

SIGHT UNSEEN



Investigative Horror by

RYAN CHADDOCK

CYPHERTM
— CREATOR —
SYSTEM

Requires the Cypher System Rulebook
from Monte Cook Games.

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SIGHT UNSEEN

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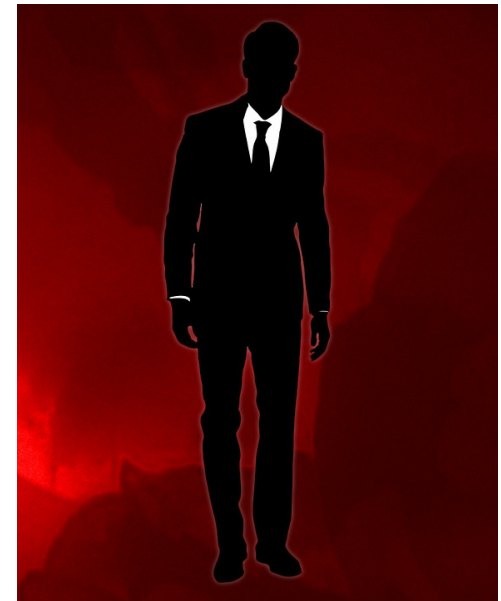
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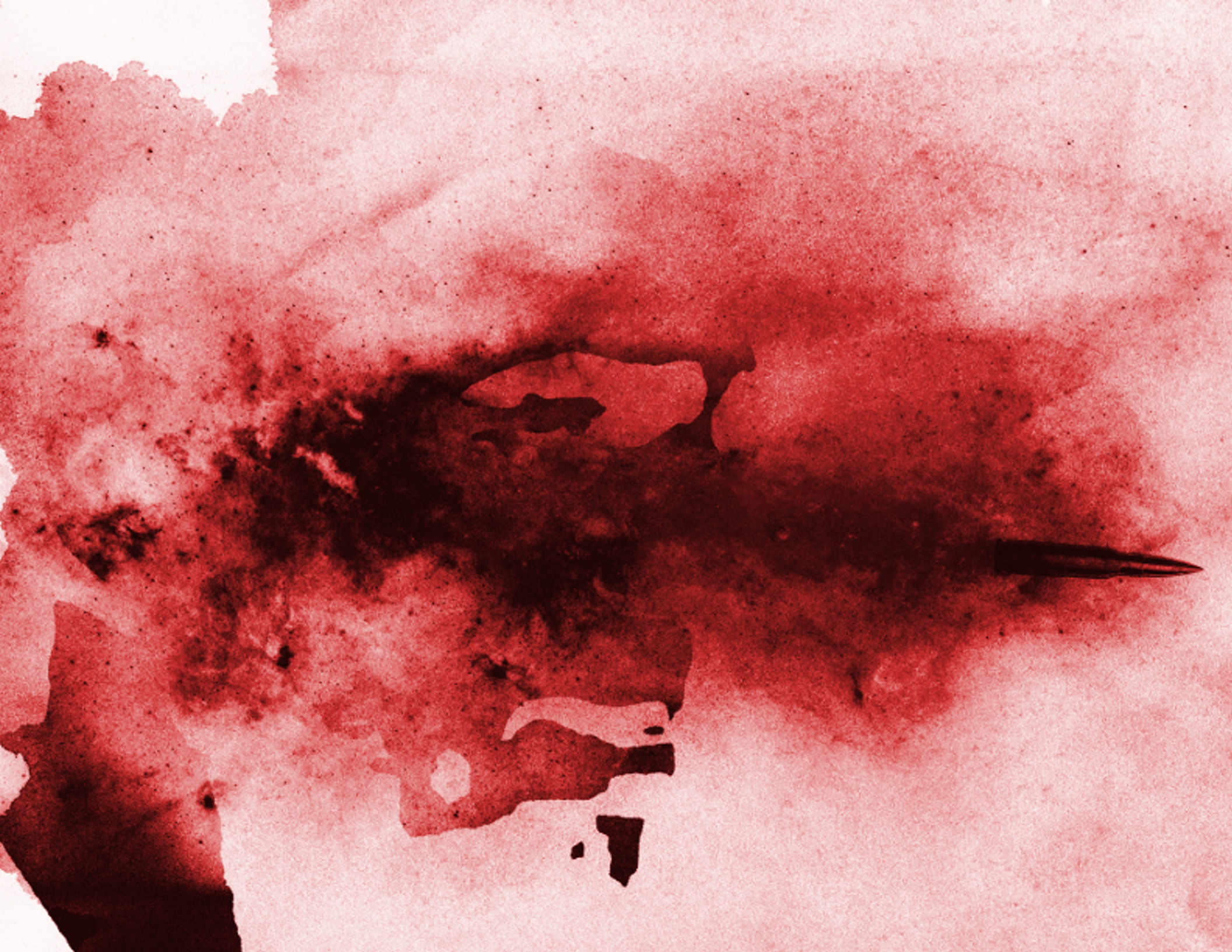
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“Let’s wash it all away...” by Hardleers on Flickr





INTRODUCTION



Welcome to the world of mysteries. Some are mundane, some are supernatural. Some are from beyond this world. Finding clues and following up on leads is amateur work compared to what you've got ahead of you. You investigate the paranormal, the unknowable, and the conspiratorial. Because the things that scare us the most have reason to cover their tracks, and even better reason to become enmeshed with the powers that be. Does the conspiracy go all the way to the top? Who knows, maybe you'll find out.

Sight Unseen is a starting place for horror and mystery Cypher System games with a mind towards investigation and conspiracy. You're a rogue cop, a federal agent with a cause, or a famous scientist who discovered something dangerous. People are out to stop you. Monsters are out to get you.

Things keep getting stranger and stranger until the whole world seems upside down.

This is not just horror. Things aren't just scary or spooky. When everything you think you know turns out to be wrong, that's something more. Embrace it, but be ready for the game to change. One minute you've got a nice job working for the FBI, the next you're on the run from the very officers you called your bosses. Enemies will become allies and vice versa over the course of a good conspiracy story. This is par for the course. Be ready to find that the only people you can trust are your closest allies, those who know you've discovered the truth and similarly want to bring it to light.

This book is a set of tools for running this sort of paranoid, off the rails, horrific campaign. If you want it to be, it can just be the

tools you need for a simple gumshoe game as well. It's investigation when everything is on the line, with a noir style and an eye towards unmarked helicopters and tapped phones.

We'll give you Foci, Descriptors, and a set of useful Cyphers. Since sniffing out clues are central to this process, much of the following mechanics revolve around the new Insight rules, outlined on pages 216-217 of the Cypher System Rulebook. Since it's horror genre, we'll also be providing mechanics which involve the various horror optional rules on pages 261-265, such as Horror Mode.

Get ready to delve into the depths of horror and conspiracy, knowing full well you may not make it out whole.

NEW FOCI

When building an investigative horror game, it's useful to think in terms of approaches to seeking knowledge. An investigator might bring knowledge of science with them, or experience dealing with particular kinds of people. Skepticism, optimism, and a drive to know more are all interesting directions to take a character. Pick a Focus and a Descriptor which combine to form a single worldview, distinct from that of your fellow PCs.

Foci from the Cypher System Rulebook that work particularly well in this kind of game include: Calculates the Incalculable, Conducts Weird Science, Explores Dark Places, Hunts Outcasts, Interprets the Law, Infiltrates, Is Licensed to Carry, Leads, Moves Like a Cat, Operates Undercover, and Solves Mysteries.

What follows are a couple more options, representing characters with specific ways of uncovering the strange and horrifying in the world.

INTERROGATES

You're driven to discover clues, even if it means sweating someone under a hot light and threatening to send them to prison. You are tough, intimidating, and know all the tricks to making a suspect or witness tell you what they know.

Connection: Choose one other PC. This person acts as your "good cop," providing you with two assets on interrogation related rolls when dealing with suspects who hope to get off easy.

Minor Effect Suggestion: The subject of your interrogation provides a bit more information than you'd expected.

Major Effect Suggestion: The subject provides an Insight into your investigation.

Tier 1: Negotiation Tactics. You are trained in Intimidation and Persuasion tasks. Enabler.

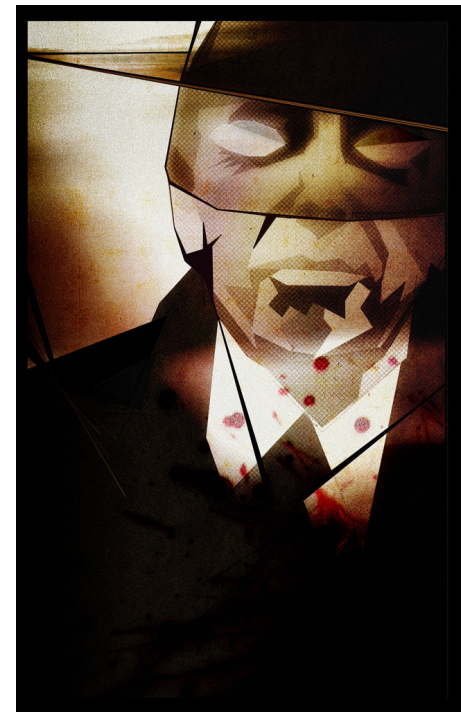
Tier 2: Stubbornness (2 Might points). You may again attempt a task you've already tried, without any increase to the difficulty. Enabler.

Tier 3: Prolonged Interrogation (3 Might points). You spend 1d6 hours interrogating a witness or suspect. If they know anything, they spill it, providing an Insight into your investigation. Enabler.

Tier 4: Fearsome Reputation. You enjoy an asset on all Intimidation tasks when the subject knows who you are. Enabler.

Tier 5: Master Negotiator. You are specialized in either Intimidation or Persuasion tasks (pick one). Enabler.

Tier 6: Power in Knowledge. Whenever you succeed in an interrogation which yields useful information or an Insight, you gain a subtle Cypher. Enabler.



SEEKS THE TRUTH

Some people are driven to seek answers to mysterious events, burning with a desire to simply know the truth. Some are reporters, some police investigators, and some are even conspiracy theorists we'd likely write off as crazy. These foolhardy adventurers pull on every loose thread to see what they unravel, placing themselves and their loved ones in danger. Such is the cost of truth.

Though similar to the Solves Mysteries Focus, Seeks the Truth is more about enmeshing oneself within the web of deception. It's

slightly less about observation and more about leaps of logic and pulling strings.

Connection: Choose one other PC. This person's skepticism sometimes sets you on the right track when your theories get out of hand. If they are present during one of your investigations, they may spend Effort on your Intellect tasks made to deduce the truth based on the clues at hand.

Minor Effect Suggestion: You realize you've got a book or file on this topic back home or at your office (whichever is further away).

Major Effect Suggestion: Your investigation reveals a connection between your current case and something much bigger, possibly something you've encountered before.

Tier 1: Myths and Legends. You are trained in Knowledge: Weird Events, a skill which you may use to relate any strange findings to old myths and legends, or possibly more recent folk tales. Enabler.

Tier 2: Deep Throat. You have a Contact in a government agency who can be called upon to put you on the right trail from time to time during an investigation, and who brings you news of strange events. Enabler.

Tier 3: Truthseeker (3 Intellect points). You know if the last thing a target said to you was a lie or not. This will not reveal what the actual truth was, simply if the person was intentionally pulling one over on you. Action.

Tier 4: Cover of Darkness. You are accustomed to nighttime investigations, suffering no penalties to noticing clues due to darkness, and enjoy an asset on such tasks if you have a flashlight or other mobile light source. Enabler.

Tier 5: Trench Coats and Cheap Suits. When you wear clothes, but not armor, your clothing grants you an Armor rating of 2. Enabler.

Tier 6: Leap of Logic (6 Intellect points). When attempting an investigation task or roll made to interpret clues, you gain a Minor effect on a natural roll of 17-18, and a Major effect on a 19-20. You suffer an Intrusion on a 1-2, due to the wild theories you come up with, unless you are using the Horror Mode rules, in which case you should count the Intrusion range as 1 higher for you on this roll. Enabler.



WIELDS SCIENCE

You are burdened with a need for everything to be put in its proper intellectual place. Everything must ultimately make sense to you. No mystery exists that cannot be solved. You're knowledgeable in a science or two and apply the methodology of those fields whenever you are presented with interesting findings.

Though you likely ruffle some feathers among your less rigorously-minded allies, your insights are top notch and you often find them dragging you out into dangerous field work.

Connection: Choose one other PC. This person always seems to draw you into the field. You cannot resist a request this person makes for help, even if it puts you in danger.

Minor Effect Suggestion: You notice a flaw in someone else's plan, allowing you to grant them an asset on their task if you point out the problem.

Major Effect Suggestion: You relate your current situation to your research, allowing you to use a Knowledge skill you possess on your next task, no matter which skill it would normally use.

Tier 1: Solid Foundation. You are trained in two Knowledge skills relating to science or medicine. Enabler.



Tier 2: Skepticism (2 Intellect points). You reduce the Difficulty of your next Knowledge roll by 1 by throwing out a few bad ideas. Action.

Tier 3: Clinical Mindset. You are trained in Intellect Defense. You regain one lost Intellect whenever you succeed in an Intellect Defense task against a base Difficulty of 4 or higher. Enabler.

Tier 4: Deduction. Whenever you pay for an Insight, you have the option to gain one additional related Insight for 2 Intellect. Enabler.

Tier 5: Scientific Authority (4 Intellect points). You gain access to a crime scene or other investigation area due to your importance as a scientist or doctor. Action.

Expertize. You are now specialized in one of the two Knowledge skills you gained in your Solid Foundation. Enabler.

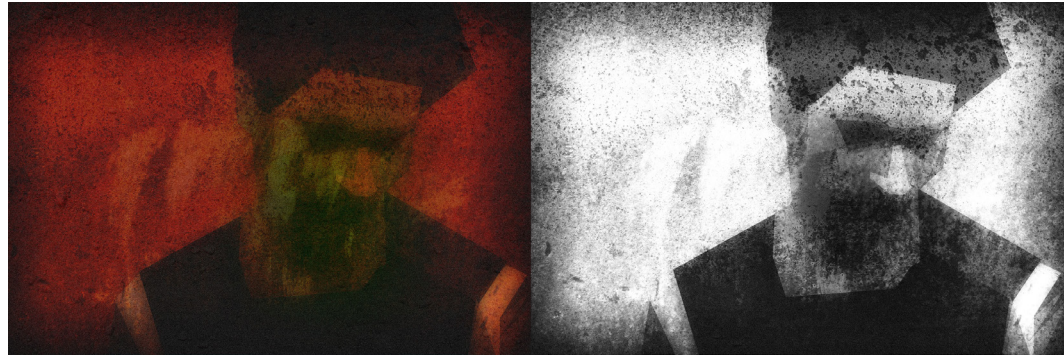
Tier 6: A Night's Work (6 Intellect points). You work all day or all night (8 hours) studying a clue using a laboratory or other expensive equipment. You gain 2 facts and 1 Insight related to the subject of the sample. You also find one Cypher. Enabler.

NEW DESCRIPTORS

As probably the most changeable major element of a character, Descriptors fill the role of motivation and current demeanor for characters. This can be particularly true in games of shifting allegiances and changing world-views. As a character comes to see the big picture, they could easily become obsessed, paranoid, or increasingly on edge. A character might become a menace to their unit, stressing the bonds between them and their allies.

This is not to say that the following Descriptors couldn't be used with starting characters. They could certainly be used to represent hard boiled G-men and women, or already halfway made researchers. But keeping one eye on the next big shift in personality, the next Descriptor coming down the line, is a good way to play for character growth and change.

A good story isn't about a block of wood. An interesting hero bears scars from the things that claw at her.



DANGEROUS

You push yourself and others to the limit, as though this night might be your last. You're always the first through the door, bursting in upon danger like there's no tomorrow. Maybe there isn't.

Boldness: +2 to your Speed pool.

Skill: You are trained in one of the following tasks: running, jumping, climbing, or balancing.

Danger to Self: Whenever you make an attack you may choose to deal one additional damage. Doing so also deals one ambient damage to you.

Additional Starting Equipment: A handgun of your choice.

Inability: You cannot intentionally hide behind cover without taking 3 points of Intellect damage to convince yourself it's necessary.

INTIMIDATING

You cut an intimidating figure, striking fear into the hearts of those who bump into you on the street. Most assume you're a thug, trained killer, or other danger to society. There's just something about you that scares people.

Strong Arm: +4 to your Might pool.

Skill: You are trained in intimidation tasks.

Hard to See: Others find you almost impossible to take on. You count as having one higher Armor rating when defending against melee and unarmed attacks.

Additional Starting Equipment: A weapon of your choice.

NERVOUS

You have never been very confident of your safety. It was little shock to learn that vast conspiratorial enterprises run by ancient beings were out to get you. You've always taken every precaution. At least it's nice to know you were right all these years.

Vigilant: +2 to your Intellect pool.

Skill: You are trained in laying and dismantling traps.

Skill: You are trained in evading those who follow you.

Contingencies: You may use an Insight retroactively to have brought a piece of equipment, mapped an escape route, or otherwise planned for a danger.

Inability: Your fear can be crippling at times. You suffer a one step increase to the Difficulty of initiative rolls.

PRESCIENT

In glimpses and visions you can see the dark things in your future. Usually it's just an instinctual sense of what's to come; other times it's a trancelike state of omniscience which flees as fast as it attacks your mind. You are left with the barest memory of the more horrifying events destined to happen.

Déjà Vu: +2 to your Speed pool.

Skill: You are trained in initiative due to your knowledge of your own fate.

Skill: You are trained in Intellect Defense, representing your preparedness for the horrors to come.

Trance: Once per game session your game master may inflict a GM Intrusion upon you without paying out any XP. For this Intrusion you are unable to act for 1d6 rounds as you experience a vision of the future. After receiving this vision you are granted an Asset on three rolls of your choice throughout the rest of the game session.

VENGEFUL

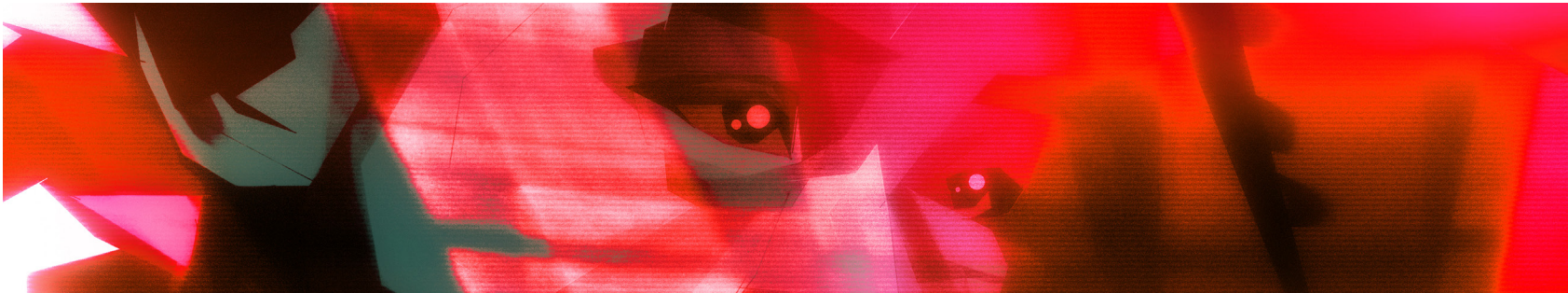
Someone has wronged you and you intend to get revenge. It eats away at you with every waking moment. The world is not just and only you can set things right, at least this once.

Ready for a Fight: +2 to your Might pool.

Driving Goal: You enjoy an asset on any task related to finding and taking down your chosen enemy. This applies to actual physical attacks against them, with which you deal an additional two damage on a hit.

Single Minded: Your focus of mind and blinding rage grant you training in Intellect Defense.

Inability: You suffer a one step increase to the Difficulty of mundane and tedious tasks. Clearly they are not getting you any closer to justice.



ADVANCED WARNING [ANOETIC]

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: For the next four hours you are utterly alert to danger. You will know of an ambush or coming threat one round before it happens, noticing the signs all around you.

ALL NIGHTER [ANOETIC]

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: You can stay up all night working on a project or staking out a location. So long as you are concentrating on just one task, your time working on it counts towards your 10 hour recovery period.

BREAK CRYPTO [ANOETIC]

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: You manage to decipher a message encrypted under a Level of technology equal to or lower than the Level of this Cypher. Using this Cypher takes 10 minutes of work with the target message.

BREAKING NEWS [ANOETIC]

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: A bit of news reporting provides crucial information and you gain an Insight related to your investigation at no cost. However, this means your investigation is now public knowledge.

CLIMB THE LADDER [OCCULTIC]

Level: 1d6 + 4

Effect: You piece together clues to discover whether a target you are investigating is working for an even more powerful foe. If so, you learn an alias the boss uses as well as their Level.

COMMANDEERED VEHICLE [ANOETIC]

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: You find a vehicle within immediate range you can use to continue or begin a chase scene, obtained through legal or possibly less-than-legal means. The vehicle is the Level of this Cypher. You lose it after 24 hours.

DANGEROUS TIP OFF [ANOETIC]

Level: 1d6 + 3

Effect: You gain a temporary Contact with knowledge of your current investigation. If you can manage to meet with them, they'll provide you with a related Insight, but you know that doing so could be dangerous for you both.

DATABASE SEARCH [ANOETIC]

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: You spend 1d6 hours going over databases for a clue, at the end of which time you gain a free Insight related to your investigation. Requires access to the appropriate computer systems. May be given to an NPC to do the research for you, if you have one at your beck and call.

DRIVE CASUAL [ANOETIC]

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: Used while tailing someone in a vehicle, you cannot be noticed until your target gets to their destination, unless you reveal yourself directly.

DROPPED POSSESSION [ANOETIC]

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: A target within long range accidentally drops an item of your choice that is within their possession.

EXPEDITE RESULTS [ANOETIC]

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: You work the system, getting results back from a lab or other bureaucratic team within 1d6 minutes.

EXTENDED CHASE [ANOETIC]

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Used when the subject of a chase is getting away, you somehow manage to keep your tail on them, allowing you to begin the chase anew in terms of successful rolls.

FLASHLIGHT SEARCH [ANOETIC]

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: For the next two hours you and any ally within immediate range may gain an Insight as a Minor or Major effect on any perception or investigation related task roll, so long as it's done in the dark while wielding flashlights or similarly small light sources.

GUT FEELING [ANOETIC]

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: For the next 8 hours you may spend points from your Might pool to gain Intellect Effort.

HIDDEN KEY [OCCULTIC]

Level: 1d6 + 3

Effect: You discover the key to a locked door, hidden near it in a secret compartment or in a narrow crack.

LOSE THE TAIL [ANOETIC]

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: You get away from your tail during a chase, winning the encounter through a clever gambit.

OBSCURE LORE [ANOETIC]

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: You call up an obscure piece of information relevant to your current investigation, reducing the cost of your next Insight to 1 Intellect point.

OUTSIDE OPINION [ANOETIC]

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: You call in an old ally from another department or field of research. You gain them as a Contact until the end of the game session.

PASSING CAR [ANOETIC]

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Used during a scene on or near a street, a car passes between you and everyone else, allowing you to leave the area instantly without a trace.

PERFECT RECALL [ANOETIC]

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: You recall all of the details of a specific moment in your past.

PHYSICAL PROFILE [ANOETIC]

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: By looking at the evidence of an attack or other violent crime you learn the exact height, build, handedness, and Level of the attacker; as well as whether they had accomplices in the immediate area of the crime.

PLUMB THE UNDERWORLD [ANOETIC]

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: You find a criminal with knowledge of a technique used in a crime or other event you're investigating. You gain a free Insight into your investigation if you can pull strings to help this criminal in some significant way.

SEE THE SCENE [OCCULTIC]

Level: 1d6 + 4

Effect: You're able to get a strong sense of the events that happened in the immediate area recently. You have a mental image of everything significant that transpired there, though you cannot see faces.

SPATTER ANALYSIS [ANOETIC]

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: By looking at a sample of blood at the scene of an attack, you gain a free Insight about the attacker or victim.

SQUEEZE THROUGH [ANOETIC]

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: You manage to squeeze your body through nearly any passage that can fit your head.

SUFFICIENT EXPLANATION [ANOETIC]

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: You convince all witnesses to an event who are within immediate range that they didn't see anything supernatural or out of this world. Nothing to panic or call the media about.

WITNESS [ANOETIC]

Level: 1d6

Effect: You find a witness to an event which took place within the last 48 hours. The witness may or may not be willing to tell you what they've seen.

More Horror to Come

DARK
MONSTROCITIES

...IT WAS ALIENS

IMPENDING
MADNESS