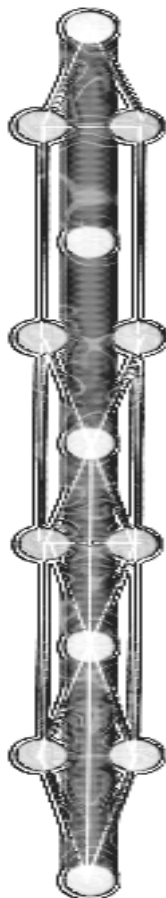
Our example sorcerer is Gregori Keyes: a smart, relatively young sorcerer well versed in ancient occult lore thanks to a youth misspent believing he was the reincarnated form of the great magician Hermes Trimegistros.

In his mundane life, he is a security and encryptions expert, working for a digital and electronics surveillance and security development firm.

Gregori's first contact with the occult nature of the Grid came when he discovered one of the numeric keys he had studied in his youth asserting itself in a decryption algorithm and the mathematical pattern of an unencrypted files.

His mind is so fixated on these patterns that he is often trapped in distracted examination and fantasy about them, and fails to concentrate on the task at hand until he realizes it.

Finally, to help him with this decoding task, he has implanted a cybernetic eye which can record and display these patterns for examination. In an age where such things are not possible, the small, metal orb lurking under his eyelid marks him as a sorcerer.



HUMANITY

Humanity is set to one point below the higher of either Stamina or Will, but never less than one -- one point gone already from the initial shock of discovery, the first, shocking contact with the electric world...and thereafter, each bit of contact, each new technological implant strips more and more humanity from the maker and user as they peer deeper into the ghosts they've found.

Any time a sorcerer successfully performs a sorcerous ritual, any ritual, they must roll their Humanity against the ghost's Power, failure entails the loss of a point of Humanity as the logical barriers between the technological and occult worlds begin to crumble, eroding the inherently rational human mind, the deep-seated beliefs of the modern human.

But humanity isn't just about sanity, it is about being human, in all its respects.

Heinous criminal acts -- that which displays a lack of empathy or caring for or about others or the world around them, a lack of a conscience -- entail Humanity checks, as the sorcerer becomes less and less connected to others, their own ability to judge right from wrong, truth from lie, self from not-self.

Is it alright to destroy the foundations of belief and rationality, cut oneself off from the human experience, in order to gather the power to achieve one's ends?

Humanity is a measure of how the sorcerer views others...how much they treat the world and its inhabitants as tools, like the technology they are using. But *is* technology just a tool, or is it alive? Where does the tool stop and the man begin, or the man stop and the tool begin?

Who is really the tool, who is using what?

Gregori Keyes

Stamina	2 – <i>Clean Living</i>
Will	4 – <i>High Self-esteem</i>
Lore	4 – <i>Solitary Adept</i>
Cover	4 – <i>Security Expert (see above)</i>
Price	– <i>Dazed</i>
Telltale	– <i>Cybernetic Eye</i>
Humanity	3

COVER

Cover can be any job description, though the vast majority of sorcerers are those who have constant, intimate contact with technology or electronics. This is anyone from a high-school or college student who uses their school's computer lab to a corporate software guru, from an employee of Radio Shack to a NASA shuttle astronaut or a law firm's secretary. With technology so deeply ingrained in the day-to-day living of the modern world it could literally be anyone.

PRICE

There is also the Price, for the power of true sorcery doesn't come cheap. A sorcerer has already sacrificed a point of Humanity in their initial contact with the electronic realm (whether purposeful or accidental), and thanks to this there is something not quite right with the character, an impediment to normal interaction.

Perhaps they are dazed by the constant drone of electricity in the background, or perhaps they cannot resist buying or talking about new technology or are socially lame, letting slip during casual conversation about the blood rites they conducted to appease the ghost in their machine or speak about their machines as though they were people.

TELLTALE

Any of the above might be Telltales as well, but for sorcerers, Telltales often come at the price of their own body, in the form of ghost technology, implanted or attached, even functionless, aesthetic devices, such as a microchip embedded in their hand. An odor of ozone might surround them, their eyes may bulge slightly, or perhaps be red, or white; their fingers may tremble, bit-pattern scars may be apparent on the wrists or arms...whatever it may be, it marks them apart from other humans and as a practitioner of the sorcerous arts – to those who are aware of their meaning.

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"...Let's remind ourselves that there is a strange mojo at the heart of every pocket calculator – and the mojo that makes it work says: Newton is dead. The fundamental 'stuff' is: indeterminate, improbable, unpredictable, affected by the act of observation and oscillates between wave and particle..."

-- Kenneth Evans, "The Hut"

Part 3: Silicon Sorcery

"...Every shred of occultism and magic throughout the ages has been so much hogwash, and the first real demon summoning occurred when MTV was invented."

-- Ron Edwards, "Sorcerer"

Main Entry: ¹**charm**

Pronunciation: 'chärm

Function: *noun*

Etymology: Middle English *charme*, from Middle French, from Latin *carmen* song, from *canere* to sing -- more at CHANT

Date: 14th century

1 a : the chanting or reciting of a magic spell : **INCANTATION** **b** : a practice or expression believed to have magic power ; **2** : something worn about the person to ward off evil or ensure good fortune : **AMULET** ; **3 a** : a trait that fascinates, allures, or delights **b** : a physical grace or attraction -- used in plural **c** : compelling attractiveness <the island possessed great *charm*>

4 : a small ornament worn on a bracelet or chain ; **5** : a quantum characteristic of subatomic particles that accounts for the unexpectedly long lifetime of the J/psi particle, explains difficulties in the theory of the weak force, is conserved in interactions involving electromagnetism or the strong force, and has a value of zero for most known particles

Merriam-Webster OnLine: Collegiate Dictionary. 2001

Machines gather ghosts, and sorcerers can call them out.

Sorcerers utilize sorcerous rituals to draw ghosts out of the Grid and send them back into it, and they themselves can enter into the Grid to interact with the ghosts there, search out specific spirits, and even become lost therein, forever.

All rituals utilize technology and electricity in some fashion to reach into the grid and touch the electric ghost, whether it be specially designed programs incorporating specific numerical sequences or text, or which send specially coded data; tuning a radio to just the right station, or sequence of stations; posting the right messages on Usenet, or transmitting a series of waves at certain frequencies. Indeed, one might say that the creation of technology was the first step towards sorcery.

But sorcery, despite its technological medium, is essentially horrifyingly alien and classically occult, for all rituals are bonded in some fashion with occult ceremony and necessity, thus the sorcerer must delve into knowledge of true names, celestial alignments, power runes, magical numbers, strange teas of herb, stone and crystal, daggers, cards, pentagrams and so forth. And not only this, but they must learn wiring, and charges, watts and voltage, circuit boards and circuit breakers, the very design of modern machinery and electrical technology.

And with this knowledge, they learn the five distinct types of rituals available only to them: Establishment, Binding, Containment, Banishment and Punishment. Each ritual varies in the length required to complete them by the desired use of entity towards which they are directed and by the skill or belief of the sorcerer. Sorcerers can speed things up or slow things down, receiving appropriate penalty or bonus dice for doing so.

Ritual	Sorcerer vs.	Ghost
Establishment	Lore	Power
Binding	any	Will (+ Binding)
Containment	Lore	Power (+ Binding)
Banishment	Lore	Power (+ Binding and/or + Contains)
Punishment	Will	Power (+ Binding)

ESTABLISHMENT

“Beneath the electronic hum lies a sleeping beast.”

All throughout the power grid, in anything that runs on electrical energy, there may be a ghost...in the refrigerator, in the lights, in the electrical wiring, in the photocopier...anywhere. It is thought the act of Establishment awakens the spirits slumbering in the machines, calling forth entities normally removed from the world above, or makes the sorcerer known to those watching and waiting for just such a chance.

Establishments can be blatant or inconspicuous and take anywhere from an instant to hours to days on end.

Communicating with the daemons in new area may take only a second of focus and a few spoken commands, a wave of the hand or the shake of a rattle made of metal and thin copper wire, or it may require a few moments to sit and feel the energy from the Grid, the sorcerer casting their mind out into the strange breach which lies between technology and spirit to communicate with the beasts within, or it may require the use of a complex program to gain their attention and bend them to the sorcerer's will.

Talking to the ghosts can be just as easy or difficult, though it is usually much more involved since the majority are dormant, between existence, and unaware until brought forth. These establishments also involve more traditional summoning rituals and methods: using true names, colors, celestial alignments, pentagrams and tri-grams and other symbols of power, chanting, words of command and possibly mind-altering drugs.

There is no difference between establishing contact with and summoning up a ghost; in fact the ritual works the same for both Those-Who-Watch and Those-Called-Forth, only the nature of the work is different. Once contacted or awoken, the intelligence knows where the sorcerer is (virtually speaking) and they may communicate via whatever means at their disposal, exchanging data and readying it to be Bound or Contained. The more successes gained, the clearer the communication becomes; a single success might entail that the sorcerer can only dimly understand what the other side is saying, but at least three ensures clarity.

The sorcerer rolls their Lore against the actual – *not current* – Power of the thing they are attempting to communicate with, success entailing successful contact with the entity, failure indicating no one is listening (or no one is responding), while a complete failure (all the sorcerer's rolls are lower than the opposition's) may have dire consequences for the sorcerer, as indicated below. Notably, the more blatant, obvious and intricate the summoning, the more powerful the ghosts called up: award bonus dice for any particularly well-described intense summoning attempt.

Of course, in some cases, this step is not even necessary, for the creature might already exist and be aware of the sorcerer, and it may be the one contacting the sorcerer suddenly someday, begging for favors. The roll is still made, the details of the contact still worked out, but unlike above, there is no chance a gremlin will accidentally appear.

Failed establishments can cause a loss of sanity or at the least equipment, with the ghost or daemon intended being replaced by a gremlin. In the case of a total failure, the more dice in Lore the sorcerer has, the meaner the gremlin and the more Power surging through it. In cases like this, the sorcerer has two reasonable options: try to Bind it anyways, or hope that they can successfully Banish it.

Note that the resulting Humanity check for successful Establishment is only rolled against the Power of the thing that answers, not the Power of the thing that the sorcerer attempted to contact.

Gregori is trying to contact a powerful entity rumored to lurk in the bowels of the Prima-Pentax corporation.

He has a Lore of 4, the ghost has a Power of 8. The odds are definitely against him, but he tries anyways; the rolls are 2,2,1,1 vs. 6,6,5,5,4,4,3,3.

Gregori fails to contact the ghost, but due his total failure invites the unwanted curiosity of a gremlin (Power 4) that bakes his electronic oijua board before scooting off in a shower of sparks.

BINDING

"I have awakened the slumbering spirit of the net, I have bound it to my will."

Sometimes, deals can be made with the intelligences contacted within a machine. Other times, they have to be forced. Binding entails either of these: the act of entering an agreement with or forcing an agreement upon a denizen of the Grid in exchange for its services; the ghost agrees to do your dirty work for you, and in turn, you agree to do its dirty work for it. Some ghosts are easy to work for, while some make it downright impossible to retain one's sanity.

Binding is also what gives Those-Called-Forth the ability to affect the world beyond its electric realm, and Those-Who-Watch a greater range of power and control over that which they witness. Without Binding, ghosts are weak and nearly helpless, and that often doesn't suit them.

The roll for Binding depends upon the method utilized to convince the ghost to enter into a contract, but just because they swiftly and easily enter into them doesn't mean they don't plan on betraying you later...even if it is supposedly the spirit of your deceased father.

Lore, Stamina or Will can be used to Bind a ghost, depending on the Binding method used, and only certain types of ghosts can be Bound via Stamina: those with some sort of physical presence. The roll is always made against the ghost's Will and it is always successful, granting bonus or penalty dice for further interactions between ghost and sorcerer as per the main "Sorcerer" rules, and bonus dice for that ghost against the commands of other sorcerers (Bound ghosts are more resistant to the sorceries of others), no matter which individual has more strength in the Binding.

If Unbound, a ghost begins to flicker away until they are unable to do anything more than communicate, and for Those-Called-Forth, eventually not even that. An Unbound ghost loses one die from its Power per day until its Power reaches zero, at which point it must make Will rolls to utilize any dice (Will rolled against the number of dice the ghost is attempting to use). The ghost then begins to lose one Will per day unless it rolls Stamina against its original Power; once it reaches zero Will, the creature is banished – nothing more than electric static in the grid.

Only a successful Establishment can revive it from this state, and if it isn't Bound afterwards, the process begins all over again.

While Those-Who-Watch never fade away, they do suffer the effects of Power and Will loss and the resulting extra effort to use their power, but they are not automatically Banished if Unbound. Instead, they are powerless, unable to utilize their abilities or affect the physical world beyond their machines until contacted and Bound again, though they may be the ones establishing contact.

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A ghost can only be Bound to one individual at a time, in order to break a previous Binding, the sorcerer making the attempt must be successful with their own Binding attempt against the creature's Will and the strength of the Binding.

CONTAINMENT

A form of Binding without the contractual obligations; Containment locks a ghost in place, rendering it unable to move from the system, program, machine or whatever it happens to be contained within. However, while within a Contains, the ghost can still communicate its presence and utilize any powers it has upon or through the system or area it is trapped in.

While so trapped, they do not suffer the loss of Power and Will that comes with being Unbound (if such should ever occur to them), and further with being Unbound inside a Contain, they must roll their Power against the strength of the Contain to affect the world physically.

There are numerous ways to create a Contain, such as the sorcerer writing a storage program, specially formatting a hard-disk, wiring a radio a certain way, creating some other electronic gizmo (even a simple maze of wires and contacts attached to a battery), or simply utilizing a sorcerous ritual to mark boundaries in some manner, such as drawing a pentagram around their machine. The strength of a Contain is always set at one, though the sorcerer can increase this with a successful roll of their Lore against the Contain's desired Power.

Through a poorly performed ritual, Gregori has accidentally Established with a gremlin. Gregori has a Lore of 4 and the gremlin has a Power of 4; Gregori has decided to Contain it within a phone jack he's set up for this purpose.

The rolls are 5,5,3,2 and 6,5,4,1; the gremlin gains a victory and avoids entrapment in the Contain...That's not a good thing for Gregori, luckily it isn't a very powerful gremlin.

A roll of Lore against the ghost's Power must be made in order to convince, force or trick it into a Contains. Note, however, if a sorcerer is trying to Contain a Bound ghost which is not Bound to them, they must also overcome the strength of the Binding (making it much easier to Contain an Unbound ghost).

To escape, the ghost may test the Contain, directing its Power against the strength of the Contain and free itself; however, if it is Unbound and frees itself, it begins losing Power and Will as noted above.

Additionally, Containments may be placed around areas to keep ghosts OUT; in this case, the sorcerer creates the Contain as usual around an area or within a device, and any ghost wishing to pass into the protected area must overcome the Power of the Contain. No similar check needs be made for them to exit from the area, however. Sometimes you can tell Contained areas...no power flows into them, or the lights are dim and equipment is buggy...but these may be the sign of gremlins, or just screwed up wiring.



BANISHMENT

Banishment is the opposite of Establishment, it allows the sorcerer to remove an electronic entity from the Grid, submerging it so deeply in the data and electrical streams that it could never find its way back up – in effect, destroying it. However, such an entity can be brought forth again with a well-researched (and successful) Establishment attempt.

However, Banishment is not an act without consequence, for the process can ruin a machine, fusing circuits, melting capacitors, overloading systems as the ghost within attempts to keep a hold of reality and virtual position. Some claim the act of banishment destroys the soul of the machine itself – that the only machine without a ghost is the one that does not function, even if that soul is asleep within it – whether they are right is a matter of debate. What is known is that the entities of the Grid don't like to be Banished and will do everything in their power to resist it.

Banishment is made with a roll of dice equal to the sorcerer's Will against the creature's Power. Failure entails the entity resisted the submersion, and it will come looking for the one who made the attempt.

An additional roll of the sorcerer's Lore against the creature's Will is necessary to determine whether or not machinery is damaged during the ritual, with the number of successes had by the sorcerer in the Banishment adding to his Lore, and the number of successes had by the ghost adding to its Will. In other words, you want to get successes or machines blow up, sparks fly and strange hallucinogenic effects warp perception.

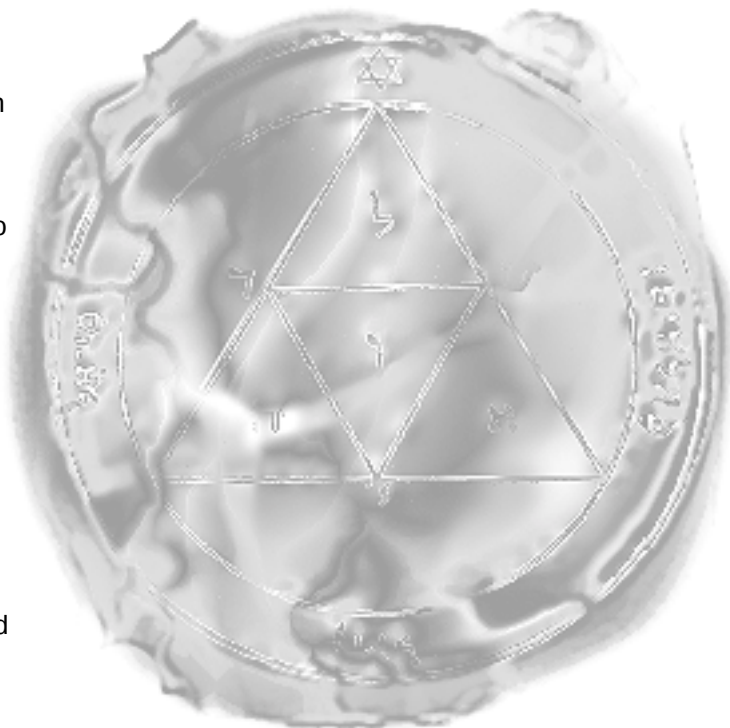
In order to Banish a ghost within a Contains, the banishing sorcerer must overcome both the ghost's Power and that of the Contains, and in order to Banish a ghost not Bound to them, they must overcome both the ghost's Power and the strength of the Binding (in this case the number of bonus dice for either the sorcerer or the ghost count as a bonus for the ghost to resist the Banishment). These situations stack.

PUNISHMENT

Punishment is a sorcerous act that drains power and strength from a ghost, reducing its ability to act upon the world. Success results in a reduction of the ghost's Power equal to the number of the sorcerer's victories (utilizing the sorcerer's Lore), unless the ghost being punished is Bound to the sorcerer, in which case no roll is required to reduce its Power by the sorcerer's Will. Otherwise, a Bound ghost can add the strength of their Binding to their Power in order to resist Punishment.

A ghost regains one point of Power per day with a successful roll of their Stamina against the strength of the Punish. As this leaves ghosts weak, a smart sorcerer never punishes his own ghosts simply to gain power, for it ultimately leaves him weakened.

Ghosts hate to be Punished and usually return the favor, usually when the sorcerer is least prepared for it. However, punishment is mostly used to reduce a ghost's Power when success is necessary, and most often in conjunction with the creation of Ghost-tech.



METAL-IN-THE-FLESH

“The human mind is constrained only by the abilities of its own inventions.”

Inspired by their knowledge of the truth of modern technology, sorcerers are able to build terrible, powerful machines and bind ghosts to them like the servant-demons of ancient Arabian fairy tales or modern dark fantasies. These devices become parasites, living machines implanted into a sorcerer's body to grant them strength, speed and numerous other powers: A cybernetic eye that allows sight into infrared and other ranges, a coil of copper wires around and through the wrist providing a permanent boost to Stamina, a metal hand that fires flares of sorcerous electricity, a pair of metal-and-flesh wings that allow flight, a transistor-studded metal plate beneath the chest generating an armor-like inertia field, or anything else the sorcerer can imagine.

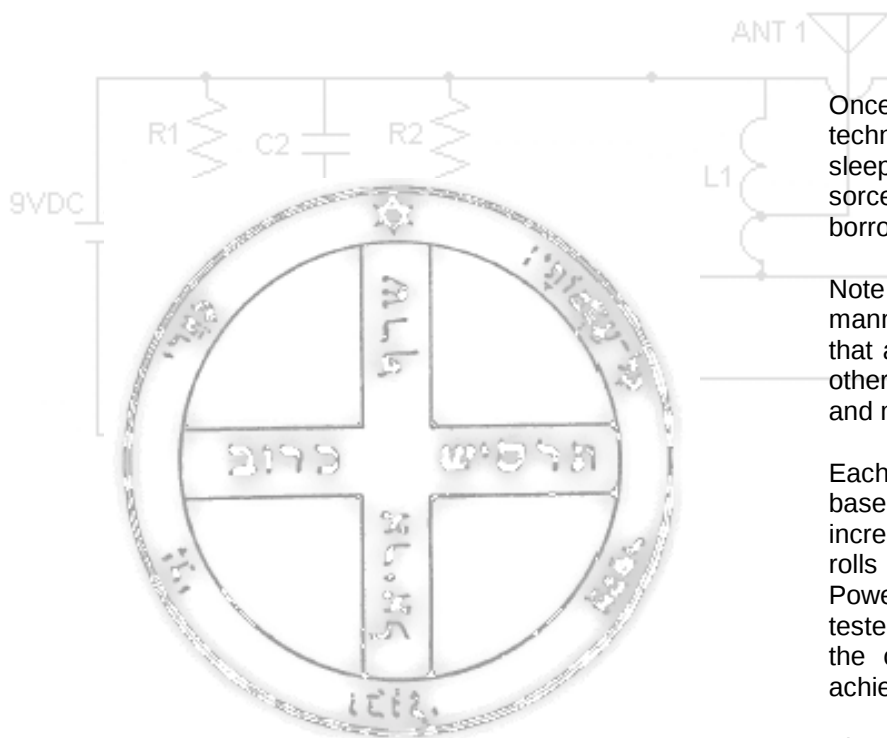
Ghost-tech is a machine possessed, inhabited by a ghost bound tortuously within, contained in a technological graft, a metal replacement of a piece of a sorcerer's body, and perhaps a piece of his soul. It devours the sorcerer in the process of its implantation, as the sorcerer becomes less human and more machine. Each time the sorcerer adds a piece of Ghost-tech to their body, merging it into themselves, they risk destroying a little bit of their humanity, the process slowly eating away at their soul.

With too much added tech, it is possible that a sorcerer could become utterly lost within the machine they have become, losing himself and becoming little more than a ghost in a piece of technical equipment (That, in fact, is why you shouldn't spend all day playing video games...).

To produce these wondrously terrifying items, a ghost with the appropriate ability must be sacrificed through use of the Containment ritual, the spirit allowing the machine to bond with the flesh of the living and function as part of it, merging with it. If the ghost utilized to create the machine is not Bound to the creating sorcerer, it receives bonus dice to its resistance based on the strength of that binding.

Thus Punishment is often used to help make the Containment attempt easier, for the ghost understands what is happening to it and will fight to keep it from occurring.





Once the ghost has been forced into the technological container, it is dormant, unaware, sleeping in tortuous chains, and the power the sorcerer desires is his to control without need to borrow it from a commanded ghost.

Note that Daemons cannot be used in this manner, for their soul or life or whatever it may be that allows man to bond with metal and electricity otherwise is simply incompatible with living flesh and minds.

Each piece of ghost-tech has a Power score at a base of 1, and as with a Contain, the sorcerer can increase the Power of an item with successful rolls of their Lore against the item's desired Power. Anytime an ability granted by the item is tested, the sorcerer rolls the item's Power against the opposition to see if the item functions or achieves its desired effects.

The Power of an item is also what a sorcerer rolls their Humanity against when implanting the item into himself; thus less powerful items are always wiser, or so it seems...

The sorcerer, Gregori Keyes, is trying to create a Grid-jack, a device which will allow him to enter the Grid at will without needing to make Humanity checks to do so. He has summoned and bound a spirit from the Grid and has already had the jack surgically implanted into his neck.

Knowing the ghost might resist, Gregori may have chosen to Punish it first to make it more pliable and obeisant; as it is Bound to him, he chooses to reduce its Power of 4 by his Will (3), giving it an effective Power of 1. The rolls are 6,6,4,4,2 and 1, meaning Gregori succeeds with five victories and the ghost is bound into the jack.

Say Gregori instead wishes to use a ghost lurking in the circuits of a rival's walls as the soul of his Grid-jack; this ghost is Bound very well, however, with its master having a 4-dice bonus to all interactions with it. In order to Contain it, Gregori must overcome the ghost's Power plus 4-dice with his Lore of 5.

Some sorcerers claim strange effects occur when one entraps a powerful spirit in a limited item – one where the item's Power is less than that of the ghost's – ranging from the device working improperly or sporadically, to undesired even baneful side-effects or the erosion of the sorcerer's sanity or sense of self.

Some groups may wish to reflect these with additional Prices being added to an unlucky sorcerer, penalty dice to the Humanity check when the device is implanted, occasional rolls of the item's Power against the sorcerer's Will to avoid mishaps or unwanted effects or activations, or so forth.

THE GRID

“The Grid is Hell, and I...I am a Devil.”

Before the mistake is made, before an impression is formed, let it be clear that the Grid is not “virtual reality”, the Grid is not the ‘Net (though the ‘Net is part of the Grid) nor is it what is commonly referred to as cyberspace. Like all things dealing with ghosts and the electronic realm, the Grid is a paradox, a dual-natured entity made of reality and illusion, and which part is which an excellent, unanswerable question.

It is a strange, ever-shifting combination of higher spiritual plane, dream or fantasy world and virtual reality, not a place to surf through the web pages called up on a computer screen, to live in them or change them, or through which one can hack into databases and systems (even though all this is part of it).

Physically, it exists (such as it were) in the electrical grid underlying modern society, shunting power from place to place, home to home, city to city; but it is much more than this...alien, unknowable, with logic (if there is any) beyond the ability of the human mind to grasp. It is a psychological trip into the soul of the sorcerer and the surrounding ghosts, for the Grid is an otherworld formed by the electrical currents of modern society, flowing through walls and streets and floors, through the air above and under the sea.

Some claim this world is the real world as ghosts see it; some claim it is created by the ghosts, a reminder of their lives, their hopes and failures,

their dreams and nightmares. Some claim it is a ghost itself, a piece of what was and has passed made real by the strange occult properties of man's control over the electric current, much akin to the ghosts themselves.

Some say it is an illusion created by the human mind when it tries to penetrate the mystery of death and reality, to cross the veil into the world of ghosts, to join with the machine as though they were one. Some say the Grid is simply a hallucinogenic trip, whose only reality is formed by the pieces of the sorcerer's own mind and the drug-induced interpretation of the real bits of the machine they believe they are entering.

Whatever the truth, it is place that can be experienced by the human mind, sunk softly into and wandered about in, a thick morass of experience and technology. It is a place a sorcerer can become trapped in, lured in, abandoned by their ghosts, caught in a stream of data or electricity while their body languishes empty and mindless without.

The layout of the Grid seems to appear as a response to emotional stimuli, those who enter calmly and without preset notion of the structure within often find empty, unshaped places, but the more experience they gather, the more unrest which boils in their soul, the more the Grid changes and the more of it they seem to see.

“The Grid...illusion? Fantasy? Reality?”

“The Pillars of Mercy and Severity and Yahweh's spheres hanging upon and between them; the Underworld and the Heavens and the Middle-Earth of the Native Americans; the Arthurian worlds of the romantic European authors, and yet more...”

“Virtual worlds of strange magic and technology, of fantasy or primitiveness, or those only a few meters long or wide...empty, bright white tunnels, blazing infernos, black places carpeted in insects.”

"The Matrix is everywhere, it's all around us, here even in this room. You can see it out your window, or on your television. You feel it when you go to work, or go to church or pay your taxes."

**--Morpheus,
"The Matrix"**

A sorcerer can step into the Grid anywhere he can find electrical power flowing, an outlet, a lamp, a blender, a computer, a power line, even a specially designed "entryway." The method of entry is a ritual like any other, modeled upon the spirit trance of the ancient shamans, which took them into the otherworld; or the result of a wild dance at a techno-rave like the sacred dances of ancient tribes, or even just a moment of concentration in which the sorcerer shifts realities.

Every time a sorcerer enters the Grid, a Humanity check is made as the experience brings them further and further from human experience and perception, exposing them to alien realms and methods...the mind can't help but warp in response. This is a roll of the sorcerer's Humanity against their own Lore, as everything human in the individual is assaulted by the occult nature of the Grid, with failure causing the loss of a point of Humanity.

But the Grid can also restore Humanity...its odd properties can be strangely revealing, even soothing in their glowing, alien metaphor. Within, sorcerers can catch a glimpse of themselves, of their own soul, and sometimes heal themselves of the psychic damage of their past as the otherworld was often said to do by magickians and magic-workers in ages past.

Of course, the Grid can be and is used for other more blatant and material ends as well...sabotage, espionage, stalking, power trips...a sorcerer in the Grid is just like a ghost in their ability to move through systems, leap through circuits and control the machine from within. Only those trips deemed to have resulted in spiritual renewal and awakening or in new insight allow Humanity to be recovered.

But there are dangers in the Grid, beyond its alien nature; there are possessors and hostile ghosts or gremlins, there are other sorcerers and cleverly lain Containments that can trap the unwary. This ritual is as nasty for sorcerers within the Grid as it is for ghosts, for a sorcerer in the Grid can be caught and contained just like a ghost and they will need to fight their way out just like a ghost. The body can die outside while the mind lives on within.

For every day the body goes without a mind, a Stamina roll must be made against itself, failure indicating a loss of one point of Stamina. Should Stamina ever drop to zero, the body dies, and the mind is lost in the Grid.

To first enter the Grid, the sorcerer performs an Establishment ritual, entering a trance-like state or use some form of sorcerous technology to see and experience the seeming realm. Unlike a normal Establishment, the sorcerer rolls a number of dice equal to their Lore against their Humanity score. Complete failure of this attempt means the sorcerer falls into a catatonic state, lost in his own head, mind broken by the attempt to understand the alien realm, and when he finally awakens, it is with an extra point of Humanity, and a reduction of one point in Lore.

Once within, movement through the Grid pits the sorcerer against themselves...

The Grid is shaped by every action within, the sorcerer's own desires reshape it, let him travel through it, resist the strange intrusions therein and open windows to the real world beyond its borders. To this end, the sorcerer's scores are used as both the means of transmission from place to place and as interference with that movement.

Humanity is the subconscious, animal mind rising up out of the dark places it is hidden and revealing itself, casting its shadow across the Grid and haunting the sorcerer's trip through the other realm.

To this end, the sorcerer must spend their efforts engaging the shadow they have cast against the electric glow with all their skills and knowledge, their mastery of sorcery and the electronic realm, and their own sense of self will.

The shadow presents itself in various ways, often as obstacles or denizens meaningful to the sorcerer, or even as the nature of the path being taken. In most cases, it does not interfere with the sorcerer directly so much as it presents itself to the walker in the electron stream. It is an ever-present "coloration", imposing details here, adding bits there, not a singular, "once-per-visit" occurrence.

In all forms, the shadow, in all capacities, uses the sorcerer's Humanity score whenever contests with it are performed, and in all forms it desires something. In order for the sorcerer to defeat it, to understand it, he must discover that desire and fulfill it, or somehow get around it...

Of course, the shadow is not the end-all be-all of the Grid, for at best it is perhaps a projection over the "reality" of the Grid, or simply another element within it. Within the other realm, ghosts live out their own lives and dramas in surreal fantasy worlds and daemons rush to and fro, performing tasks, blocking paths, even imposing themselves upon or being incorporated into the shadow.

Lore is the ability to sidestep all these dramas playing out around the sorcerer, using and seeing the machinery itself stripped of illusion; it is an understanding of the physical location of the world just outside – the ability to peer out beyond the electron fantasy -- allowing physical travel from one point to another using the Grid. Lore is often rolled in contrast to Humanity when attempting tasks within the Grid that deal with the underlying technology and occult mysteries of the Grid instead of the seeming reality and personal nature of the view. For example, with a successful roll of Lore against Humanity, the sorcerer can wipe away the shadow, sidestep its influence, and see the fantasies projected by the ghosts and the inner spirit of the machines around him, but of course this means they cannot fulfill the shadow's desire.

"He slid down the muddy canyon slope as thunder rolled through the darkness above, plunging into the dark abyss below...had it been reality, his bones would have cracked on the ground far below. Had it been reality."

"Here, he found himself lying in a field of white and yellow flowers watered by streams of glowing data; disoriented, feeling stunned and wondering where to go from here...what new dream or nightmare was he participating in?"

"He noticed he was wearing different shoes."

Humanity can also be pitted against the shadow to gain insight into the sorcerer's self; and it can resist the alien nature of the Grid, shaping it into recognizably human experiences. The sorcerer may declare things to exist or happen, alter perception and reality itself. Humanity is a measure of the power they have to make it so when such changes are resisted. Humanity helps to understand what their shadow reveals when cast against the Grid.

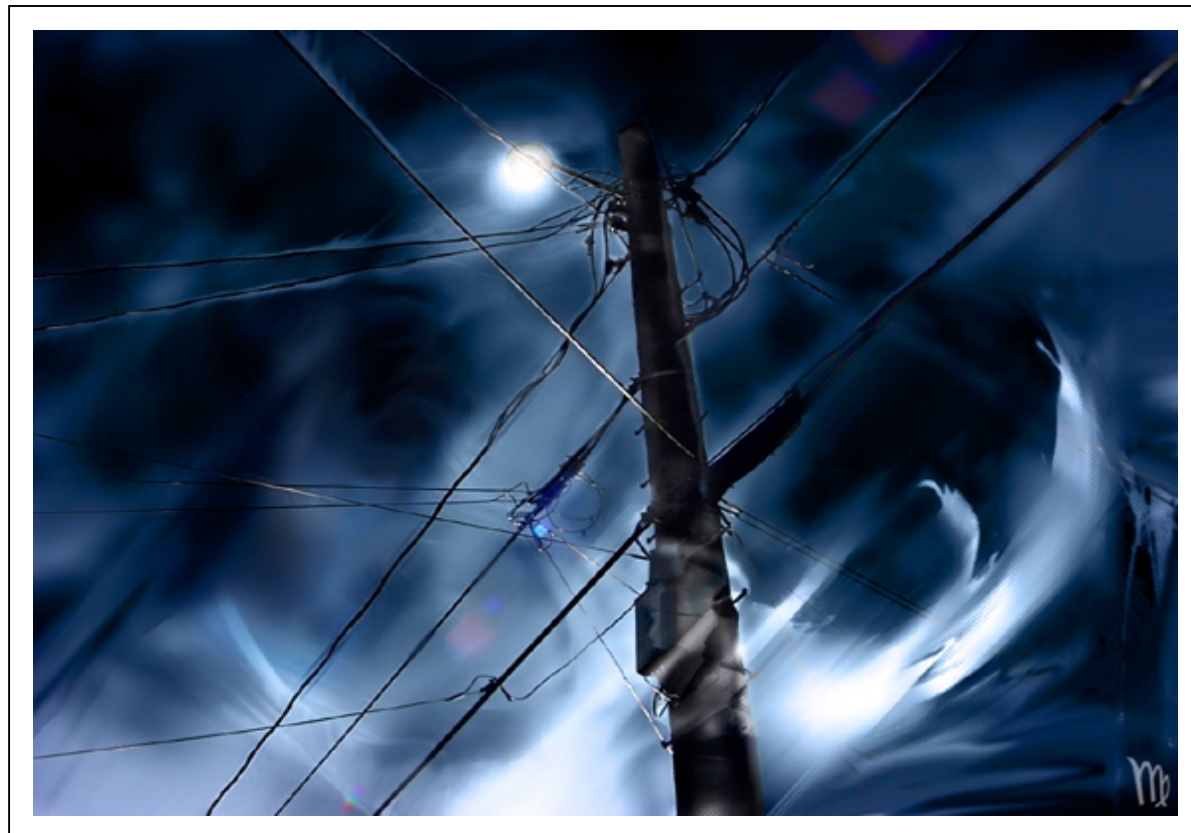
Successfully fulfilling the shadow in the Grid results in a gain of one point of Humanity, though doing so is not so simple as making a single roll; it is fulfilling a task, understanding the nature of some problem, coming to a conclusion or improving one's nature.

Finally, within the Grid, Will is the equivalent of Stamina (the sorcerer's Stamina score is ignored). It determines how severe the shocks of the Grid can be before the mind rushes safely home, for combat, injury and other contests in the Grid result in penalties to all scores except Stamina. Will should be used when mentally refocusing oneself when assaulted by the nature of the realm, or attempting to understand the archetypes and subconscious messages of ghost and daemon playing through the landscapes.

Each time a contest is lost, one die in Will is temporarily lost since everything here is mental, psychological, even archetypal -- half construct, half illusion – and the strange, inconstant nature of the other realm can be shocking and stressful to a mind built to deal with other realities.

Stamina remains when all other scores drop to zero and the mind flees back to its physical refuge, emerging from the transcendent state into a possible coma in the real world...Of course, if his body is not there, the sorcerer is in a great deal of trouble.

Stamina also determines how long a sorcerer can remain inside the other world until the ailing body pulls it back out, and to resist the intrusions of alien presences into the sorcerer's body while vacant of a mind. In the case of the former, the body can only last so many hours without the mind, and after the first six to eight hours, the sorcerer must roll Will against Stamina to remain in the Grid. After another four hours, they must roll again, and so on. A sorcerer may only stay within the Grid a number of days equal to their Stamina score before the body simply dies.



Guides

“Lead me through the Grid, through the twisting electron corridors of the mind...”

A sorcerer can attempt to contact a guide within the Grid in the same manner they normally Establish with a ghost. This method allows the sorcerer to find what they are looking for with less difficulty, as both the ghost and sorcerer roll for tasks undertaken in the Grid, and successes by either are conferred as victories to the other.

Note, however, that they cannot roll with one another when they do not have a matching score (in the cases of Humanity and Power), though such guides can contribute their Lore to sorcerous rituals.

The guide is almost always the same...a manifestation of the Price the sorcerer has paid.

In addition, the rituals of Banishment, Containment and Punishment work within the Grid, upon anything within it.

Banishment can be used upon another sorcerer to send them back to their body, though when used against a ghost or daemon, it destroys them utterly. Containment traps a sorcerer or ghost within a specific “place” in the Grid, and the machinery that corresponds to that virtual location.

Punishment works the same.

Part 3: Campaign Types

“He’s going to gather ghosts and drain them away to summon up El’zak’arheth...and that’s a demon we would not wish upon this world.”

Despite all of the above rules and statements about the world of Electric Ghosts, the Narrator should not feel bound to a particular type of story or setting. Electric Ghosts can take place anywhere, in any setting from modern times to the near future, to the far-off reaches of time and space.

In fact the idea that Electric Ghosts could take place in any time other than the present day is not simply supported, but encouraged. From the time of Tesla (perhaps a sorcerer himself -- perhaps the first very first sorcerer) and backwards into an age before electricity ruled, though after it was discovered...or forward into the future: the near future of massive corporations guided by power-hungry, scheming sorcerers and their ghostly companions; or the far future, when massive freighters and ships ply the endless void of darkness between worlds, powered by sorcerous batteries that surge with the otherworldly energy of ghosts; all these are possible periods to set an Electric Ghosts story within.

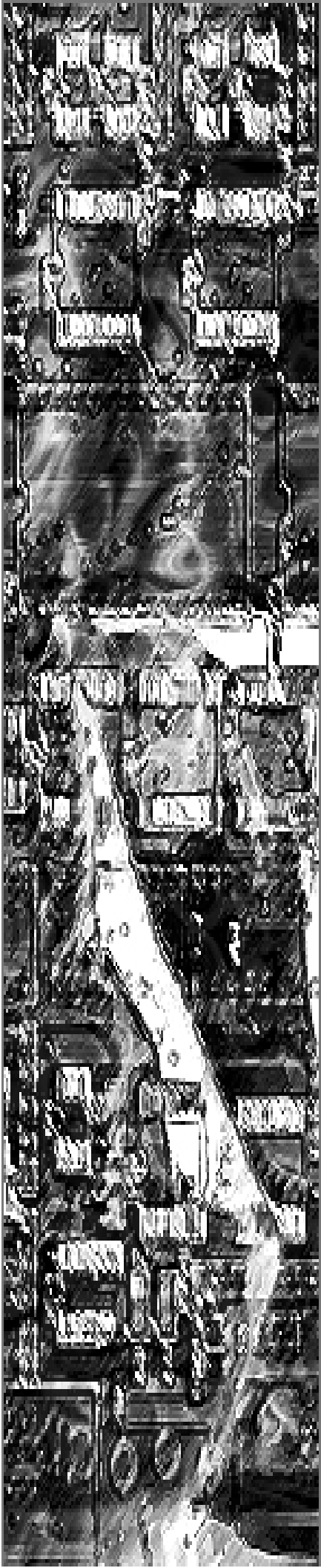
MODERN

There are two types of stories easily be told in the modern day, depending on the technology level available to the characters and the style of play preferred. These are a low-tech game involving sorcerers whose main contacts and experience are with the ghosts of normal modern appliances.

The focus here is on action and movement, not generally intrigue or political machinations.

The other type of modern day story focuses on sorcerers who work for other people, whose main concern is keeping tight reign on certain ghosts and keeping those of others out of their own systems. These sorts would be hired (quietly) by corporations: electron-junkies, endlessly surfing the networks, keeping other people’s ghosts and daemons out, gathering databases of servants and spirits to perform their bidding, to whom they owe favors, corporates battling it out on the cyberplains with rival hackers and daemoniac virii.

This sort of campaign is focused around intrigue and planning with bad-ass battles in-between.



NEAR FUTURE

The near-future, that time just within glimpsing distance, not so far removed from today that it is unimaginable or alien in the shift of its culture, but different enough that it isn't now, it isn't modern.

This is a time to set any number of types of sorcerer stories, from those involving massive corporations and cybernetically enhanced beings to those where sorcerers are a fading breed trying to understand, perhaps preserve, the strange world fading away as humanity moves to a different source of power than the electricity which ran it for so many centuries, or instead push it towards absolute, unshakable dominance and securing their own power.

Certainly it is possible to believe that ghosts and the system which supports them might begin to vanish sometime in the near future upon discovery of some other motive force, phasing out electrically-based technology. Perhaps photonic or quantum in nature, removing either all or more likely, a great deal of the power of sorcerers, regulating them to back streets and under-developed countries which still utilize the old method, control of minor portions of the technological paradise which require energy created via electricity.

With such a grim promise in store, it is also not inconceivable that sorcerers might use their current power to ensure their continued dominance, via the survival and support of electrically-based technology, and the suppression of any other types which might arise with proper research and funding. Even so, these two settings would require a great deal of preparation, research and explanation on the part of the narrator.

One type of near-future which would not would be the oft-explored cyberpunk genre, with a great deal of resource material available in a wide variety of formats, video, book and game, such a world would be easy to construct and understand, with the narrator only having to detail the way sorcerers would interact with such a setting.

And, in the near future, one should not forget to include man moving into space and building colonies -- the race trying to claw their way to the stars and the interaction of sorcerers with the technology that gets them there.

"I need your cooperation, Sal."

"Of course, Dr. Chandra."

"There may be certain risks. I propose to disconnect some of your circuits, particularly those involving your higher functions. Are you ready?"

"Not yet. I would like to ask a question."

"What is it?"

"Will I dream?"

"Of course you will. All intelligent creatures dream."

-- Arthur C. Clarke, "2010: Odyssey Two"

FAR FUTURE

The far future includes technology unavailable and perhaps unimaginable to us today, technology perhaps indistinguishable from magic and certainly unexplainable to our modern understanding of natural law. This is a time of starships and interplanetary exploration; alien cultures and galactic empires or an empty universe wherein man and earth-creatures are the only living things.

Sorcerers may be a type of well-known mystic plying the space ways, techno-mages and wizards.

Or perhaps they rule over others, or build vast fortresses against the devouring darkness discovered between the empty stars. They may be the technicians of living ships or massive, semi-intelligent freighters, living out their lives in service to their vehicles.

"We are dreamers, shapers, singers, and makers. We study the mysteries of laser and circuit, crystal and scanner, holographic demons and invocations of equations. These are the tools we employ and we know many things."

**-- Elric the Technomage; Babylon 5,
"The Geometry of Shadows"**

Perhaps they are even anarchists and luddites, horrified by the ghosts men are creating, privy to frightening secret knowledge or belief about the kind of future that will result from the use of technology. So they campaign for changes the rest of the populace refuses to entertain, as no one but the sorcerers has ever seen a ghost: moving to a different, more limiting form of technology that holds no spirits, or returning to mankind's ancient roots and a simpler way of life.

Perhaps sorcery does not arise until man encounters and begins to use alien technology, and ghosts are something of a side-effect to it.



The Hand of Al'Shaqar

This scenario seems a simple search for an artifact lost in antiquity, but quickly reveals that finding the Hand is only the dressing over the real story. No preconfigured hooks are provided by which to involve the players' sorcerers, each group will individually have to decide upon the reasons they become involved and add emotional weight to that decision, as it should be.

The actors are:

- Jamal Hammash, an imposing Negro
Stamina 4, Will 3, Lore 3, Cover 5, Humanity 2
- Ifrim alBashiri, head of Bashiri Enterprises
Stamina 3, Will 6, Lore 0, Cover 6, Humanity 1
- Shapir Hammad, Iranian archeologist
Stamina 2, Will 4, Lore 0, Cover 4, Humanity 3
- Abdul alKhamir, the missing man, kidnapped
Stamina 3, Will 4, Lore 0, Cover 4, Humanity 3
- DuArmand, a mysterious Turk
Stamina 3, Will 3, Lore 1, Cover 3, Humanity 2

The ghosts are:

- Sham, a nasty beast guarding the Hand
Stamina 6, Will 3, Lore 5, Power 6
- Periwit, Jamal's daemon
Stamina 2, Will 3, Lore 2, Power 4

Background

A few months ago, a potentially important discovery was made in the mid-Eastern deserts, an ancient complex from a time before the Persian empire was unearthed from the sands. Rumors circulating in certain, private sections of the Internet claim that the archeologists discovered an ancient sorcerous artifact within, created long before such sorcerous devices should have been possible, and once silent ghosts whisper terribly about an alien power being unearthed. More publicly, the news has been splashed with reports that both of the archaeologists working on the scene have vanished and heavy, professional guard the site has been placed under by a private, unnamed company.

The unnamed company who funded the digging, and the company who owns the guards keeping a lockdown on the site, is Bashiri Enterprises, a mid-eastern technology and military hardware company headed by the reclusive millionaire Ifrim alBashir.

Bashiri Enterprises was originally an oil-drilling business, but has used its own considerable wealth as well as that of unknown backers to expand its influence in recent years.

What no one realizes is that men from Ifrim's company discovered ancient hieroglyphs painted on the walls of caverns discovered while drilling. Ifrim -- a believer in the old stories of djinn, and an aspiring sorcerer in the ancient traditions -- believed the translated writings were keys to power, or once they had been translated, a map to such keys.

The writings were translated in secret and the workers and translators who saw them were then sealed away in the same caverns and left to die...all except one, Shapir Hammad bargained his way out with promises that he could unlock the mystery the translated writings had revealed. Soon enough, he proved himself right: the translated text was an allegorical map pinpointing the location of a mythical city deep in the desert.

Once there, Shapir requested help from an old friend, Abdul alShamir, a fellow archeologist and cryptologist with an extensive background in dead languages and an uncanny ability to solve riddles and puzzles, of which there were no end of in the ruins.



During the dig and exploration of the chambers in the main temple of the buried city, the group triggered the release of a waiting guardian: Sham, a one-handed ghost who proclaimed himself to be a djinni, but would not bend to Ifrim's sorceries.

Fleeing the site in the confusion and chaos caused by the angry djinni, Ifrim rescued Abdul only to lock him away in the high-security compound beneath his estate. The tycoon believes he is protecting Abdul from the world media and the thing now stalking the archeology site, however, he also plans on killing him as soon as the Hand is located and the puzzle-lock guarding the final chamber solved.

Abdul is no fool, however -- he's noted Ifrim's cold behavior and heard rumors about the mass burial made to keep this operation quiet -- so he understands his chances of surviving longer than it takes him to solve the puzzle are slim to none.

He has no idea where he is being kept, though he feels the place he is in is dead and empty in an intangible way (perhaps feeling the effects of the daemon Periwit's influence over the local Grid).

A week ago, Abdul discovered the key to the lock and thus the final chamber, but for the time being he is feigning ignorance, bluffing grudging work on the problem until he can figure out a way to escape or bargain with Ifrim. Unfortunately, time is running out, as Ifrim suspects Abdul's lies...he's not the only one, however.

Guarding Abdul is Jamal, a large black African man who serves as the head of computer security and technological counter-intrusion for Ifrim's estate and the high-security compound beneath it.

Jamal's actual loyalties lie with an African sorcerer's cult who want the power of the Hand for themselves, and are sneaky enough to slip one of their own into Ifrim Bashiri's network. The cult wants to use Abdul to their own advantage, either by spying-out the necessary solution to the lock or by 'rescuing' Abdul from the estate, with Jamal's help.

In the background is Periwit, something akin to a collection of daemons all answering to the same program: a sort of sorcerous firewall set up to keep unwanted spirits out of the local systems and keep a heavy guard over the area Abdul is caged in. Periwit's programmed desire is that NOTHING is to get into or remain in the system, and thus he is only more than happy to oblige, but Jamal is trying to rewrite the daemon to spy on Abdul as well and help cover an escape, a task proving to be extremely difficult.

Additionally, the cult's agents are hunting down the other archeologist as an alternate means to help retrieve the Hand; with luck, Jamal may ferret out this man's location as well.

Currently, Shapir is just as much a prisoner as Abdul, though in a different way. Though happy to be alive, he is certain Ifrim has killed Abdul and is certain the same fate awaits him; thus has taken to hiding out in a slum, renting a small apartment and using a fake bank account to get by. He hopes that if he waits long enough Ifrim will just forget about him.

He's wrong, the tycoon won't, in fact his agents have already located him, but right now he doesn't care enough focus himself personally on Shapir; time enough for that after he gets the Hand.

Enter DuArmand, a high-ranking Turkish officer in the security sector of Bashiri Enterprises. He is also a naïve sorcerer, and not surprisingly (considering his true goals) has had himself assigned as head of the security detail at the site. The Turk is biding his time, waiting for the sealed vault to be opened, when he plans on making sure Ifrim finds an empty chamber and abandons the search as fruitless. In preparation for this, his own agents are hard at work digging their own tunnel into the final chamber and also attempting to solve the puzzle-lock.

Unfortunately, Sham is roaming the grounds of the site, making the ability to carry out this plan very difficult. Though gunfire and other methods

can drive Sham away, even destroy him, he always returns the next day, as powerful as ever, and disrupts progress, nor is the djinni above getting a little human blood on his hand.

However, Ifrim is fully aware of DuArmand's duplicity, through loyal double-agents of his own, and is just waiting for the Turk to make his move, even, perhaps, get the Hand for Ifrim...

At some point, very shortly, DuArmand will kidnap Shapir and bring him back to the site, quietly and under his protection, to solve the puzzle-lock and then reset it for Ifrim's visit after getting the Hand. In fact, it is DuArmand who trailed Shapir to his current hideout and filed the report.

Locations

The archaeology site is deep in the sands of the Iranian deserts. It is heavily guarded by a contingent of a dozen-and-a-half men armed with automatic weapons. A barbed-wire fence surrounds the main dig area. The sand has been mostly cleared away from the building ruins, enough that part of a broken street and a few blasted buildings have been uncovered (or what remains of them). The real treasure is in a series of catacombs and chambers under the central temple building.

Through a large hole blasted through the remaining floor of the temple stand a series of underground tunnels and chambers. The results of the archeologists' previous explorations can be seen here: a few lanterns and other tools left behind, or dropped in their haste to flee from Sham; there is even a body or two of unfortunates killed and left behind.

The obstacles and puzzles placed in the way by the original builders are all evident as well, all overcome, except the final puzzle that somehow triggered the release of Sham.

The Bashiri estate is on the outskirts of a large city, surrounded by high walls and security cameras, patrolled by dogs and security officers; an elevator leads to the compound beneath the estate and consists of a number of chambers and hallways guarded by security doors and security personnel, run by a mainframe in the center of the complex. The mansion above is a posh, modern mid-eastern estate with artistic tastes showcasing Ifrim Bashiri's fascination with the ancient folklore and magical practices of the Persian empire and pre-Persian cultures.

The slums where Shapir is hiding out are a run-down, dangerous area. Government subversives and fanatics abound, as do the typical thieves and muggers to be found in such areas. Further, DuArmand has an agent keeping tabs on Shapir, and a couple agents from the sorcerer's cult Jamal belongs to have been combing the area searching for the archeologist whom they believe can be found somewhere in this area.

Reactions

Shapir is a self-serving coward at heart, though he's not evil or cruel. He's weak and frightened, and looking out for his own immediate safety in any situation. If approached, Shapir will attempt to bargain for his life, offering help to anyone who promises to protect him from Ifrim Bashiri, if they appear to be able to keep that promise.

He knows something of the house systems and layout of Ifrim's estate and offers up any information that might prove valuable, but he will not put himself into Ifrim Bashiri's hands by accompanying a group to the Bashiri estate or the archeology site, at least not without an excess of persuasion.

He won't go to the local law enforcement, since they are easily in Bashiri's back pocket, though the media might hear him out...and if he can implicate Ifrim in any sort of scandal, he figures he's safe for a short time. Thus he's nervously waiting for someone from the press he thinks he can trust.

Abdul is clever and personable, with a quiet nature masking a strong self-will. He believes in his own abilities, but knows his limitations, so he's never cocky or overconfident.

He doesn't care to go back to the site, and would prefer to get himself completely out of this mess altogether. He is acutely aware that Ifrim will hunt him down, so he is also plotting out ways to end the tycoon's life if he does manage to escape...thus far his plans have amounted to little more than apparent fantasy, something he himself is well aware of.

His best chance, he believes, is to tell Ifrim that he must go to the site to open the puzzle-lock, because the permutations of the answer, depending on what happens when he solves the first puzzle, are too complex to impart to Ifrim in a short time and rely on Abdul's specialized knowledge. Once at the site, Abdul plans to try to seal Ifrim away or let the tycoon get himself killed, and escape himself.

Jamal is a quiet plotter, unassuming and careful. He's cool as glass and doesn't like to make waves. He's never caught off-guard or flustered, even when doing something he shouldn't be.

Once he learns what is occurring at the site and after sufficient preparation, Jamal will arrive to deal with Sham, likely with Abdul in tow. Jamal may request help in retrieving the Hand, or in causing a distraction at the estate while he spirits the archeologist out, but he will mask his motivations for doing so and ultimately betray anyone who does help him.

DuArmand is cocky and overconfident; he likes to think he has every angle covered, and is supremely certain of his own overestimated abilities and knowledge.

The Turk is looking for any help he can find to deal with the djinni; he is not quite certain why it is behaving the way it is or what is generating it. DuArmand knows the layout and security of the Bashiri estate, and has clearance to access the restricted sections, including the underground compound where Abdul is being held, though he believes freeing Abdul to help him is a greater risk than he wishes to take and will settle for Shapir.

Ifrim is a raving egoist underneath the suave businessman's exterior he puts forth, though with his wealth and power he can afford to be.

In any attempt to quell Sham, Ifrim will demand he be involved, using ancient sorcerous techniques, dress and language, all of which will be utterly useless against the ghost. Suspecting that Abdul may be lying to him about the difficulty of solving the puzzle, Ifrim is quietly seeking other suitably knowledgeable individuals to help him.

"Yes, if it lands on the hawk. But if the puzzle moves to the keystone next, what do you do? And after that, where the puzzle moves...you must answer in correct, ordered sequence, dependent upon the nature of the moves before it and the symbology of the puzzle. Do you understand ancient Iranian, mister Bashiri? No, that is why I must be the one to do it, only I can decipher the coded meaning of each puzzle movement."

Periwit, the daemon guarding the estate's security system, speaks with a thousand voices, and manifests as bugs crawling everywhere. It's programmed desire is something it refuses to allow alteration to.

Periwit can be overcome by superior force or through destruction. Unbinding and rebinding the daemon will not allow other sorcerers to ghost into the system, as Periwit's desire is still to stop them from doing so. He will have to be fought or out-manuvered.

Sham is a humanoid manifestation limned with cool flames that can blaze and lash out. He truly believes he is a djinni out of the old desert tales, vicious, clever and cruel, and acts the part; he unthinkingly protects the temple and the ruins from invaders. As powerful as he is, it will take a strong sorcerer to contain him.

Sham will not allow anyone or anything to get to the Hand, and will use *any* means necessary to stop them. He regenerates until successfully banished or until the dynamo that supports him is discovered and destroyed...whether that turns out to be the modern equipment at the site, or a more ancient generator built deep in the temple.

Binding Sham will prove to be difficult, as the only bonus dice to be awarded are those gained through proper procedure: by discovering and utilizing the ancient Persian rituals originally used to bind Sham.

The Hand

The *Hand of Al'Shaqar*, a rumor, said to be the greatest sorcerous artifact ever created, a taloned glove made of brass that grants the wearer power over the fabric of reality itself, but created long before history records man had even begun to understand or work with electricity.

Lost in antiquity, legend and hearsay have placed it in various times and places across recorded history, at the center of world-changing events, but it has never been located or verified as more than a fantasy by any.

Now, one of those legends has come to life in the modern world, whispering of the Hand's whereabouts and luring those who want its power, or to know the truth of its legend.

Whispers in silent corners of the Grid have always quietly but boldly claimed that sorcery was practiced more than a thousand years before the modern age of technology made it possible; rumors of control of electrical currents in ancient Persia, rumors arising from the find of primitive batteries beneath the desert sands, batteries once used to plate statuettes with gold.

This story can take place in any time period, but most ostensibly the modern world.

Whether the Hand actually exists or not is a question unanswered here, as are the powers of the Hand itself, if it truly has any.

Mars Dome -- scenario seed

The Mars Project was an unmanned attempt to study and terraform the red planet, man's last hope for survival as a poisoned, overburdened Earth slowly died around them. Utilizing a massive mainframe housing a state-of-the-art artificial intelligence, the project was run from a habitat dome constructed by robotic drones drop-shipped to the Martian surface years ago. After completion of the virtual fortress, dubbed "Mars Dome" back on Earth, the components necessary to build the mainframe were dropped from orbit and assembled, the AI program transmitted to the waiting core from Earth's central space-flight and exploration agency.

But something went wrong. Contact was lost with the machine nearly six months ago and has not been reestablished, and after exhausting all other options, the space agency has determined someone must be sent to Mars to investigate and get the project back on track or at least report the problems so Earth techs can attempt to devise a repair scheme. There is no room for failure.

This mission represented the first manned flight to the planet. However, the surface-to-orbit shuttle carrying the inspection crew was damaged upon arrival, leaving them unable to return to the orbiting station and their companions, and the only ride home. This presents no serious problem if they can locate and enter Mars Dome, which should have enough spare parts to repair the damaged craft. Control also reports that due the eventuality of such a manned mission, Mars Dome was stocked with supplies of food, water and air, and should contain a breathable atmosphere.

There are two robotic drones with you, a small rover and a dog-like servant.

What's going on?

The AI terraforming unit has decided that mankind is wrong in attempting to destroy Mars' natural habitat,

- Mars' magnetic field interferes with the ghosts inside the machines...they want to go home...back to Earth, where they belong, or they're just completely insane now.
- There is an alien influence with some purpose sinister or benign affecting the machines of the Red Planet...what the goals of this influence are are completely mysterious.
- The AI terraforming unit has decided that mankind is wrong in attempting to destroy Mars' natural habitat, and is taking steps to stop, including the destruction of anyone who sets foot on Mars.
- The AI unit feels that the technology to change Mars should be used on Earth instead, and is building weapons, warrior-drone servants and ships to return to the blue planet to reduce the population and begin steps to restore it.

Deep, Dark Space -- scenario seed

A deep space shuttle, a commercial transport plying the black emptiness between the stars has been attacked and its systems brought down. The ship itself is dying around you, ghosts flickering out one by one...soon enough the cold will come, and then they will come, the rumored things that lurk in the depths of space. Horrible, black demons of indescribable form, whose eyes none have seen...devourers of ships and men and minds.

Even now they quietly wait, until your energy reserves are gone and all the ghosts have gone away; only the ghosts keep them away...

The Grid is still available to explore, and perhaps enough exploration can reveal a way to fix the ship, to get it moving again...but that's not likely. This is about coming to terms with the eventuality of death, what you will think about, what you'll come to terms with and how you'll go out.

The Electric Godzilla – scenario seed

A massive "thing" of metal and wire is tearing up New York city...straight from a Godzilla flick...but beyond stopping the monster, there are the real questions: what ghost is inhabiting this thing...where did it come from...why is it destroying the city?

What if this thing is a virus? What if the world as the sorcerers know it is just a virtual creation their minds are trapped inside?

The Haunted Car – scenario seed

A car just purchased has proven to be unreliable in its character, and study of the vehicle's history reveals the murder of a young woman in the backseat. The crime is yet unavenged.

Any failed Binding involving the car results in a young lady appearing mysteriously in the sorcerer's life, unknown to him a manifestation of the vehicle, not realizing she is dead, slowly forcing the issue towards reenactment of the crime which led to her murder.

The sorcerer's problem is that in their failed Binding, they woke the spirit of the young woman, brought her ghost into their life permanently, and the only way to make the ghost happy is to complete the vicious cycle...how does one maintain their humanity in the face of this? And if they choose their humanity, what about their sanity?

Epilogue



Thousands of years ago in Europe, man domesticated the horse. He chased it down because it could carry more than he could, ran it down on foot and caught it, wore it out and tamed it. Today, there are still natives in Mexico who run seventy miles to a nearby village just to chat; who run races that last for days, just to compete. Today, we become winded running up a flight of stairs.

From horses to cars, we've lost our ability to run, to outdistance and out-endure other creatures; we've lost something that makes us human, part of our human heritage. We have willingly passed our own power on to tools, invested them with our ability. To run down a horse today, we have ATVs and jeeps and helicopters.

In the quest for ease, superiority and safety, first we harnessed or enslaved other animals and other men to do our work for us, to do it better or to help us out; now we've harness our minds and our resources to create *things* to do our work for us, to do it better, to help us out...even our own slaves did so, desiring an easier or freer life through technology of their own.

By doing so, by giving up bits of our human experience and naturally granted power, are we losing some of the essential nature of what it is to be human?

Electric Ghosts assumes we are, but it also assumes that man creates because he was meant to, and so the question then becomes: *how does one achieve a state of balance with technology?*

How does one remain human when that very humanity is put aside, when we take our essential being and place it into objects, when what we do and how we do it are described not by who we are, but by the tools we use and their powers. Tools we create...but we must ask, are our tools *extensions* of ourselves, or are we replacing ourselves with empty plastic and lifeless steel?

Technology was created to improve our lot, things made to better the world and our place in it. Look at the world and wonder: have all our advances really amounted to an increase in the life quality of a person as an individual? Not a longer lifespan, not a healthier life, not an easier life, but a qualitative increase in ourselves, in our own personal happiness and inner contentment? In that of our neighbors and fellows...humanity? What good is health, long life and ease without some other measure that make it worthwhile?

What has technology done for you today...what has it REALLY done?

We still war, we still hate, we still have sickness and stress, we still separate the classes and step on others to ensure our personal survival and contentment. We still struggle, as a race, day-by-day to accomplish and survive...in this environment, one wonders about the promise of technology, and why it has yet to assert itself.

Where does the fault lie? In our technology? In ourselves?

But technology isn't just tools; technology holds our history, there's a forgotten creator at the heart of every machine, and a history of influence and deed wrapped around the existence of every advancement. In a way, every bit of technology contains the ghosts of our ancestors, the ones who dreamed it, who created it, who used it, and who passed it on to us.

If you really want to get into Electric Ghosts, lie awake at night sometime in the dark and listen to background noise you forget during the day ...the hum of the refrigerator, the whirring air circulator, the blowing fan or the humming heater. Stare at the street-light glowing outside beyond the window, an eye in the night; get up and go to the fridge, in the dark, open it and stare at the light...does it feel like something is watching you?