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Retropunk
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RETROPUNK

<<< I N T R O D U C T I O N >>>

<< W H A T I S T H I S ? >>

Retropunk is a tabletop roleplaying game where the players embody characters in a futuristic hybrid reality—where the digital and physical have merged. Everyone experiences a world beyond augmented reality through their neurochip, tech implanted at birth. The player characters hacked their neurochips to traverse this hybrid reality without being monitored by the system.

The player characters cloak themselves in anonymity to combat the corporatocracy that controls urban sprawls across countries and continents. They snatch resources away from those in power and use their gains to fuel their resistance. As the rebellion grows, they take on more powerful factions.

Retropunk requires at least two players, but is suited to four players or more. One player must be the Referee. The Referee "runs"the game; they create and portray all the characters not controlled by the other players, referred to as non-player characters (NPCs). The Referee also represents everything else about the game world—such as its themes and visual motifs.

This game's system assumes open, frank collaboration between the players and Referee. Everyone at the table should approach the game as friends who want an interesting, fun experience for all involved. The players also have plenty of opportunities to build the game world using their input. Character creation, for instance, codifies certain aspects of the setting, such as Factions and counterculture.

This game requires you to print out or otherwise markup materials, which are provided in the back of the book. Those materials are also available digitally and come with your purchase of the game. If you did not receive the digital materials for some reason, email samjokopublishing@gmail.com with proof of purchase and it will be sent to you.

Retropunk assumes that players understand the basics roleplaying games. This game does not concern itself with sections like "What is a roleplaying game?" and similar introductory sections—such as setting a scene and framing devices. As such, it is not very accessible for people new to tabletop roleplaying games.

The next two sections do, however, explain the core values at the heart of *Retropunk*—collaborative play and fiction first gaming.

<<*TABLE CULTURE*>>

This game makes seven assumptions about how players and the Referee treat each other at the table:

1) **The game is collaborative.** Every player will help create a welcoming environment for everyone else at the table. Everyone will listen to each other. Everyone can add their ideas to the fiction.

2) **Everyone's inputs are valid.** Whoever is speaking in the current moment, whether a play or the Referee, should be open to input from others. Every player should feel safe adding ideas, setting details, and narrative beats to the story.

3) **The conversation is equal.** No one should dominate the conversation. Everyone must follow the conventions of polite social conversation. Listen, give input, and come to decisions together.

4) **Player agency is paramount.** The game follows the player characters and their story. So players must have the agency to tell the story as they see fit.

5) **The Referee is an arbitrator.** The Referee steps into the conversation to arbitrate the rules. This role is easier when players offer interesting plot hooks, problems, and conflicts.

6) **The Referee has final say over disagreements.** If the table cannot agree on what happens next—such as a rule or the outcome of a roll—the Referee determines the resulting consequences.

7) **The Referee acts in the spirit of the game.** The Referee is a fan of the player characters and the players themselves. The Referee's desire and investment in the fiction is equal to the players.

Is This Just Fantasy

<<FICTION FIRST & FICTIONAL POSITIONING>>

Retropunk is a fiction first game. Let the story drive the game—if you want to linger on in-character conversations, setting details, or your characters thoughts and feelings, go for it. You might go a long time without rolling dice—that's totally fine. Some groups like to do lots of roleplaying, others like to rely upon mechanics for scene pacing. Groups will find their own rhythm.

When you do use the dice to determine what happens next, players must first narrate or describe their Approach and then follow the dice rolling procedure on page 22. If a player wants their character to attack someone, the roll procedure will prompt them to describe how their character behaves violently before rolling the dice.

Fictional positioning (the situation leading up to a roll) is at the heart of *Retropunk's* system. Everyone at the table builds a picture in their head about what is happening in any one moment. Each time someone speaks, new information details the difficulty or ease of an obstacle. Can you shoot someone from a distance? The Referee says you're in a tricky situation because the lights are out. If the player has a gun with tracking bullets, however. The task becomes easier with that advantage. Only turn to the dice when everyone understands the character's position—the situation, the stakes, and the difficulty.

Referee, make sure your fiction is consistent—as you play, the table will build up an idea of what is or isn't possible in the story. The game breaks down if the fiction isn't consistent. If a specific gun can shoot through a door for one person, it also does this for another person. If someone can attempt a two-story jump, they can attempt a similar jump later on in the story.

> *"There's never been a rule of human behavior that hasn't been broken by someone, somewhere, sometime, in some circumstance mundane or spectacular. To be human is to transcend the rules."*
> - *River of Gods*

Pause the game if someone isn't sure what's happening in the fiction. If you're a player, ask the Referee for clarification— is my enemy close enough to punch? How high up are we? How long before she catches up to me? When everyone's on the same page, describe what your character does in that situation. Determine your Approach. Roll the dice.

<<NAVIGATING THE BOOK>>

Retropunk's text is arranged to give all the necessary information for playing the game in an as-you-need-it fashion. It begins with broad setting details: What a player does in the setting and when to roll the dice. It then proceeds to character creation. Afterwards, you will find rules on running the game for the Referee. Where possible, text has been hyperlinked to pages in the document or outside sources, as necessary. There is also an index at the end for additional ease.

<<< *T H E S E T T I N G* >>>

<< *G O I N G R E T R O* >>

Retrofuturism is—at a fundamental level—remembering the anticipation of how science and technology would transform our lives in the 80s and 90s.

Retropunk draws aesthetic elements from the 80s and early 90s, when we were speculating over the potential of emerging computer technologies and globalization. Things like complex cybernetic systems integrated into the human mind, and sophisticated Virtual Reality experiences. However, this game's setting evolved past cyberspace and VR.

The digital is just as real as physical space, creating a hybrid reality. It bridges retro futuristic elements with technologies speculated upon today to create something different, but still grounded in our cultural consciousness.

Retropunk exists in a cyberpunk alternate reality—one brought to radical social extremes. The stratification of class is severe. Capitalistic oppression and consumerism have altered society further, supplanting government and democracy. Most people are wage slaves, working jobs they don't like so they can buy things they don't need. There is a resonant, constant belief that your purchases will make you happy. To consume is to both be and do "good" in society. To live well is to give the system your body, and oftentimes, being complicit in its machinations.

With intense globalization comes corporations so rich and so powerful they now run the world. These companies coined a new kind of corporate identity: megacorporations. They represent the top of the food chain and are responsible for the systemic injustices in society.

These injustices are assumed to be present in *Retropunk*. We see overpopulation in giant, sprawling megacities divided into Districts controlled by megacorporations. Over policing by private corporations is rampant. Laws favor megacorporations, and those who rebel against capitalism receive the harshest of punishments.

Megacorporations are bleeding the world and humanity itself dry, and fast. Sure, people protest or lobby votes for the next governing megacorporation. Some express their malcontent in peaceful, loud, and lawful ways. Some have resisted the system their entire lives. The change brought by speaking truth to power *is* happening... just not *fast* enough.

There is too much corruption. Too much disease in the bloated corpse of society to wait for a slow march to progress.

But you? You're too vibrant. Too militant. Too angry. Too battered, beaten, and hurt to believe the broken promises of a defunct government that preached civility and the merits of economic progress for all.
So, you fight.

You take everything you can from the 'corps to wage war against them. You take their bleeding edge tech. Their funds. Anything you can grab from them. You use these gains to build a resistance capable of hurting them.

Because make no mistake, the corporations can, and will, hurt you. Badly. But when the pain fades, what was broken and torn can be remade, reshaped, and remodeled. If they take an eye, a leg, or a hand—a street doc will replace it with something chrome, instead. Every new piece of cyberware incorporated into your body helps you persist in your fight.

Without realizing it, megacorporations gave birth to a new wave of punks. Rebels carved out safe spaces for each other with force, determination, and grit. They created new fashion that defaces, satirizes, or subverts megacorporations and popular consumerist icons. You tattoo yourself with subversive elements of consumerism and the corporatocracy. You take new, advanced technologies away from these 'corps, integrate it with your flesh and your blood, and repurpose your tendons, muscles, and your veins. All so you can level the playing field.

Players of *Retropunk* embody characters who do these things and share these punk ideals, goals, and aesthetic. They are the glitches in the system. They align with those communities who rail against it and endeavor to tear it down.

It's them or you, like it's always been.
But now, they're not going to put you down without one hell of a fight.

<<< T E C H N O L O G Y >>>

Imagine the near future—seventy years or so—when describing technology in *Retropunk.* Technology won't have reached levels of transhumanism usually seen beyond expansion from Earth. Think of the speculative tech found in cyberpunk, and give it an 80s and 90s flair. If you could picture a piece of tech in a cyberpunk movie or novel, it belongs in *Retropunk* too.

Cyberware, hardware implants that link the mind to technological systems, exists in just about any form. While all of it looks mechanical, it lets people do incredible things. There are cyberware prosthetics that function like flesh and blood, "jacks" (conduits for plugging the mind and body into technological systems), you name it.

You can mix up programs or tailored chemicals that can offer you all sorts of sensory experiences and benefits. If you're an expert programmer, you can even program food and drink.

Fabricators (complex 3D printers) are heavily relied upon, but vary in quality. They fabricate housing, food, and clothing. Most people have a cheap fabricator in their home. However, technologies generally follow the rule of thumb that: the more expensive an items is, the smaller, heavier, and/or complex in function they usually are.

Renewable energies and technologies that combat climate change exist. However, climate effects are felt daily—acid rain, rapidly rising water levels, and a globally increased temperature.

> "Today we no longer fear technology. It's no longer a question of assimilation. What remains to be seen is what we are about to become."
> -*Cyber World: Tales of Humanity's Tomorrow*

<< N E U R O C H I P S >>

Everyone has a neurochip (or 'chip) implanted in their skull at birth. The 'chip enables a constant hybrid reality. This reality is universal—a person's home, their workspace, public parks, every space broadcasts its own digital signal to every neurochip. The governing megacorporations track each neurochip to monitor citizens' vitals for mandatory "safety reasons."

<< *G L I T C H E S   O F F   T H E   G R I D* >>

Rebellious people disable the tracking function in their neurochip by replacing their current identity with a new one. Any attempt to track a jailbroken 'chip receives an error. A Glitch. The community took to calling themselves Glitches ever since.

Glitches perceive the same reality as everyone else (unless they further modify their 'chip), but they live functionally apart from the system. They can't obtain lawful work or a lawful bank account because they aren't integrated into the system. In the eyes of the megacorporations, they do not exist.

Jailbreaking or possessing a jailbroken 'chip is unlawful. The authority pushes patches at popular nodes onto jailbroken chips to put them back on the network. Glitches hold regular community events to keep up with the current jailbreaking software.

<< *I N T E R F A C E   &   C A P A B I L I T I E S* >>

Neurochips function as a computer and connect to every part of the brain. People can download programs and apps, make phone calls, look up information, and more. They can also customize how they interface with their 'chip. Some people make commands with a body part, be it hands, eyes, feet, fingers, or tongue. Imagine your body is a keyboard, and you can program a key binding to any part of it. Some people even use the parts of their brain that enable imagination to control their 'chip.

If you can do it on your computer now, you can do it on a neurochip. You can use multiple windows to check the weather, watch the news, and play games at the same time. You can hold a phone call, you can write a message, whatever you please.

"Fads swept the youth of the sprawl at the speed of light; entire subcultures could rise overnight, thrive for a dozen weeks, and then vanish utterly."
- Neuromancer

Everyone in *Retropunk* customizes their personal space, such as their home, vehicle, or their appearance. The masses purchase digital components from various 'corps that tailor visual aspects of their body with digital accessories, clothing, and makeup. People who know how to create these items can usually make a living. If they become influencers and trend setters, they can do very well for themselves.

<< WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT HYBRID REALITY >>

In *Retropunk*, the digital becomes physical in hybrid reality. People perceive and interact with the digital world in a physical space every day.

How hybrid reality appears in your game is negotiable between players and the Referee. A virus can *look* like anything; there could be digital constructs of walking, talking human beings. Whatever you want. Just keep in mind that anybody can interact with these objects in hybrid reality. And it, in turn, can attempt to interact with you.

The ways one can hack are therefore open to interpretation. Hackers might be outfitted with a jack that lets them plug in custom-made hardware. Others might alter the physical architecture of their 'chip with surgery. Others jailbreak their 'chip with software.

Regardless of *how* they go about it, hacking can be physical and digital in hybrid reality. A hacker could write a virus shaped like a bullet; when they shoot that bullet into a human-shaped digital construct, it looks like shooting a person.

<<REALISM AND LIMITATIONS IN HYBRID REALITY >>

Programming twists the appearance of physical objects. Nodes use the bones of what is there and dress it up with the digital. Hybrid reality is a playground for people that can alter the digital.

Programming quality determines the object's realism in hybrid reality. An amateur hacker reveals themselves when they dress in faulty, self-made digital components.

Experts can tap their skills into all five senses. A digital meal written by the best will make you feel full. You can taste it. You can smell it. It is, in every sense of the word, *indistinguishable* from a real meal. Of course, a digital meal can't nourish your body. But it can be an equal experience to a physical meal.

Conversely, **poor** programming will miss some of the sensory inputs. You can smell it, but it has no taste. You can feel it, but the texture isn't right. It looks like a proper meal, but the color is off. Any number of things might telegraph poor design or construction.

You must interact with a program to experience it, no matter what it looks like. You must put a food program in your mouth to experience it. The neurochip translates the program into the experience—the act makes the interaction happen, just as in "real life." Of course, you can hack your neurochip to alter how you interact with an experience. You can circumvent the neurochip's protections to eat a meal without putting it in your mouth.

Characters in *Retropunk* can assume there is something physical there, dressed up with the digital. It takes tremendous skill to create something in hybrid reality without a physical foundation. It's easier to trick a person's mind via their neurochip when there's something there with an overlay of additional information.

> *"White-hot needles stabbed through his eyes into his head, into his brain: a new environment for the information viruses, where they replicated, forming snarls of complex logic that entangled him, clanking mechanisms that pursued him from one thought to another, down corridors of memory and forgotten rooms of days."*
> - **The Star Fraction**

<< H A C K I N G   A   N E U R O C H I P >>

All lawful citizens are connected to a large network monitored by Information—a megacorporation present in every District (see page 20 for more on District). Information have arrangements with other megacorporations specializing in security. When an intruder enters the network, they trace and dispatch this security force.

Of course, there are talented, well-known hackers who go up against this security force. They do so to undermine 'corp interests. Harming the general public, is of course, against Glitch ideology, and would not be tolerated by anyone living those values.

Clever hacking attempts are like magic. They involve misdirection, such as planting code in an object that someone interacts with to access their 'chip. A trick. Slight of hand. Alternatively, a crude, quick hack, like shooting a target with a virus bullet, will work all the same.

<<*N E U R O C H I P   S E C U R I T Y*>>

All criminal elements, including Glitches like the player characters, separate themselves from Information's network when they hack their neurochips. This act makes the individual personally responsible for their digital security. Glitches rigorously maintain their private firewalls on their 'chip.

Criminals usually have **better** 'chip cyber security than your average citizen. Programs pass hands at underground clubs, concerts, and meetings. A place offering the latest in cyber security is a clear mark that it is a safe place for Glitches, as well as various other criminal elements in some cases.

Some criminal elements won't share Glitch ideology, and will hack anyone that gets in their way without a care. These people keep anyone off the grid alert to potential threats, since there are people out there who would do them harm.

<<< *WHAT DOES A CHARACTER IN RETROPUNK DO?* >>>>

Player characters use their resources to undermine and dismantle the system with a Do-It-Yourself, pro-direct-action mentality. They travel from District to District, confronting the capitalist forces that control the urban sprawl. They are anti-authoritarian, anti-consumerism, and anti-corporatism.

When the player characters take resources away from the corporate system, the value goes towards experience points (XP). Experience eventually allows for Improvements (see page 60). You only get XP when you harm the system in a meaningful way. If you materially hurt a megacorporation or their resources, you're doing it right.

Player characters will take on jobs to score better equipment so they can take on tougher opponents—such as institutions that physically protect or empower corporations, banks, holding companies, and private holdings.

A job might involve raiding a warehouse full of product, directly assaulting a 'corps physical location, compromising their data, destroying their property, corrupting their shares and releasing trade secrets, or any number of tasks.

When not directly hitting a 'corp, player characters network with like-minded communities. They could engage ex-employees with inside knowledge about their old company, or notorious hackers who can breach a corporation's security. Develop relationships with contacts and Factions to strengthen your collective resistance. Without their aid, player characters will always be small fish in this urban ocean.

The players' crew of Glitches can join forces with other communities to combat the system. But, you'll probably have to earn the trust of other crews first. After gaining that trust, you can share resources, get their help in return, and work together to take on larger forces.

The stronger the Faction, the better the resources. With better resources comes higher-scoring jobs against the 'corps. You help a Faction, they help you. Everyone works toward dismantling megacorporation control together.

THIS
REVOLUTION
IS FOR
DISPLAY
PURPOSES
ONLY.

— BANKSY

Retropunk assumes the player characters are always moving through different areas, called Districts, within a large urban sprawl. Each District houses different Factions, technologies, and other features such as housing and markets.

A District is also "anchored" at a player level with a theme. The Referee section contains tools for creating a District and its themes (see page 74).

Beyond this core book, *Retropunk* will soon be supported by supplementary content you can insert into any District. There will be plot hooks, landmarks, specific Gear, and more. More information, in general, to use as you see fit when playing *Retropunk*. Districts allow a table to create any kind of fiction within the boundaries of what the player characters do in the fiction and the setting elements outlined already. There is no "cannon". A table could opt to use the forthcoming supplementary materials or choose to create their own setting, springboarding off what is codified already.

Only spend as much time in a District as it interests the table. If you get bored of a District, move on to another. If you want to explore a District's deeper themes and relationships, stay there. Interact with what you like, when you want to interact with it.

< < < *A P P R O A C H E S* > > >

Approaches provide players with ways to overcome problems. All player characters start with six Broad Approaches (located on each character sheet). Three of the starting Broad Approaches apply to physical action, and the other three apply to non-physical situations.

Broad Approaches are loosely defined actions that could apply to a number of situations. For example, Violence (a Broad Approach) is rather general and could apply to melee combat, kicking a door, threats, and a number of other violent situations.

Each Broad Approach is at the head of an Approach Tree. An Approach Tree is made up of a Broad Approach with branches or spaces for Focused Approaches beneath it. As a player character earns Improvements, they can add Focused Approaches underneath a Broad Approach (see the Improvement section on page 60).

Focused Approaches are explained on page 22. But in general, they are more specific facets of a Broad Approach, illustrating a player character's growing expertise. Violence, for example, could have Brawling as a Focused Approach, which gives that character an edge in hand-to-hand combat.

The three starting physical Broad Approaches are:

- *Violence*. Use Violence if you wish to cause bodily harm that is not dependent on speed or aim. Melee combat, a street fight, physical intimidation, or a brawl are examples of when you'd use this Approach.

- *Precision*. Use Precision when coordination, timing, or accuracy matters. It's most commonly used to shoot a gun or engage in acts of careful subterfuge.

- *Velocity.* Use Velocity when speed is the most important element. This could be outpacing a pursuer, acting first (such as a quickdraw situation or testing cybernetic reflexes against an opponent), or dashing short distances without being seen.

> *Funny thing about taking a stand that, it might hurt like hell but if it's right, there's no feeling better. She's only just realized that, and now she knows she wants to do it every single day. If she lives to see another."*
> *-Escapology*

The three starting non-physical Broad Approaches are:

- *Compromise.* You might Compromise a security system to gain access to it. You might Compromise a person's safety, such as their armor or their 'chip's cyber security. You could open someone up to harm where it wasn't possible before. You could Compromise to reach a peaceful resolution.

- *Establish.* Use Establish when forming new relationships or contacting a person for the first time. You might cement a relationship with an act, like a speech or demonstration of trust. When you build or modify something new or unique, you are most likely using Establish.

- *Uncover.* You might use Uncover to determine if something is hidden, whether it masquerades as something else in hybrid reality, or is obstructed from normal view (such as a door or other mechanism). You might "peel back" hybrid reality to expose the physical space. You might use Uncover to reveal the obstacle before using another Approach to overcome it.

A player can further customize their character's Approaches with a Focused Approach. Add your Focused Approach under a Broad Approach (which creates an Approach Tree similar to a "skill tree"). The Focused Approach must tie into the Broad Approach. Under Velocity, a player could add Reflex Training as a Focused Approach, as it relates to acting quickly. A Focused Approach increases the chances of a successful roll.

Each player character has a Class (see Classes on page 35). Some Classes ask players to make a new Broad Approach or Focused Approach for their character during character creation. A player can also add Focused Approaches by taking a Minor Improvement when they earn enough XP (see Improvement, page 60).

<ROLLING THE DICE>

<< WHEN TO ROLL >>

Only roll when:

a. a player describes their character attempting something that poses a challenge and;
b. the outcome, whether a success or failure, is interesting.

If both apply, use the following three-step procedure:

1) The Referee tells the player the obstacle's Tier level and possible consequences, based on what the player character is attempting. Consequences vary considerably: The situation might escalate, the player character may receive an Injury, or they could lose a life, a limb, a piece of cyberware or Gear, the list continues. Consequences scale with what the player character wishes to accomplish. The more difficult the task, the bigger the risk.

2) Once the stakes and task are established, the player decides whether to roll the dice given the possible consequences. If they do, the player gathers a dice pool, rolls the dice, and looks at the result to see what happens next.

3) If the player doesn't think the consequences are worth the risk, they can suggest a different Approach. The player and Referee work through steps 1 to 3 again to find appropriate, interesting stakes.

Note: Don't roll the dice if the outcome is uninteresting. The player just describes what their character does and play proceeds.

Conversely, if failure is *more* interesting, the Referee and player can agree to have the player character fail. Maybe they need to try another way because it was a long shot anyways—that's fair, too.

Referee: If a player *wants* to roll, they probably have an idea for an interesting outcome or possible consequence. Ask the player what they have in mind if it's not clear to you.

Players: Feel free to offer that kind of information willingly.

It may feel exhaustive to clarify, but it's easy for people to get the wrong idea about what's happening in the fiction. Especially early on in the game, when what is "easy" or "difficult" for a player character is not yet fully determined. As you clarify the world around you, the table will understand the fiction and how it works.

<<<*HOW TO BUILD A DICE POOL*>>>

When it's time to roll, the player gathers a pool of six-sided dice using these five steps:

1) The player states the Broad Approach they're using and takes 1 die (called the context die, page 25)

        a. (Note: Trained Broad Approaches give the player 2 context dice, see page 61.)

2) Add all additional dice to the dice pool (see below)

3) If one or more player characters are helping, all players giving aid take a helping die (keep the helping die separate from the dice pool)

4) The player (and all helping players) roll their dice. (See Helping on page 29.)

5) The Referee and player look for the highest die/dice for the outcome

There are six ways to add **additional** dice to your pool using the following questions:

- Does a Focused Approach in the same Approach Tree apply to the situation? **Take an additional die.**
- Does the Broad Approach Link to an Approach Tree that helps the situation? **Take additional die for each applicable Approach in the Linked Approach Tree.** (See Linking Approach Trees on page 63.)
- Is the player character using Gear that has Tier or would give an advantage (beyond simply enabling them to make the attempt)? **Take an additional die.**
- Did you or someone else roll a mini crit on a previous roll? **You may spend that mini crit and take an additional die.** (See Mini Critical Successes, page 27.)
- Does your Special Ability give you an extra die? **Take an additional die.**
- Does the Referee think there are any other situational advantages? **Take an additional die.**

<<< THE CONTEXT DIE >>>

Players always begin building their dice pool with the context die from their Broad Approach. It's named the 'context die' because it represents all the fictional circumstances around a roll.

The player should feel free to describe the context for their character in the moment. What does that look like? What is the character thinking, seeing, or feeling? Why are doing this? Sometimes people forget to state *why* their character is acting when describing the *how*.

Contextual details place the players in the fiction; they make the world feel real. Players should consider asking the table further questions about the situation to paint it with rich imagery. Leading questions provide those details, such as: "What do I smell when I enter this place?" or "What color eyes do they have?" or "How do you get the impression they're not happy to see you?"

<<< READING THE OUTCOME >>>

A player character's success depends on the obstacle's Tier level (see Modifying Difficulty (Tier) on page 28). If the obstacle is Tier 1, look for the highest die/dice:

- **Miss**: A *1, 2*, or a *3* means things aren't going to go the player character's way
- **Mixed success**: A *4* or *5* means the player character succeeds, but there is a complication
- **Complete success**: A *6* means the player character gets what they want without consequences
- **Critical Success**: Two or more *6*s means the player character gets what they want plus an additional benefit
- **Mini critical success**: Two or more *5*s means the player character gets what they want plus an additional die on a future roll

Each additional Tier level above 1 requires an additional *6* for a complete success. A Tier 3 obstacle requires three *6*s for a complete success, and a Tier 4 obstacle requires four *6*s for a complete success. See the table on page 28 for a quick guide on success against higher Tier obstacles.

The player characters start at Tier 1 and cannot gain Tier—they can only gain dice through Gear and support. Taking on big 'corps is risky, no matter which District you visit

<<< *M I X E D   S U C C E S S   &   F A I L I N G   F O R W A R D* >>>

Retropunk uses gradients of success to determine dice roll outcomes instead of a binary pass/fail system. The gradients allow for more nuance, where interesting complications spring out of misfortune. The Referee's response should never be, "nothing happens."

Assuming the player character and obstacle are the same Tier:

A *1-3* grants the Referee an opportunity to complicate the situation in a compelling way. Perhaps the player character even gets what they want... for the moment. A player character might hack open the door to a megacorporation, but find guards on the other side. Or they get in, but the attempt opens them up to being hacked. If they're hacking with a device, perhaps it breaks. There are many opportunities to move the fiction forward with failure.

A *4* or a *5* generally means the player character succeeds, but there's a complication. So, what's the difference between that and a *1-3* then, right? The answer lies in how much agency the player has after the roll.

<<< *M I X E D   S U C C E S S   A N D   P L A Y E R   A G E N C Y* >>>

The player character is in a "tighter" spot on a *1-3*, and the Referee generally gets to say what happens next. The guards are right there when the player character hacks the door open. They must act immediately to avoid severe injury. Perhaps their hacking tools break, and they'll have to spend time and resources fixing it later.

The *4/5* outcome gives the player character more room to act. When they hack the door open, an alarm trips—guard are on their way. There's time to act, but things are getting heated. Simplistically: they have more options, which means they have more agency.

<<< C R I T I C A L S U C C E S S E S >>>

A critical success occurs on a roll of multiple **6**s. A critical success results in an extra effect or benefit to whatever the character attempted. The player can always suggest the effect or benefit, keeping in mind the surrounding circumstances.

Depending on the context, you could:

- Inflict more harm
- Impress, dismay, or frighten anyone in the vicinity
- Take less harm
- Score something valuable
- Create an opportunity for you or someone else
- Increase your standing with an appropriate faction
- Maintain your anonymity

<<< M I N I C R I T I C A L S U C C E S S E S >>>

A player gets a "mini crit" or mini critical success when they roll multiple **5**s. A mini crit gives the player *one additional die* they can spend on the very next roll (either their next roll or another player's next roll). A player may only add one mini crit bonus per roll.

<<< M O D I F Y I N G   D I F F I C U L T Y   (T I E R) >>>

An obstacle's Tier indicates how hard it is for a player character to succeed. Some obstacles will be evenly matched with the player characters. But sometimes other obstacles, challenges, or situations are harder to overcome. A higher Tiered obstacle represents the increased difficulty.

A successful outcome is still determined by the highest die (or dice). A *4, 5*, and *6*, all count toward a favorable result no matter the Tier level. When the obstacle is the same Tier as the player character, a *4/5* provides a mixed success, and a *6* provides a complete success.

However, when the obstacle is Tier 2-5, the player character needs an additional *6* per level for a complete success. When the obstacle is Tier 2, a *4/5* or *6* count as a mixed success, two *6*s count as a complete success, and three *6*s count as a critical success.

> In general, when a player character faces an obstacle above their Tier, the Injury they would normally suffer is bumped up.

Player characters are always Tier 1. The player characters never increase Tier; they increase their dice pools through Gear, Improvements, and support to overcome high Tier challenges.

Refer to the table below for a quick reference guide:

	<<< D I C E R E S U L T S >>>							
OBSTACLE	1-3	4-5	6	2 x 6'S	3 x 6'S	4 x 6'S	5 x 6'S	6+ 6'S
TIER 1	MISS	MIXED	SUCCESS	CRIT	CRIT	CRIT	CRIT	CRIT
TIER 2	MISS	MIXED	MIXED	SUCCESS	CRIT	CRIT	CRIT	CRIT
TIER 3	MISS	MIXED	MIXED	MIXED	SUCCESS	CRIT	CRIT	CRIT
TIER 4	MISS	MIXED	MIXED	MIXED	MIXED	SUCCESS	CRIT	CRIT
TIER 5	MISS	MIXED	MIXED	MIXED	MIXED	MIXED	SUCCESS	CRIT

> A mini critical success follows the same gradient as a critical success. A result of three 5s against a Tier 2 obstacle gives the player a mini critical success, and so on.

For example, a player rolls four dice against a Tier 2 obstacle and gets 1, 2, 4, and 5—the 5 gives them a mixed success. However, the consequences are quite harsh, as a Tier 2 obstacle is more difficult than a Tier 1 obstacle.

<<< *H E L P I N G   &   H I N D E R I N G* >>>

If a player character triggers a roll, another player character can try and affect the outcome (if the Referee and other players believe it makes sense).

However, it's good practice to check-in with the table before a player character interferes with a roll. Sometimes people find player interference, especially hindrance, uncomfortable or simply not on tone with their game.

Ideally, these boundaries were discussed before play. But if they were not discussed, take some time to figure it out before picking up the dice. The Referee should ask if the interference would be fun or interesting before proceeding. "Everybody cool with this?"

Note that this can even come up with another player helping someone during a roll. Sometimes players want to do things for themselves, or they want a climactic moment for just their character.

< *H E L P I N G* >

If a player is helping, they describe how their character gives aid in the situation. If the suggestion makes sense, the player helping takes a helping die. The helping player rolls the helping die at the same time as the acting player.

Keep the helping die separate from the dice pool.

All parties involved in the roll share in success, but failure is assigned to the individual player characters. If the helping die result is a *1-3*, the player character helping suffers a relevant consequence. **This consequence is independent of the other players' rolls**. If you roll a *1-3*, consequences come for you specifically.

If the helping die is a *4/5* or a *6*, it contributes to the success of the player character receiving help. If the acting player rolls a *6* and the helping player rolls a *6*, that's a critical success against a Tier 1 obstacle. If the acting player rolls a *6* and you roll a 2 against a Tier 1 obstacle, the group receives a complete success—but you additionally receive trouble.

Multiple people can help a player character on a single roll. Doing so is risky, since failures are reserved for the specific player character. But help is especially useful (or sometimes necessary) when overcoming higher Tier obstacles. A player going up against a Tier 2 obstacle with one die will likely fail—but help from another player character offers a chance at a complete success.

< H I N D E R I N G >

Hindering refers to times where one or more player characters want to inhibit or prevent another player character from taking a course of action. Always do a check-in with everyone at the table when a player wants to hinder another player character's roll; player consent is mandatory.

Conflicts like this can often lead to hurt or uncomfortable feelings. Make sure this procedure makes sense for the fiction and that it fits your table's tone and expectations. If you did not discuss expectations before the game, do so now before rolling any dice.

When a player interferes, they describe how their player character hinders the other in the fiction. The player rolling subtracts a die for each interfering player character. The outcome follows the normal rolling procedure.

> *"She made us realize that human dignity is inalienable, and as long as there is still breath left in your body, there will always be something left to fight for."*
> **-Data Runner**

< P L A Y E R   V E R S U S   P L A Y E R >

When two player characters are in direct conflict with each other, you can refer to the Player Versus Player rolling procedure below. Use this procedure for duels, interpersonal conflicts, or any other one-on-one engagement between player characters. Both players build a dice pool for their player characters using the normal procedure. The player with the highest success is the victor. How much they succeed depends upon the margin: One success above the other is a mixed success, while two margins of success results in a complete success, and three roughly equates to a critical success. For example, the first player character rolls two **6**s (a crit) and the second rolls a **5** (mixed success)—the first player receives a complete success over the other, as a crit is two margins above a mixed success.

<<< *THE DIE OF FATE* >>>

Sometimes, it'll feel appropriate to let fate or chance decide an outcome, rather than the Referee or the players. To keep things "fair," a Referee can roll one six-sided die—the Die of Fate—to see what happens next.

The Die of Fate can decide situations that are not directly tied to the player characters' agency. Who would win a fight between two equally skilled non-player characters? How many members of a gang are present when the player characters approach their headquarters? Has a player character's exploits spread to a fixer? This person was shot; did they survive? What are the chances a local arms slinger has this particular gun?

The Die of Fate can accommodate degrees of success as well as a binary yes/no. You could assign *1-3* on the die as "no" and assign *4-6* as "yes." You could also assign *1-3* as "many," *4-5* as "some," and *6* as "a few" when deciding how many guards are in the building.

The Die of Fate assigns ill-luck to lower numbers, while higher numbers favor the players—the lowest and highest being "best" and "worst" outcomes respectively.

A Referee might use the Die of Fate to determine the relationship between an individual or Faction. See the next section for information on Standing.

<<< *CONTACT & FACTION STANDING* >>>

Player characters will form relationships with non-player characters and Factions during the game. These relationships have a Standing between -3 and +3 to represent how the character or Faction feels about that player character. The Standing, for the most part, is assumed to be mutual between the player character and character or Faction, though there are exceptions where it may be one sided, representative of how a group or individual feels about the character and not the other way around. But for the most part, if you can receive help from them and rely on them, they will expect the same in return.

Relationships are complicated, however, so there are exceptions. Maybe you're building trust while infiltrating an organization. The Standing in that case represents their trust in you. However, the assumption is that player characters will usually be attempting to build genuine, trusting relationships with like-minded people during the course of the game.

Standing falls into the following:

- **-3**: They could not dislike you more. They will go out of their way to hurt the player character, physically, socially, financially, or by any other means. They actively work against you and see you as an opposing force.
- **-2**: They are probably nursing a grudge. They won't help you and don't expect you to help them. They don't trust you, and they don't like you. They might come looking for payback, but they won't go out of their way to hurt you.
- **-1**: They generally don't trust you. They need a beneficial arrangement or a show of trust to work with you. They won't go out of their way to screw you over, but you're not friends.
- **0**: They may not know you at all, are completely apathetic toward you, or haven't made up their mind about you yet.
- **+1**: They trust you about as far as they can throw you. You've gained some modicum of trust, but it hasn't solidified yet. They will help you out with a small problem. They might make some of their resources available to you.
- **+2**: They trust you and consider you a friend and ally. They would help you out in a tough situation, but not a life-or-death one (unless it's a unifying cause). You've got access to their resources and channels if you need them (within reason).
- **+3**: They could not trust you more. They'd help you out in any given situation. They welcome you into their space, and you're welcome to their resources and channels.

A player character with higher Standing can also purchase the Unique Gear (or anything else the player character might benefit from) an individual or Faction possesses. Technology they've developed, viruses or malware, anti-viruses or firewalls, specialized programming for hybrid reality, a higher Tier or specialty weapon, inroads to scores against megacorporations, and more. For examples of Unique Gear, see some of the additional content created, starting at page 83.

<< *VISUALLY REPRESENTING STANDING* >>

When a player character gains the trust of a Faction or individual contact, consider showing it in the fiction. A character might cement a relationship with, for example, a Faction's tattoo when they have a +3 Standing with them. It could be an article of clothing, an accessory, a patch, a body modification, anything.

Players mark these shows of trust under Gear on the character sheet (located at the very end of the book). Leveraging Standing can provide an additional die to the player's dice pool in the right circumstances.

<< *USING STANDING WITH THE DIE OF FATE* >>

When you meet a new contact who knows you through someone you have Standing with, roll dice equal to that Standing. You take the lowest die if the Standing is negative, and the highest number if the Standing is positive.

If a contact with Standing either helps or hinders a player character, the Referee might tell the player rolling to add or subtract dice equal to their Standing with that contact.

<< *GATHERING INFORMATION* >>

When a player wants information, they tell the Referee what they hope to learn and how they hope to acquire it, then they build a dice pool (using the Build a Dice Pool procedure on page 24). Players can help or hinder, provided they describe what their character does to help or hinder the attempt. However, players who help on a Gather Information roll do not receive consequences.

The outcome is different to a standard roll. If the highest die is:

- *1-3*, the information might be unverified (such as rumors), complete misinformation, or simply incomplete.
- *4/5*, the information is accurate, but lacks specific details that would provide more useful context.
- *6*, the information is complete and accurate. Of course, they only learn what is possible through the method used to acquire it.
- Two or more *6s*, the information also reveals a weakness, advantage, or extra pertinent details. Perhaps the initial approach springboards into a more complete answer.

Gathering information is a conversation between player(s) and Referee. The player(s) can ask follow up questions, but the answers must still conform to the above outcome. The player(s) do not need to ask perfectly worded questions to get the information they're after. A Referee should feel free to give information that stems from the spirit of what the players want to know.

Player characters may not attempt to get the information again without trying a substantially different Approach. Players should therefore discuss who is best-placed to use a particular Approach before rolling the dice.

<<< *CHARACTER CREATION* >>>

Player characters are all relatively new to the Glitch scene. They've cut ties with their old life and are starting fresh. Maybe you're trying to hack your neurochip to get off the grid, or maybe you're off the grid and are seeking more like minded folk. Keep this premise in mind when creating characters.

<< *SUMMARY* >>

1) Discuss tone and expectations

2) Pick a Class

3) Pick two of the character customization options (do not select the same option twice)

4) Decide your look and subculture

5) Assign Standing

6) Mark $1,500 in Verified Funds (VF) and a rucksack for carrying Gear

7) Spend your VF on whatever you wish

8) Introduce your character to the table

<< *TONE & EXPECTATIONS* >>

Discuss as a group what kind of experience you want to have before starting a game of *Retropunk*. The best games begin with everyone at the table understanding what each person wants to see during play. Are you interested challenging battles? Do you want to explore hybrid reality and hacking? What are you excited to see and interact with?

The characters will be up against corporate and authoritarian ideologies, so calibrate your game's "grit" level with everyone. Establish what themes or systemic challenges people do or do not want to come up in your game. Some themes of might overlap uncomfortably with players' lived experiences, and some people may want to set boundaries around the level of oppression in the fiction. Players may want to tackle particular themes of oppression, others won't want to insert matters that affect their life outside of the game. into the fiction.

Referee, keep a list of what people do and do not want to see in this game. Let people know they can add to this list during the game if they like. If someone tries to introduce something on the "do not" list, anyone can remind them it's off the table.

I strongly recommend also using safety tools—whether you've played together for years or are playing together for the first time. Use the safety tools that work for the group. A great safety tool resource is the TTRPG Safety Kit:

> *The TTRPG Safety Toolkit is a resource created by Kienna Shaw and Lauren Bryant-Monk. The TTRPG Safety Toolkit is a compilation of safety tools that have been designed by members of the tabletop roleplaying games com munity for use by players and GMs at the table. You can find it at bit.ly/ttrpg safetytoolkit.*

<< C L A S S E S >>

When making a character, don't be afraid of your imagination. Create a character that explores the ideas you find most interesting within the world of *Retropunk* and its themes.

It's usually best to make characters as a group. The character ideas you share will craft and reinforce the tone you want to see in your game. That shared understanding will help everyone tell a story that interests the whole group.

Pick a Class for your character:

- *Specialists*—Experts in a specific field

- *Heavies*—Skilled in close combat

- *Breakers*—Masters at bending and breaking hybrid reality

Every character begins with six Starting Approaches: Violence, Precision, Velocity, Compromise, Establish, Uncover. All characters can access those Approaches when overcoming an obstacle. However, player characters have unique skills and talents in a particular field. Classes and character customization can give players extra Broad Approaches or Focused Approaches to show this expertise mechanically.

<<< S P E C I A L I S T S >>>

Specialists have trained in a specific Vocation that makes them experts in their field. This Vocation gives them an extra Broad Approach epitomizing this skill set. They also have a special Object that is integral to using their Vocation.

< V O C A T I O N >

A Vocation could be any focused skill set negotiated between the player and Referee. When the Referee and player reach an agreement, the player writes the Broad Approach that captures the Vocation on their character sheet.

Your Vocation could be Splatter Specialist—an expert in weapons that can take on groups of people. You could be an Infiltration Specialist with the skills to get into a place unseen. Or a Getaway Specialist with expertise in vehicles and high-speed pursuit, an Espionage Specialist who can alter their appearance easily, or a Fixer Specialist who grows their network of Contacts along with their reputation and Standing. You could pick a Vocation that overlaps with Heavy or Breaker Class skillsets, but mechanically the Classes function differently.

< V O C A T I O N   O B J E C T >

Each Specialist is Attuned to an Object that allows you to make a new Broad Approach that is tied to your Vocation—whether it's a reference text, a weapon, a vehicle, or another piece of technology. The Object isn't codified mechanically beyond that (in other words, it just gives you the fictional positioning to use the Broad Approach. It doesn't give you additional dice or other mechanical benefits).

< S P E C I A L   A B I L I T Y >

Specialists start with one Special Ability:

Attune: Once per session, you can use your Object to either succeed at an easy or normal task, without rolling, or attempt something extremely difficult or almost impossible.

A sniper might attempt a one-in-a-million trick shot with their rifle. A getaway driver could try to make an impossible jump with their vehicle. Someone Attuned to a knowledge base might recall something important, or extrapolate a tenuous connection. A duelist Attuned to a vibrosword could disarm an opponent without injuring them. A punk rocker Attuned to their cybernetic voice or a musical instrument might sway an entire stadium with a performance rooted in an ideological stance.

< I N J U R I E S >

A Specialist can incur 1 Critical Injury, 2 Moderate Injuries, and 1 Minor Injury. Mark these in the "Injury Threshold" boxes that correspond to each on your character sheet. Harm and death are explained on page 55.

<<< H E A V I E S >>>

Heavies are trained in the art of close physical combat. Character concepts that fit the Heavy archetype are the street samurai, bruiser, and booster (to borrow terms from other games). Soldiers, bodyguards, killers, an up close and personal solo, or just a pugilist in the future—they all work as Heavies. But a Heavy is not limited to those roles.

Heavies can engage multiple opponents at close range when leveraging their melee combat skills. A Heavy can take on 2 opponents of their same Tier in melee combat without incurring a penalty for being outnumbered.
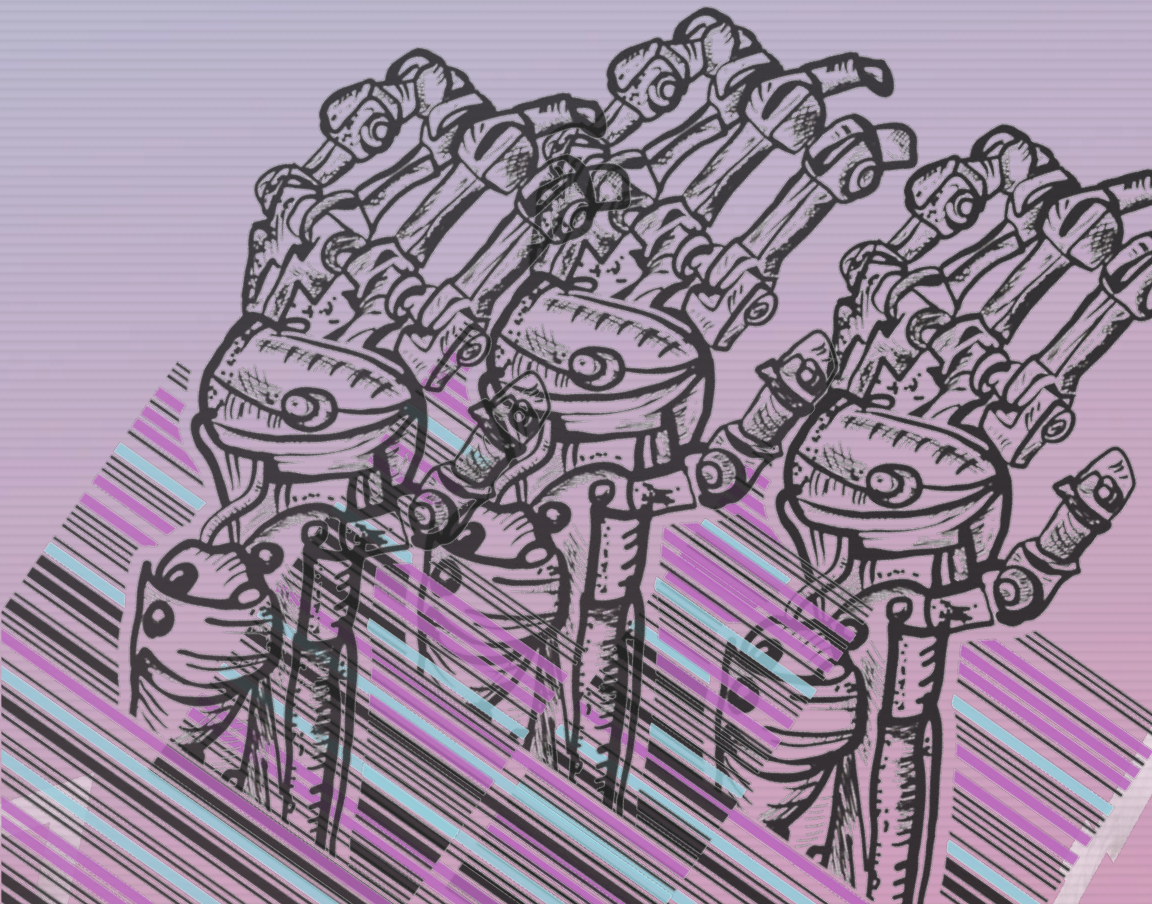
< S P E C I A L   A B I L I T Y >

Heavies start with one Special Ability:
Tremendous: Once per session, a Heavy may re-roll the lowest die in their dice pool when engaged in melee conflict.

< I N J U R I E S >

A Specialist can incur 2 Critical Injuries, 2 Moderate Injuries, and 2 Minor Injuries. Mark these in the "Injury Threshold" boxes for each on your character sheet. Harm and death are explained on page 55.

<<< B R E A K E R S >>>

In a hybrid reality where the digital and physical are equally perceptible, Breakers literally break reality. Familiar character archetypes from other cyberpunk games include deckers, netrunners, deck jockeys, and techies. However, there is plenty of space to create a character that does not fit those molds.

< D I S C I P L I N E >

Breakers have a Discipline—they might distort reality (altering the five senses), or strip the digital away from the physical environment; it's up to the player and their creativity.

Your Discipline will fit into either a Broad Approach or Focused Approach. If the Discipline creates a new area of expertise, make it a Broad Approach. If it fits within a starting Broad Approach, add it underneath as a Focused Approach.

You might guide people through a null space vault, where a void is broadcasted by a corporation attempting to hide something. You might be an architect (such as in the movie Inception), where people delve into dreams with you. Perhaps you're a programmer who mixes drinks at clandestine clubs—only the drinks are programs that change how people perceive hybrid reality.

< S P E C I A L A B I L I T Y >

A Breaker begins with one Special Ability:
Breach: Once per session, you may push the limits of your Discipline to attempt something beyond your normal capabilities.

Breach lets you attempt something when you lack the fictional positioning to merit a roll. Pushing your limits lets you go beyond your usual scope of expertise—like going beyond your Tier level to hack an opponent's senses or 'corp security. It doesn't make it easier. It makes it possible or gives the player character a better chance.

< I N J U R I E S >

A Breaker can incur 1 Critical Injury, 1 Moderate Injury, and 1 Minor Injury. Mark these in the "Injury Threshold" boxes for each on your character sheet. Harm and death are explained on page 55.

<<< *C H A R A C T E R   C U S T O M I Z A T I O N* >>>

The player further customizes their character by selecting two of the following options. Once an option is chosen, it may not be selected again during character creation:

1) Train a starting Broad Approach (see page 61)
2) Add a Focused Approach to any starting Broad Approach
3) Increase an Injury Threshold by 1 (Critical, Moderate, or Minor)
4) Start with an additional 1000 VF (see Currency and Gear, page 44)

This customization helps make each character unique. Players can Improve their player character further through play (see page 60).

<*Y O U R   L O O K   A N D   S U B C U L T U R E* >

Remember to keep your game's tone and expectations in mind when creating your player character's look. If you're going for a serious game, craft a serious player character—but feel free to let loose if your tone is less serious.

Whatever your tone, your look should speak to punk values and Glitch subculture. Part of Glitch ideology in *Retropunk* is aesthetic. Anti-establishment, anti-authoritarian, nonconformity, anti-corporatism, and **pro** *direct* action beliefs have a *look*.

Your character can be any skin color, gender, or sexuality, they can come from any background, and they can wear whatever they like. There are no restrictions on identity and expression.

How *you* express your values is up to you. What makes your character stand out in a crowd? What makes them unique? Do they wear designs that subvert company logos or advertisements? Every facet of their appearance is yours to tailor. Their look could be leather, mirrorshades, UV or neon tattoos that move over their skin, body piercings, or other high tech aesthetic enhancements, whatever you like.

Give them cybernetic body parts if you like! Cyberware is common, but varies hugely in quality. Most Glitches have access to a DIY street-doc who can outfit them with cyberware. Street-docs are valued members of the community for their skills, regardless of varying quality of care they can provide based on experience, background, or resources. Of course, you *could* use a "reputable" 'corp surgeon in a shopping mall... but who knows if they low jack the parts, report suspicious characters, or charge unfair prices. Plus, while sanctioned doctors can access premium parts, those parts are almost certainly traceable.

So, what's *your* look?

<<< *A S S I G N   S T A N D I N G* >>>

Player characters begin the game with a Contact and Faction as part of their background. They don't know too many people right now, since They've cut ties with their old life and are starting fresh in the Glitch scene. The character sheet has a space to write multiple Contacts/Factions. Use the space to write the following down:

Create a Contact that is part of the Glitch underground scene:

- Write down the name of your Contact in the Glitch scene. Then roll one six-sided die. If you roll a:
  - o **1** or **2**, write **-1** beside their name in the Standing column. Neither of you trust each other right now. Are they an acquaintance? Someone you know but haven't built rapport with yet?
  - o **3** or **4**, write **+1** beside their name in the Standing column. There is some trust between you, but it hasn't solidified. Did you do some past work with them? Were you introduced by a mutual friend who vouched for you?
  - o **5** or **6**, write **+2** beside their name in the Standing column. You have a solidified relationship. What are you to each other? How was this trust built?

Create a Faction that is part of your support system:

- Write down the Faction's name, what their deal is, and what they mean to you. It can be whomever you like; it's your world to build. Perhaps they gave you the skills or Gear you have on you now, or maybe they helped get you off the grid.
- Write **+1** by their name in the Standing section. You can ask them for small favors, but nothing major yet—introductions, low-level scores, open calls, etc.

For both Contacts and Factions, there is enough space on the character sheet large enough to document anything about them; you need to remember who they are and what they mean to you. Write down their location, or look, or anything else you might want to document about them.

> **"Everybody is an outsider, if you go deep enough. The trick is reassuring people that you're their kind of outsider."**
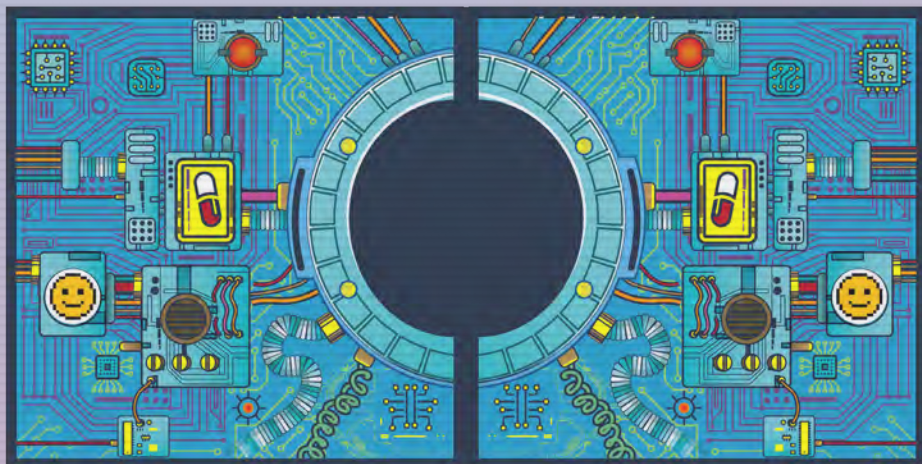> *- Autonomous*

For purchasing Gear (and everything else), there's Verified Funds—or simply "Funds," "VF," or "Vs" depending on your slang. If Gear only has a $ attached, assume the pricing is in VF (which every District accepts as currency). Verified Funds experienced deflation at the hands of megacorporations. The 'corps standardized VFs and increased the value of the currency immensely.
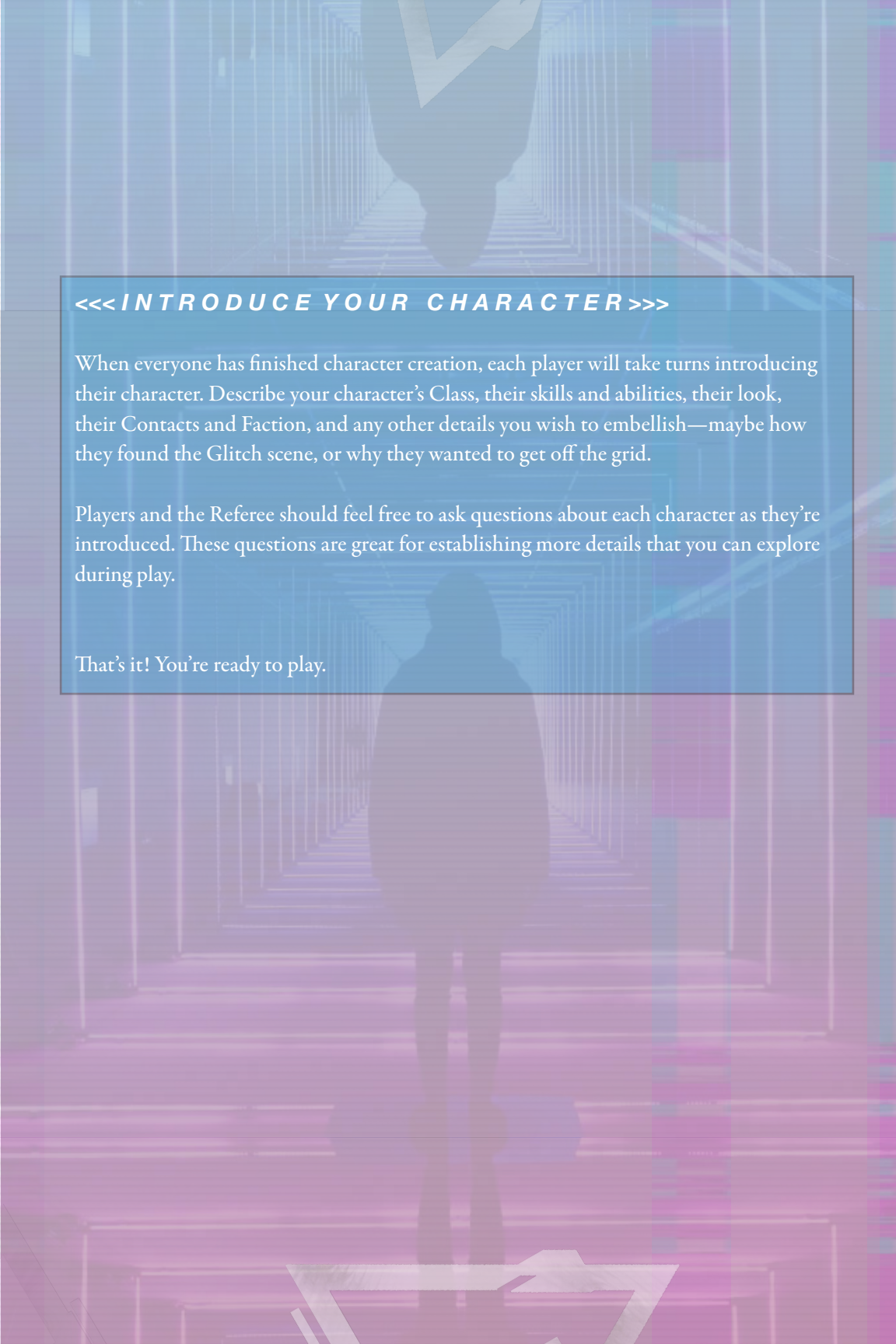
By default, new player characters start with $2,500 VF and a rucksack. Spend your Verified Funds on the Gear list that starts on page 49.

Remember: you don't need to purchase communication devices. Everyone has a neurochip in their head that can do everything your computer or phone can do nowadays.

"*Freedom. The freedom to be, without limits, to the very best of your ability. The freedom to move without fear or reticence and live your life one leap at a time. The freedom to unbind yourself from all those paths that have been constructed for you by society and find your own way through the obstacles. The freedom to write your own physics, accepting nobody's rules of gravity and space but your own.*"
- Data Runner

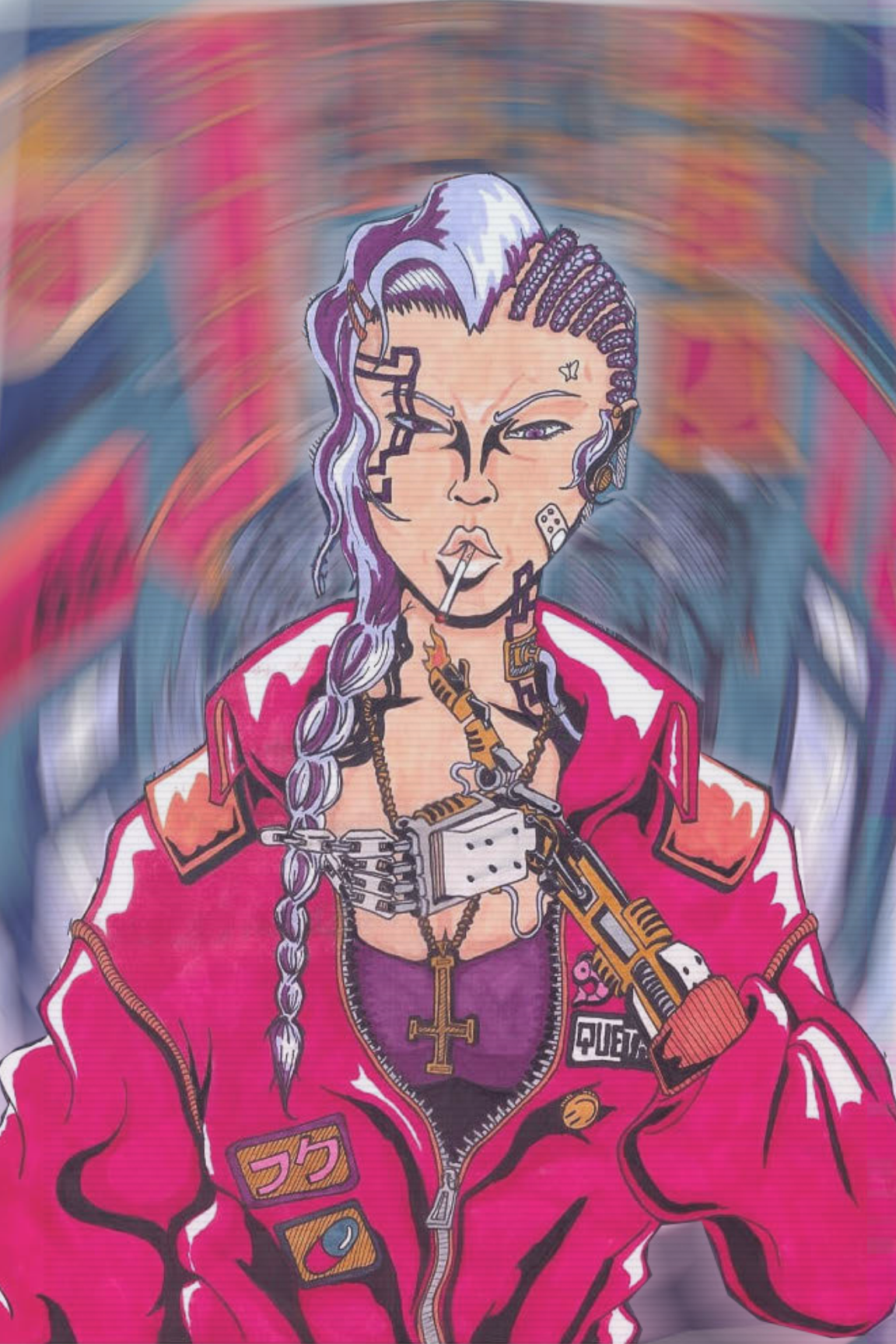## <<< *I N T R O D U C E   Y O U R   C H A R A C T E R* >>>

When everyone has finished character creation, each player will take turns introducing their character. Describe your character's Class, their skills and abilities, their look, their Contacts and Faction, and any other details you wish to embellish—maybe how they found the Glitch scene, or why they wanted to get off the grid.

Players and the Referee should feel free to ask questions about each character as they're introduced. These questions are great for establishing more details that you can explore during play.

That's it! You're ready to play.

<<< G E A R >>>

<< WORKING YOUR WAY UP >>

The Gear in this section is considered common, and the prices generally don't change from District to District. This Gear list is typical for Glitches, so if the variety seems somewhat limited, that's because it's *your* scene's shopping list.

<< ENCUMBRANCE & WEIGHT >>

In *Retropunk*, Gear is made to be incredibly light, durable, and pretty good quality. If it's reasonably big or illegal, it also disassembles into components.

Retropunk only cares about how encumbrance affects a character's fictional positioning—there's no mechanical weight dictating when a player character is encumbered. If it seems like a piece of Gear should fit into a rucksack, then it does. If you're slinging around a big rocket launcher, maybe there's some debate around whether it can fit into a rucksack, but maybe not? What makes sense for your game?

If a character has a full rucksack and a rifle in their hands, those variables should factor into the effectiveness of certain Approaches. Hoofing it with a full rucksack may very well make a task more difficult. The Referee can factor weight into a relevant roll if it's interesting to the fiction, on a case-by-case manner.

Otherwise, the fictional cumulative weight of Gear or other items doesn't bring impact the mechanics or bring an automatic penalty to a character's Approach. If things make sense cinematically and fictionally, it's all good.

<< GEAR APPEARANCE >>

Gear doesn't have a codified look in this text, so players have creative freedom to describe their Gear. The player and Referee can collaborate on how things look to make it fit into the established culture, fiction, and tone. After agreeing the Gear's look and function, stick to it during play—that way, you keep the fiction honest and true to your collaborative world.

<< REPAIRING GEAR >>

In general, repairs cost a quarter of the purchase price. If it's a luxury item, it's more like half. If it's a rare item, the Referee can determine a fair price using Gear prices as a rough guide.

<< *B U Y I N G   F R O M   T H E   ' C O R P S* >>

Megacorps charge double the price compared to the underground. 'Corp Gear comes with no mechanical downsides, but it's probably loaded with malware or spyware. However, if you need quality, there's nothing better out there than the 'corps, usually.

Glitches have a difficult time purchasing from a 'corp. You've hacked your neurochips to get off the grid afterall, so legitimate deals are problematic, to say the least. You could hook yourself *back* up to your old identity to spend some VF (although that will probably flag your account as suspicious), or you might assume a different identity to make your purchases. Most communities will have hacked identities members can use when they need to buy things legally.

Typically, only official 'corp wares requires this scrutiny. Everyone else is happy to get VF through any transfer service, be it off the grid or otherwise.

<< *W E A P O N S* >>

Glitches are, by necessity, crypto-anarchists. All weapons—but especially guns—are modular in design and usually made with a fabricator. Pricing is based on a few factors: paying for the materials, getting the files and customizing the file to the printer, the baseline labor and testing, and/or a payment to secure the anonymity of the purchaser.

To keep things simple the prices in the following item list extend to both printing the materials yourself or buying it from someone else. If you're concerned about hand-waving the cost, use the fiction to justify the price. The player characters are in a spot where the options are limited and must take what they can get or any of the above factors come into play.

If a player wants Gear that isn't listed, the Referee can opt to use the Gear list to set a reasonable price.

You'll see some weapons on the Gear list have downsides. The Referee can draw from these downsides as a consequence from a roll. However, weapons purchased directly from a 'corp don't have these downsides.

<< G U N S >>

A gun's capabilities should factor into the fiction. If a player character wants to shoot someone four feet away with a sniper rifle (where a pistol is more appropriate), the Referee must take that into account when the player goes to roll.

Retropunk keeps firearm exchange simple—just do what makes sense for your cinematic fiction. You don't need to know a pistol's accuracy. If everyone thinks your shot is possible based on the situation, go for it, take the shot.

Of course, an additional cost to using guns is the price of a bullet. The gun list uses "cost per shot" (CPS) to denote the cost of a bullet for each gun. Make sure you budget for ammunition as well as the weapon itself.

Baseline cheap polymer (plastic) printed revolver - 500 VF
Downsides: Low durability, heat and cooling issues, known to backfire, jams, small clip size
CPS: 25 VF

Different baseline core component frames:
Semi-auto handgun 500 VF
CPS: 25 VF
Shotgun 1500 VF
CPS: 50 VF

Deviations from basic design:
Cosmetic changes: +250 VF
The core components remain the same, the shell is tailored to anything you want
Upgraded core component: +500 VF
An upgraded core component removes one downside of your choice
Linked: +1000 VF
The gun and bullets accommodate a payload (a program, virus, malware, etc.)
Concealed +2500 VF
Will not set off most detectors
Smart gun: +4500 VF
Contains a basic artificial intelligence that will create a payload for a Linked gun.
Onboard fabricator: +5000 VF
No longer costs money to fire regular ammo (CPS: 0 VF)
Capable of printing different kinds of ammo on demand at an additional cost:

- *Armor piercing: 100 VF per shot, Poison effect: 500 VF, Explosive: 1000 VF per shot*
- *For other effects, ask the Referee*

<< B L A D E S >>

Baseline cheap polymer (plastic) sculpted switchblade - 100 VF

Downsides: Low durability, heat and cooling issues

Different baseline bladed weapons:

Knife 150 VF

Sword 500 VF

Deviations from basic design:

Upgraded core component: +200 VF

An upgraded core component removes one downside of your choice

Monofilament +250 VF

 Will cut through most body armor

Vibration +300 VF

The blade rapidly oscillates when activated

Concealed +1000 VF

Will not set off most detectors

Smart enabled: +2,000 VF

Contains a basic A.I that can create and coat the blade with a payload

<< A R M O R >>

When a player character's armor takes the brunt of an Injury, roll one six-sided die. No matter the outcome, the Armor's effect happens (such as dropping an Injury down one level). But if the result is a 1, it no longer functions properly until repaired (a quarter of the original price).

Mesh vest 500 VF
Drops an Injury down one level, unconcealed

Mesh weave integrated into a piece of clothing 1500 VF
Drops an Injury down one level, concealed

<<< C Y B E R W A R E >>>

<< EXPRESSIONWARE >>

DermaSlate -- *subdermal timepiece* **25 VF**

Kinetic tattoo -- *a small range of motion (a GIF imprinted on skin)* **50 VF**

EyeLights -- *spray that changes your eye color* **25 VF**

Subdermal imprint -- *color/pattern/design applied beneath skin* **75 VF**

SinHair -- *color/light emitting artificial hair* **25-100 VF**

<< MISSIONWARE >>

Voice synthesizer -- *mimic any recorded sound, including human voices* **375 VF**

Nasal filters -- *stops toxic gases, fumes* **400 VF**

Independent air supply -- *good for 30 minutes* **450 VF**

Subdermal pocket -- *2-inch x 4-inch space with synthetic skin zipper* **500 VF**

Motion detector -- *proximity detection* **1000 VF**

<< HARDWARE >> (PRICES IN VF)

Optics

5000 VF per eye with three tags (**200 VF** per extra tag)
Tags: Image enhancement, micro-optics, low light, thermographic, infrared, ultraviolet, recording, secure

Audio

4000 VF per ear with three tags (**200 VF** per extra tag)
Tags: Amplified, radio link, cellular, scrambler, secure, lie detector, recording, compensating

Arm, legs, hands, feet

3500 VF with one tag only (**500 VF** per extra tag)
Hydraulic rams -- increased strength
Reinforced -- durable and hard to break
Chromed -- metallic covering

<<< *M I S C E L L A N E O U S* >>>

<< *HYBRID COCKTAILS* >>

Connecticut 250 VF per dose
Stores a digital viral payload in the bloodstream. The user can pass on the virus through a weapon or physical contact. Good for 24 hours after being introduced to the body.

Blitz 500 VF per dose
Automatically increases reaction time in a fight or flight response. Costs a Minor Injury upon application. Stays in the bloodstream for one week.

Oakley 1000 VF per dose
Simulates your neurochip being on the grid, letting you pass a cursory security check. Lasts about 48 hours. You can purchase things on the grid while Oakley is active.

<< *LIFESTYLE* >>

- Designer items -- Mirrorshades, elaborate clothes, accessories, personal items, halo-paint, artist supplies, guitars, etc. (**100-500 VF** per item)
- Rent for an apartment **2000-10,000 VF** The deed to an apartment **1,000,000+**
- Motorcycle **5000 VF**, Car **10,000 VF**, Sports car **30,000 VF**

<< *MISSION ITEMS* >>

Players don't need to worry about being fully stocked before going into a job or mission. *Retropunk* assumes the player characters are competent and prepared. So if you need small items or tools to overcome an obstacle, you can ask the Referee if it's reasonable to spend the VF and say you bought it when preparing for the mission.

The items you can buy on a job or mission come in two categories:
* Kit -- any small item you might conceivably have on hand. Rope, smart-paper, a light source (**50 VF** per item as you need it)
* Tools -- Lockpicks, cutting torch, protective goggles, glowstick, flashlight, respira tor, etc. (**100 VF** per item as you need it)

<<< HIGHER TIER GEAR >>>

Gear with a Tier rating can contribute an additional die to a player character's dice pool. High Tier Gear is therefore crucial for taking on higher Tier obstacles and risky jobs. A player character can obtain Tiered items by:

- Taking it from someone else (such as a strike against a technology 'corp).

- Increasing their Standing with an individual or Faction that has access to higher Tier Gear, and then purchasing it or coming to an arrangement with them.

In terms of VF, there is no specific formula for pricing higher Tier Gear. A Referee can take a look at what basic items cost and use them as a gauge. If, for example, a gun is higher Tier because it has a more sophisticated A.I than the average smart feature (4500 VF), depending on the factors the Referee wanted to use to judge how obtainable the Gear should be to the player character(s), they could double (or triple) the "base" 4500 VF price.

<<< SELLING AND FENCING GOODS >>>

A player character can generally sell Gear anywhere for half the value if it's clean (meaning the owner isn't tracking it or going to look for it). Of course, factors such as trustworthiness or Standing may influence the selling price (perhaps with a Die of Fate roll).

Possession of illegal or stolen 'corp gear brings a sentence tantamount to murder, so communities off the grid are often the only buyers willing to take it. However, for someone to buy something hot and turn it around, you need to make it worth their while. Whatever the price is in VF, you get 15%.

Most Glitches steal what they need, including cyberware. But proposing job to acquire much-needed cyberware for a community member is risky. Cyberware is expensive and guarded well. It's also usually monitored and hard to take off the grid.

<*I N J U R I E S   &   H E A L I N G*>

There are three kinds of Injuries: Minor, Moderate, and Critical. A player character's Class provides their Threshold for each Injury type (see each individual Classes, beginning on page 38).

- Minor Injuries heal on their own. They're skin deep cuts, bruises, and sprains. They aren't very serious.

- Moderate Injuries cannot heal without intervention. Left uncared for, they become Critical Injuries. Broken arms, deep lacerations, gunshot wounds, serious illnesses get worse with time. Anything serious that requires medical expertise can be classified as a Moderate Injury.

- Critical Injuries lead to death when untreated. They do not heal naturally and are the most serious injuries a player character can sustain. Critical Injuries are always life threatening when incurred.

The risk of injury is always established at the time of a roll, and should scale with what the player character is attempting.

Match the danger of a situation to your time constraints and tone.

A gun battle between two player characters (PCs) and eight opponents of the same Tier could play out beat by beat: The PCs make rolls for each shot at a specific enemy. They take cover between rounds of gunfire, and risk a Minor Injury with each roll. Of course, this will take a significant amount of time, and is very focused on action and combat.

The Referee can alternatively fold the whole fight into one roll. The PC with the most combat-focused Approaches should make the roll, with help from the other PC. The Referee should tell them that severe injury might be a consequence of the roll. After the roll, the Referee might inflict a Critical or Moderate Injury, depending on the degree of the PCs' success. A failure might mean death is on the table, if it suits the game's tone. If the enemies are a higher Tier, the consequences should also be more dire.

Before the roll, the Referee should tell the player how bad the injury will be and how long they'd have until it worsens. The player can then a) decide if they want to do it with the full context, and b) prioritize what they should do next if their character is injured.

There is no set time frame as to when a Moderate Injuries will become a Critical Injury, because Injuries vary widely. A gunshot wound will become Critical more quickly than a broken rib, for instance. Player characters must treat Moderate Injuries with medical treatment. Otherwise, a Moderate Injury will only worsen.

Your tone should drive how long it takes for an injury to worsen (established in the Tone & Expectation section on page 34). If you're playing a gritty game, the player character should have less time than a game with the tone of a shoot-'em-up action movie.

In general, when a player character faces an obstacle above their Tier, the Injury they would normally suffer is bumped up.

Likewise, an injured player character's fictional positioning should match the tone and established fiction as well. When a player describes their character attempting a task with their Injury, the risk—or whether or not they can make the attempt at all—should reflect the player character's current state.

< S E R I O U S   I N J U R I E S   A N D   D E A T H >

A player character usually dies when they fill up the Critical Injury boxes on their character sheet. In some cases, the player and Referee can work out a way for the player character to cheat death. Perhaps a Critical Injury box becomes permanent, lowering the Injury Threshold a player character can withstand going forward. Perhaps the Injury Threshold is lowered temporarily—such as a shot-up arm that is later replaced with a cybernetic arm, allowing the player character to regain their Critical Injury Threshold.

A hallmark of cyberpunk fiction is a character's ability to sustain severe harm and, through the use of advanced technologies, are able to continue their fight against the 'corps. The characters steal, develop, or purchase technology to skirt death where most would succumb.

However, the group should decide if death, permanent Injury, or disability is "on the table" for the player characters. *Retropunk* is concerned with empowering characters, but the confluence of empowerment and erasing lived experiences of people with disabilities can be fraught. When Injuries of this nature could occur, ask the table if the outcome fits the players' expectations established and the tone of the game. Make sure every player is alright with establishing whatever happens next with the Injury.

< H E A L I N G >

Every player character removes 1 Minor Injury for each day of recuperation (unless otherwise stated by Gear or a Special Ability).

If a player character has an Approach that could reasonably treat an Injury, they may attempt a roll (using the normal procedure). If the stakes are uninteresting, count every success (*4-6* on the dice) as reducing an Injury by one level—a Critical Injury becomes Moderate, a Moderate Injury becomes Minor, and a Minor Injury is reduced to no Injury at all. If the stakes are interesting, make sure the healer and the injured person are okay with the potential consequences before rolling.

When a non-player character treats an Injury, the Referee decides if a roll is needed. If it is needed, the Referee rolls a Die of Fate corresponding to the non-player character's skill. The Injury is reduced by one level for every success. If no roll is required, the Referee decides how much the Injury level is reduced.

Use the following guidelines when seeking someone to treat your Injuries:

· Tier 1: Self-taught, passing knowledge, can reasonably attempt treatment --
Layman (500 VF)

· Tier 2: Experienced, but probably not formerly trained, field medic --
Novice (1,500 VF)

· Tier 3: Formerly trained, skilled --
Experienced (5,000 VF)

· Tier 4: Experienced and trained --
Skilled (10,000 VF)

· Tier 5: Top of their field, possessing one-of-a-kind skills --
Expert (50,000 VF)

<<< E X P E R I E N C E >>>

Player characters only get Experience (XP) if they harmed the megacorporations in the process. Your actions must attack systemic problems and corporations—hurting their bottom line, thwarting their plans, stealing their resources, neutralizing an important connection. It doesn't have to be a master plan that destroys a 'corp, but it needs to demonstrably go toward taking down the system.

There are three ways to get XP through hurting the system:

- Acquiring VF (either taking items worth VF or executing jobs that pay VF)
- Setting and achieving group goals (called Milestones)—agreed between the players and Referee
- Achieving jobs or tasks

Player characters can earn one XP per VF if they get paid to do a job that hurts an institution perpetuating the corporatocracy or systemic oppression. Player characters receive the VF as well as XP, allowing them to buy Gear after the job. Alternatively, they can steal goods from a 'corp, which grants XP based on the VF amount it costs the corporation (10% of MSRP)—not the retail price of purchasing the goods yourself.

Milestones tie personal progression to the player characters' short- and long-term goals. The Referee works with the players to set these short-term and long-term goals. Make sure these goals match the pace of your game, and don't make them too easy. Players receive a Minor Improvement for achieving a short-term goal, and a Major Improvement for achieving a long-term goal.

Player characters can also receive varying amounts of XP for completing tasks or jobs. As a rule of thumb, distribute XP based on the following levels of difficulty:

- 100 XP for something easy, like graffitiing over a corporate logo
- 200 XP for something that will come back and cause you future trouble
- 500 XP for a relatively easy job
- 1000 XP for a difficult job
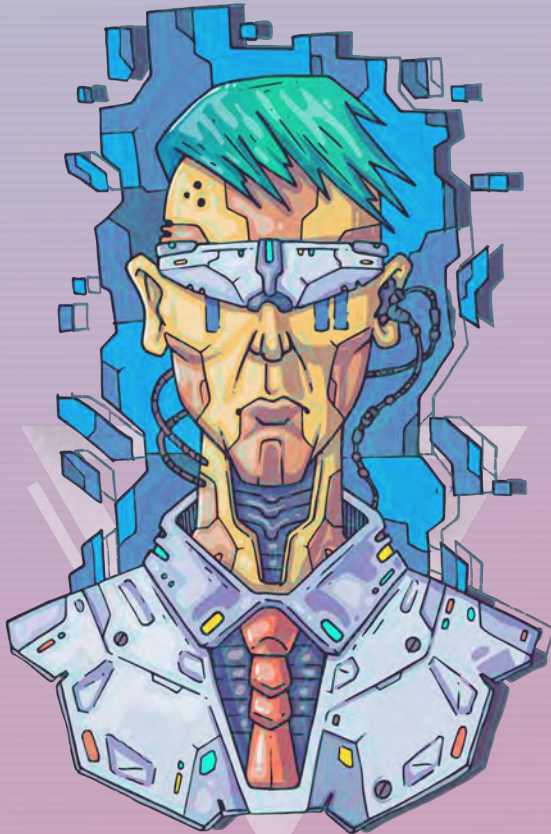- 1500 XP for an intricate and difficult job

In general, Milestones are group goals the player characters achieve together. However, if setting individual Milestones interests your group—go for it! But remember that doing so may complicate the job or score if each player character has different goals they're trying to achieve. This might suit your group, or it may not.

<< *PACING EXPERIENCE GAIN* >>

You can use one or all of the above ways to get experience in your game, so choose what's right for the table and your time constraints. If your group is incentivized by VF, for example, you could give them a relatively easy job (500 XP) that also pays out 500 VF for their first session—assuring them their first Major Improvement (which requires 1000 XP) if they complete the job. They can then spend the VF they earned on Gear.

For a one-shot session, Milestones help structure story beats throughout the scenario. You could set several short-term Milestones (worth a Minor Improvement), and pace the scenario to hit one every hour. These Milestones could feed into larger story beats to keep the scenario focused on the player characters' ultimate goal. It usually keeps the game clipping along.

For multi-session campaigns, a combination of Milestones, task-based XP, and VF helps give players a sense of progress as they dismantle the system—even if it takes a while to enact a hit against a 'corp. If the players want to build communities and create Glitch networks, the Referee could fashion socially-based Milestones. Then, when they do a job that targets a 'corp, they also get task-based XP and/or VF.

<<< *I M P R O V E M E N T* >>>

Players can spend XP on Improvements to help their character improve and grow. When a player chooses an Improvement, take the time to describe their character's growth using the world around them. A certain Improvement might reflect the player character's backstory, some intensive training, or a developing relationship with a Glitch community—it's up to the player's imagination.

A character gets an Improvement when they hit these thresholds:

> Major Improvement 1,000 XP
>
> Minor Improvement 3,000 XP
>
> Major Improvement 6,000 XP
>
> Multi-class /Major Improvement 10,000 XP
>
> Minor Improvement 15,000 XP
>
> Minor Improvement 21,000 XP
>
> Major Improvement 28,000 XP
>
> Multi-class /Minor Improvement 36,000 XP
>
> Major Improvement 45,000 XP
>
> Major Improvement 60,000 XP
>
> Major Improvement 80,000 XP
>
> Major Improvement 100,000 XP

When a player character earns a Minor Improvement, they can choose any one of the following options:

- Add a Focused Approach
- Train a Broad Approach
- Train a Special Ability
- Unlock a new Class Special Ability

Earning Major Improvements allows you to take one of the following options (or two options from the above Minor Improvement list):

- Add a Broad Approach
- Change a Broad Approach
- Increase an Injury Threshold
- Link Approach Trees

<< A D D A F O C U S E D A P P R O A C H >>

Within each Approach Tree, there are Broad Approaches (at the top) and Focused Approaches (in the three slots below the Broad Approach). This Improvement allows a player to add a Focused Approach under any Broad Approach. The player works with the Referee to do this.

Things to keep in mind when choosing a Focused Approach:

- The Focused Approach must apply to the Broad Approach
- You can optimize your dice pool by planning your Linked Approach Trees. Savvy players can add Focused Approaches that will overlap with other Approaches when Linked.

<< T R A I N A B R O A D A P P R O A C H >>

A Trained Broad Approach adds two Context Dice (instead of one) to a dice pool. When you take Trained, tell everyone what training you received (perhaps with a short montage or description of what the training looks like). Then, indicate that on the character sheet where "Broad Approach" is shown.

Only Broad Approaches can be Trained. Focused Approaches are not eligible.

<< T R A I N A S P E C I A L A B I L I T Y >>

You can Train Special Abilities that can only be used one per session. Doing so lets you use them twice per session instead. When you take Trained, tell everyone how you train your Special Ability (such as through a short montage or description of what the training looks like in the fiction). Then, write "(Trained)" next to the Special Ability.

Special Abilities may only be Trained once.

<< U N L O C K A N E W C L A S S S P E C I A L A B I L I T Y >>

Each Class has additional Special Abilities (see page 64). This Improvement lets you add a Special Ability from the list to your character sheet.

A player cannot select a Special Ability from another Class unless they have multi-classed (see page 63).
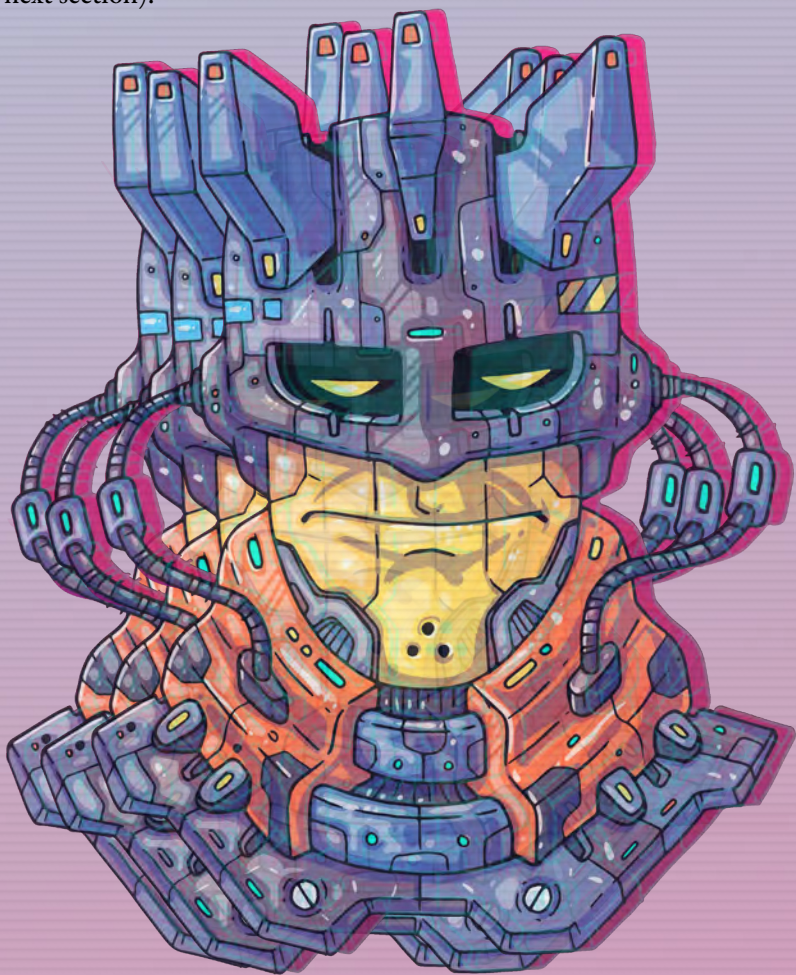
<<ADD A BROAD APPROACH>>

Players may add a Broad Approach to the top of any available (blank) Approach Tree on their character sheet.

Look to the other Broad Approaches for inspiration when adding a Broad Approach. If there's something you'd like to do that doesn't quite fit under an existing Broad Approach, this is a great opportunity to craft one.

An extra Broad Approach should add a new dimension to your character that also makes sense for the story you're telling. A new Broad Approach should not give the player character such freedom that they can attempt anything under the sun—it needs to focus on a set of actions or skills. However, the Broad Approach shouldn't be so narrow that it limits the Focused Approaches you could add underneath it.

It's pointless to craft a Broad Approach that a player has a hard time describing in the fiction. If the Approach's functionality is hard to describe in-character, it can be changed later (see next section).

<< *C H A N G E   A   B R O A D   A P P R O A C H* >>

A player can use an Improvement to change an existing Broad Approach in consultation with the Referee. However, any existing Focused Approaches in that Tree must still apply to the Broad Approach. If that stipulation is met, you can change any Broad Approach, including the Broad Approaches a player character begins with.

<< *I N C R E A S E   A N   I N J U R Y   T H R E S H O L D* >>

Player characters can use an Improvement to increase any single Injury Threshold by 1.

If a player character's current Critical Injury Threshold is 2, a player can "cash in" their Improvement to increase it to 3. If their Minor Injury Threshold is 1, the player could use this Improvement to increase the Threshold to 2.

Keep in mind that taking more Critical Injuries is not always the best option. Minor Injuries build up to Critical ones as the player character takes more damage. So, a player character that can take more Minor Injuries can head off Critical Injuries. For more on Injuries and Healing, see page 55.

<< *L I N K   A P P R O A C H   T R E E S* >>

Any Approach Tree can Link to one other Approach Tree. A player should make a line from one tree to another on their character sheet to show that the Approaches are Linked. When a player builds their dice pool, if a Focused Approach or Broad Approach applies on either Tree, they can add a die for all of them.

An Approach Tree may only be Linked once. It may not be linked to multiple Trees. Choose carefully.

<< *M U L T I - C L A S S I N G* >>

A player character can multi-class at 10,000 XP and 36,000 XP to gain Special Abilities from other Classes (see the following section). However, keep these three points in mind when multi-classing:

- You may not choose a Class's starting Special Ability
- The player character does not gain the Class's benefits from character creation
- You cannot Train a multi-classed Special Ability

<< C L A S S S P E C I A L A B I L I T I E S >>

< SPECIALISTS >

The Drop: When an opponent is unaware of your presence, you may either add one die to your dice pool before rolling or petition the Referee for a different additional benefit. *You might inflict greater damage than you would otherwise, or create an opportunity for an ally, for instance.*

Exemplar: Select one Broad Approach. Mark an * (asterisk) next to it. When you participate in a roll with more than one player character and this Broad Approach applies, each player involved adds an additional die to their dice pool.

Adaptable: Once per session, when you modify a piece of Gear to make it do something it wasn't designed to do, you may reroll the lowest die in your pool.

Peripheral: You may Attune an additional Object to the Broad Approach that represents your Vocation. *Add this Object to your Gear. A player generally requires their Attuned Object to access their Vocation's Approach Tree; an additional Object makes this even easier.*

Strain: Once per session, you may add an additional die to your dice pool when in melee combat.

Maneuvering: Once per session, you may immediately close the distance between yourself and an opponent after they fire upon you at range.

Support: Once per session, you may help a nearby ally who is engaged in any type of combat without a roll. They receive one additional die for their dice pool for the duration of the conflict, so long as you continue to help them.

Guardian: Once per session, you may take an Injury meant for a nearby ally.

Conditioning: Once per session, when you're engaged in melee combat with a target that is lower than you in Tier, you may immediately disable them without dealing an Injury.
Ask the referee if your character can discern if they are below your Tier. A character may need to assess the target through some interaction or roll to learn their Tier.

Survive: Once per session, when you want to escape from a situation where you're facing a potential Injury, you may add an additional die to your dice pool.

Precision Instrument: When you meet or exceed an opponent's maximum Injury threshold, you choose *exactly* how much damage you inflict. You may knock them out, disarm them, kill them, or deal a precise Injury.
A maximum Injury Threshold is fictional positioning in a roll, usually predicated on a character's goal when attacking somebody. If the Approach and outcome of a roll allows the Heavy to overcome them as an obstacle, the Referee should consider their maximum Injury Threshold met.

<BREAKERS>

The Wise: When you use your Discipline as a knowledge base in a roll, always add an additional die to your pool.
This could be convincing somebody about a course of action, identifying a Breaker's actions or work, or any other occasion where you leverage your knowledge.

One of Us: You always recognize another Breaker when you meet them. A Die of Fate roll determines how much you've heard about them (such as their Standing or Discipline).
Knowledge scales with the die result. A low roll results in knowing very little about the Breaker, with higher rolls resulting in more information.

Unplugged: Once per session, you may block the incoming feed from a node for a few minutes without a roll. You create a null space around you where anything purely digital cannot affect you (or be perceived by you).

Duelist: Once per session, when you combat, compete with, or go up against another Breaker, you may add an additional die to your dice pool.
You might attempt to breach another Breaker's digital defenses, or disable a program of some kind. This ability applies whenever you go "toe-to-toe" with another Breaker.

Alias: You have crafted an alternate appearance from digital components. Once per session, roll 1d6 when you concentrate and produce this self-image. On a *1-3*, choose 1. On a *4/5*: choose 2. On a *6+*, choose three: *the self-image is flawless in every way—whatever reputation you've established precedes you—you create a basic melee weapon that lasts for one hour—everyone who sees you is impressed or dismayed (you choose which)—you shift focus either away from or toward you—you maintain this appearance for days instead of hours.*

While many people augment their appearance with digital components, crafting one that alters your appearance completely takes concentration and focus. It requires a lot of work to produce anything that looks, feels, and smells real; let alone an entirely different image of oneself.

If you would like to disguise yourself temporarily without a completely different alias, use an Approach instead.

< R E F E R E E   S E C T I O N >

Retropunk's emphasis on collaboration between the Referee and players makes facilitating the game easier. The Referee's job is to:

- Know the rules of the game
- Keep the game fair for all players
- Convey all the important elements of the fiction—such as the non-player characters' speech and actions, and what the player characters see, taste, smell, hear, and touch
- Determine when a roll is required

<< A G E N C Y >>

The best way to keep a game "fair" is to make sure everyone in the game has agency. A good way to preserve player agency is to involve players when describing the fiction. Ask the players questions about how the world looks and feels; get them to describe what we see when they blow up a building. Keep them involved in the world around them: "How do we know this person is influential and rich?"

The most direct way to preserve player agency is to make sure their characters can affect and navigate the fiction as they desire. After all, these characters are the center of the story. When a character wants to determine if someone is telling the truth and they roll well, let the player have a say in the outcome: "How do you know they're lying to you?"

Agency fosters greater investment from players as they realize they influence the world. When coupled with rules that keep the game fair, the story is rich and unpredictable while keeping all players involved in the story.

<< Q U A L I T Y >>

Quality reveals the immense stratification of class in *Retropunk*. On the lower end, things are printed on 3D printers, called fabricators. They can just about print anything, but the quality varies widely with the printer and access to materials. They're a saving grace for communities that walk away from society. Plastic dwellings, one-time use guns, clothing, tools, and prosthetics—all easy to wear down or break—would be considered lower end quality as they are less durable. Publicly shared prefabricated designs and materials are the cheapest option.

Middling quality goods are what people buy with a month's wages, or what adorns public spaces like megamalls, public transit, and buildings. Modern, yet antiquated with an emphasis on utilitarian design—mass produced designs and materials, spaces that aren't prefabricated, megacomplexes, metal piping, cement, the "hard concrete" look (for more on that check out: https://medium.com/adjacent-possible/the-aesthetics-of-science-fiction-what-does-scifi-look-like-after-cyberpunk-ba9f1991e75c).

Mid-quality products are made desirable via mass marketed consumerism—a standard weapon that can be used more than once, mechanical prosthetics (possibly with a synthetic cover), durable tools, and possessions people protect from theft.

Higher quality means fabrication with multiple materials ranging from metals to complex polymers. They tend to be close-to organic or, in some cases, actually organic. This look could be one-of-a-kind, brutalist, monolithic, life-like, or more than a passable imitation.

<< *USING TIER* >>

Tier indicates mechanically how easy or difficult a particular task, obstacle, or action is to accomplish. Use Tier as a guideline for deciding how much a player character can achieve with their attempt. When a player character faces an obstacle—be it circumstances or a non-player character—that is a higher Tier than them, it is harder to overcome mechanically. Modifying Difficulty (Tier) on page 27 details how many successes are required per Tier level.

Tier level should also fictionally reflect how the obstacle is threatening or dangerous. A higher Tier assassin may move before the player characters, putting the player characters in a reactionary position rather than a proactive position. The assassin may have already shot at them or snuck up on them.

A lower Tier obstacle is a possibility as well. This could be thugs, a small mob of civilizations, or muscle like a bouncer at a club. Essentially, they're things the player characters should be able to deal with easily. They may pose more of a threat in greater numbers or in certain circumstances where the player characters are vulnerable, but otherwise, while they may still trigger a roll from a player character, the PC should receive more effect than facing something on the same Tier as them. A higher Tier corporate executive may seem defenseless at first. That's when the Referee tells them they notice a dozen laser sight dots trained on them. Or, when attacked, the exec disappears—a mere projection that seemed completely real up until that moment.

A higher Tier corporate executive may seem defenseless at first. That's when the Referee tells them they notice a dozen laser sight dots trained on them. Or, when attacked, the exec disappears—a mere projection that seemed completely real up until that moment.

Player characters can set themselves up for success by preparing to take on a higher Tier opponent. Remember, mechanics follow the fiction, so reward your players for their efforts. A Referee could award an additional die to their pool or disregard Tier entirely if fictionally appropriate (no additional successes are required).

<< C O N S E Q U E N C E S & S C A L E >>

Generally, a player sets the scale for their roll by stating what they want to do (although the Referee can make suggestions). A player's goal for a single roll can be hyper specific, such as firing a gun at one opponent, or broad, like taking out the entire group. The Referee tells them the potential risks, which should fit the game's tone.

But remember to mix up the scale's scope to keep the fiction interesting. Fire fights can get boring or confusing if they're always dealt with in one roll. Likewise, combat can drag if five player characters roll for each shot against an opponent. Imagine you're watching a movie, and use the scale to set the pace within the story—what would you want to see on the screen in this moment?

The consequences should match the scale of the conflict. After all, the player sets the scale and knows that if they want to achieve a lot, the consequences may be severe. Each discussion before a roll sets the boundaries for consequences within your fiction.

If the Referee is stumped for interesting consequences, they should ask the table for some ideas. However, here are a few possible consequences that suit cyberpunk fiction:
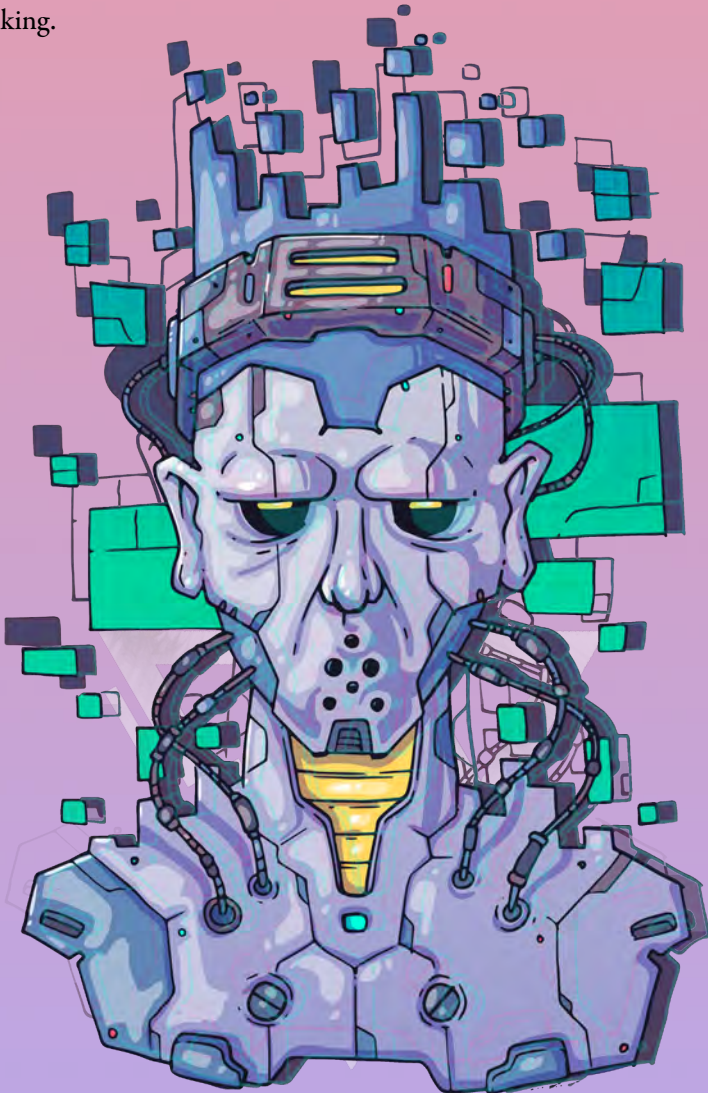
- The situation escalates, becomes more complex, or the stakes are raised
- The attempt means someone or something is in danger
- Someone is Injured
- Something of importance or value is taken away or broken
- The downside of a piece of Gear manifests—now or later
- The player character(s) must try again, a different way
- A new obstacle is introduced
- The player characters are separated
- Rather than something being revealed, it is further obscured or obstructed

<< *THE DOWNSIDE OF GEAR* >>

Pieces of Gear, depending on their quality, usually have a downside. The Referee can draw from these downsides if they're having trouble coming up with a consequence.

The Referee can also give a piece of Gear a new downside as a consequence. A downside can be whatever a Referee sees fit—it does not have to be something physical. A weapon could shift from being concealed to unconcealed. A piece of cyberware, such as an arm, might develop durability issues after smashing a door open. A player character's anonymous avatar might become known.

Downsides should generally be things a player character can negate—be it with time, VF, or skill. However, some players get attached to their Gear. A Referee should be upfront about these possible consequences before the roll, so the player knows what they're risking.

<<< *CONSTRUCTING A DISTRICT* >>>

Retropunk will be supported with supplementary content that is organized into Districts. Each District is a sandbox environment, with elements that are both known and unknown to the player characters.

The player characters will navigate their way through a massive urban sprawl. Within this monstrously large environment, there are Districts of varying sizes that delineate areas within the greater sprawl.

Different megacorporations control each District. They govern in their own way, and they can be similar or radically different to other 'corps in their approach to law enforcement, consumer products, aesthetic, populace, and so on.

Every District is also populated by Factions attempting to enact their own goals. These Factions are the District's big players that the player characters will likely engage. Player characters will typically take jobs from a District's Factions to further that Faction's interests.

Districts are a great way to communicate your game's themes and tone. The plot hooks, locations, non-player characters, and Factions should be there to explore these themes. If a Referee constructs their own District, they don't need to prepare all of these things beforehand, as *Retropunk* is a player driven game. Character creation and pre-game tone conversations should help the Referee prepare a District.

<< *T H E M E* >>

The Referee should center the theme on whatever the Referee and players want to explore in this setting. Some common cyberpunk themes are:

- Loss of privacy
- Corporations co-opting individual autonomy
- Entertainment and advertising as a form of mind control or programming
- Stratification of class and poverty
- Ethical consumption, pollution, and waste
- Various ramifications of overpopulation
- Scarcity of natural resources; synthetic or "fake" goods replacing natural resources
- Religion versus technology
- The commodification of art
- Possible ramifications of (post) capitalism
- Social structures determining what, and who, is considered valid or real
- Exploring the positive and negative impacts of emerging technologies on selfdom/society
- Interrogating social constructs that benefit the system/corporations

<< *F A C T I O N A L   E L E M E N T S* >>

Once the Referee chooses a theme that fits the game's tone and expectations, they next create two opposing views (or Factional elements) within the District that focus on the theme. This could be two people within the same Faction, or two separate Factions at odds. Think about how these two sides co-exist in the same District. Would they possess the same resources? Would they share any common ground? Does either or both belong in the "mainstream" cultural consciousness?

The player characters explore this theme by interacting with these two opposing Factional elements. Because they're exploring a sandbox, don't plan a concrete plot arch—let them go toward what they find most interesting. It's okay enter a session with some basic ideas to see where they end up.

An easy, quick way to prepare these elements is to write down no more than a short sentence regarding each of the following:

- What is their view, and why do they hold it?
- What is their name or alias?
- What is the first thing a player character would notice about the person/group?
- What is their general disposition when interacting with the player characters?

<< MOTIFS & SENSORY INFORMATION >>

The theme(s) should be peppered throughout the District as the player characters traverse it. The world and its visual aesthetic should also reflect the theme(s) via:

- The general population
- The superrich
- Criminal elements present in the District
- And the governing megacorporation that determines the official position in that District

Consider how these motifs link back to the opposing Factional elements. Think about how the general population, the superrich, or 'corps feel about the conflicted parties.

The Referee should assign sensory details to each of the above groups. When the player characters encounter these groups, convey these details through the fiction. The Referee can also ask players to describe sensory details in the scene that communicates the theme. Asking players not only makes the theme clear, but builds their investment in the story.

> *"The thick, stagnant air reeked of perfume, cigarettes, and exhaust. Everyone was barefaced, wanting to flaunt their features instead of hiding beneath blank masks. To be able to flirt with their lips, to be able to kiss. But I wasn't fooled by the dark—the air was still poisonous. Even if we couldn't see the brown haze, it smothered our city lit in neon."*
> *- Want*

<< NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS >>

The Referee can prepare non-player characters that are affected by the Factional elements without being directly involved in either side—someone with stakes outside of the conflict. These extra characters are useful when the player characters aren't interested in siding with either Factional element.

But don't stress about making the non-player characters complex. Give them a name, an opinion about the Factional elements, some mannerisms, and any other aspects of their character that incorporate theme. When the player characters engage that character, show these details through the interaction. If the character becomes tied to the player characters, let the character develop over time. Writing out their whole backstory is a waste when you don't know if the character will stick around.

<< OPPORTUNITIES >>

Opportunities are things the world wants from the player characters. Attach the opportunity to a non-player character with stakes in the Factional dispute. The Referee knows what this non-player character wants, you just need to hook the player characters into it—probably something that targets the opposing views embodied by a different Factional element.

Player characters need to know the following information:

- **What is being asked of them?**

   Use the players' interests to create an opportunity—something the table wants to explore. Attach the opportunity to a fun job or mission: a heist, a hit, a protection detail, a mystery, anything!

- **What do they get out of it?**

   The player characters will always want to know what they get. This could be money, Gear or other goods, increased Standing with a Faction, a favor, or something else, as yet unforeseen.

- **An idea of how they can achieve the opportunity.**

   A good opportunity communicates options for how the player characters can accomplish the job. Don't dictate a detailed plan to the group; give the player characters room to make their own plans and Gather Information about the task. That procedure will make the opportunity harder or easier.

Foreshadow your theme, then have the Factional element approach with the opportunity. The Referee can convey the opportunity any way they see fit. But often times, players will seek Factions in need of help so they can gain Standing.

<< REWARDS / BETTER GEAR >>

The easiest reward to offer the player characters is Verified Funds (VF). With VF, the player characters can purchase upgraded Gear or remove the downside(s) on Gear they own. VF can also count toward Improvements if the player characters hurt 'corp interests in the process.

The Referee can also offer unique or high quality Gear as a reward as well. Player characters gain access to specific, better quality Gear when they increase their Standing with a Faction—whether by purchasing it, receiving it as a gift, or coming to some other arrangement (such as completing a job or task).

Typically, a Faction has access to one or two pieces of Gear that's special to them. But most Factions, especially ones that share the player characters' values, do not have access to a lot of Gear.

If the players come up with an interesting piece of tech or Gear, the Referee can create it. Gear doesn't need a complex set of stats. Primarily, the Referee needs to decide whether the Gear is the same Tier as the player characters. If it's above them, note it next to the piece of Gear (as it may provide a die bonus). The Referee can ask the player to further describe the Gear when it's created: "What about this gun makes it Tier 2?" Or the Referee can establish that themselves: "This a prototype gun called a Sunjet 22x with ammo that bursts in the air when approaching a target." Primarily, a Referee should be concerned with the fictional positioning of this kind of Gear and in what circumstances it could add an additional die to the player character. What does it "do" or in what way is it better than the typical stuff Glitches can get their hands on?

Use the following as a description guide for each Tier of Gear:

- Tier 1: Poor quality—what the player characters have access to when starting
- Tier 2: Commercially available, but low grade—durability and mass production issues
- Tier 3: Very high quality, probably sold as a high-end product by a 'corp
- Tier 4: Specialty, hand-made goods, near perfect quality
- Tier 5: Military grade—cutting-edge, prototype, and restricted to 'corps

Using unique Gear as a reward can be a good way to reinforce themes around community. If your theme focuses on class stratification and food deserts, perhaps a Faction developed a new, fast-growing seed that could help another community. The player characters could take an opportunity to safely escort those goods, receiving a portion of seeds and increased Standing upon delivery.

<< *INCREASING STARTING FUNDS* >>

Consider allowing player characters even more starting VF... Just with a catch:

- They borrowed the money from a 'corp who takes a percentage of their earnings, with exorbitant interest rates, of course. Or perhaps the 'corp thinks they owe more than just VF?
- Maybe they stole the VF from someone. Which 'corp, Faction, or Contact is hunting them down?
- In the process of leaving their past lives to go underground, they liquidated their past life. When they disappeared, someone went looking for them. Who are they?
- Someone they knew has died, leaving them the money. Who were they? Perhaps it was a member of the crew?
- Perhaps they've assumed the identity of someone with the additional VF, deceased or otherwise. Now, someone's looking for that person. Maybe someone who wants to recover the identity, like a cop? Or a killer who thinks they botched the job and are looking to correct their mistake.

Whatever scenario a Referee uses, make sure it entangles the player characters in further trouble. It can be a good way to hit the ground running in the first session or to bring in trouble when there is a suitable lull in the fiction.

<< MAKING ENEMIES >>

Inevitably, the player characters will make enemies. Helping out a Faction will generally mean another Faction's interests are harmed in the process. As the player characters succeed or fail in their endeavors, the Referee should inform them of the changes in their Standing. If their Standing drops with a Faction they have yet to meet, it's a good time to introduce them—perhaps with an opportunity of their own.

<< MOVING FROM DISTRICT TO DISTRICT>

Each District is generally controlled by a megacorporation—most likely a different 'corp from District to District. When player characters move Districts, show how different things are under a new 'corps rule. Corporate law, architecture, local customs, shops, wares, all of it could change, much like traveling from country to country.

Show each District's eccentricities and challenges through your themes and motifs (see constructing a District on page 75). If a 'corp specializing in film controls a District, it'll look and feel different to a District where the market is labor or trade work. And what does an anti-corporate ideology look like in each environment?

Traveling from District to District is risky. The player characters have hacked their neurochips, and each District boundary usually has a neurochip security check. They might need to bribe their way in, or else find a less... *direct* method of gaining entry.

<< FLOW OF PLAY >>

A typical session of *Retropunk* is structured in the following way:

- Play follows the player characters as they interact with the environment
- The Referee presents an opportunity to the player characters, or the player characters find or devise one themselves
- The Referee tells the players what the opportunity requires and what they'll get as a reward
- If acceptable, the player characters attempt to do what is asked of them
- They succeed or fail
- Play returns to player characters interacting with the environment

<< *THE GOLDEN RULE* >>

There are things intentionally not codified in this text. It provides tools to be used by the Referee to deliver the kind of play experience everyone ones at the table. If something cannot be found, the Referee should always apply the Golden Rule: what happens next makes sense for your fiction. Depending on how long you've been playing *Retropunk*, this may require a lengthy discussion or a short one. Starting out it will take longer because you haven't internalized all the rules yet and certain elements of the game just haven't been established yet. The fictional positioning isn't there yet. As you play the game more, and everyone utilizes and internalizes the rules, these discussions will naturally take less time. Eventually, they will not be required at all.

Whether the question is if it makes sense for a player character to be able to do something or if a setting element makes sense. Always ask yourself if this makes sense. Don't be afraid to poll the table and ask what others think.

<< *RESOURCES* >>

Sometimes, looking at images can help players visualize the world and how they want their character to look. Feel free to use this Pinterest board as a resource for calibrating the aesthetic you want in your game of *Retropunk*:
https://www.pinterest.ca/frasersimons/retropunk/

Here are some media touchstones representative of the flow of play, themes, motifs, and general setting inspiration for *Retropunk*:

- *Necrotech/Nanoshock* by K.C. Alexander, for its mission based, cyberpunk action
- *River of Gods* by Ian McDonald, for its futuristic city
- *Data Runner* by Sam A. Patel, for parkour infused action and philosophy
- *Escapology/Virology* by Ren Warom, for its reimagining of hacking and hybrid reality
- Walkaway by Cory Doctorow, for showcasing and extrapolating existing technologies into walkaway movements
- *Autonomous* by Annalee Newitz, for climate tech and an interesting take on piracy
- *Implanted* by Lauren C. Teffeau, for climate awareness and impact, and the closest thing to a neurochip I've come across in fiction
- *Repo Virtual* by Corey J. White, for the world having similar aspects to *Retropunk's* hybrid reality/mixed reality and a cyberpunk heist integrated into the setting.

<< *LEADING BLANK SPACE* >>

The blank spaces in this game are purposeful. Codifying setting details ultimately detracts from the idea that Districts are microworlds capable of housing diverse themes, motifs, ideas, and cyberpunk fiction. The solidification of some high Tier Gear, samples of cultures and crews, factions, or example tables within this core book would create a default assumption and point-of-view from which to work from, which is against the design goals in mind for *Retropunk*.

This core book is designed to be scaffolding.

Should a rules question that is not codified come up in play, it is because it is more interesting to pose that question to the players of the game (including the Referee). This point of view is pivotal to understanding and making use of *Retropunk*. There is enough to spark some creativity in the players. Not so much detailed that it dictates the world to the degree that the players no longer know, through play, that the integral notions about the *Retropunk* world are of their own making.

The hope is that with this game, they can—you can—imagine a unique kind of cyberpunk, one which is customized to your friends and to you, personally.

<<< *ADDITIONAL CONTENT* >>>

The following content was made possible by the *Retropunk* Kickstarter campaign—the idea being that these designers would create something akin to an adventure or module found in other kinds of roleplaying games, only in a smaller format. Armed with the premise of the game and a loose format, they crafted useable, evocative, and diverse content to slot into any game.

Please Note: Lists herein will accommodate randomization with six-sided dice, where applicable.

<<< *B R O K E N   C I T Y* >>>

[B Y   B A N A N A   C H A N]

It's been four weeks since the District of Boulei has been barricaded off from the rest of the city. The people of the District had grown dissatisfied after following the words of a spiritual leader, Insight, whose purpose is to stop the use of a new upgrade pushed onto neurochips. This patch has seen the rise of addiction in an app that boosts dopamine levels temporarily. Insight led their followers to jailbreak their 'chips, breaking them free from being sedated by the corporatocracy.

Since the disruption of implementing the mandatory patch, people have flooded the streets, chanting "Our minds, our future." Chaos between the police and citizens caused the government to enforce a lockdown on the District. Since then, anger on the streets has subsided into a desperate hunger. Rations aren't being sent into the District on time, and the people are trapped within both the physical walls, as well as the firewalls, unable to seek help from the outside. Seeing as you're stuck in Boulei too, you can do one of two things: either establish an underground route in and out of the District or assassinate Insight to appease the 'corps.

To establish an underground route, you'll need to:
1. Reach out to Insight and their followers
2. Find/purchase guard outfits and Glitches, shrouding your ID
3. Disguise yourself as a guard at the walls of Boulei District
4. Meet with The Rum Runner from a neighboring District and negotiate an offer from Insight to bring in supplies
5. Sneak back into Boulei District to find that Insight's group wants to release a virus that will kill all residents of Boulei unless the government opens up the walls
6. Convince the followers to stop and agree to the underground route instead

To assassinate Insight, you'll need to:
1. Make contact with a government agent, Fisher
2. Prove your allegiance to the Megacorp by leaking a new patch of the 'chip that will kill anyone who attempts to remove their 'chip or jailbreak it
3. Get close to Insight and their followers by proving you're on their side by joining their cause and hacking digital billboards
4. Once close to Insight, place malware into Insight's 'chip
5. Let Fisher know, sit back, and get paid. The walls fall back down, the citizens get sedated again. It's a win-win for everyone

Insight

Unknown

Beautiful, charismatic. When they speak, people listen. They have an air of mystery around them, donning flowing clothing and long purple hair. They always have an entourage.

Interactions with PCs

If Insight accepts you, they will grant you access to any location you need to get to in Boulei District. They can also connect you to people who know things that can help you with jobs. Their followers will also shower you in compliments whenever you see them.

The Rum Runner

Specialist - Smuggler

Terrifying and powerful, her face is painted like a skull. Her warehouse carries everything from survival packs to bootleg hardware. She also hosts her own video channel, where she posts video diaries on what she eats in a day.

Interactions with PCs

She can sell you any cyberware you need at a fraction of the cost (she can give you a 20% discount because she's getting her wares at a price lower than distribution - which means she probably stole the cyberware off a truck).

Fisher

Heavy - Government Agent

A shady character in sunglasses and a suit. His face is always obscured in the shadows where you meet, so you're not entirely sure what he looks like. He speaks in a monotonous voice but ends conversations dramatically, like the cliffhanger in a hit TV show.

Interactions with PCs

If you're ever in a scene with Fisher and another character, you may add a die to your pool (they're helping by being intimidating). Once the scene ends, the die goes away.

- A spy is hiding among Insight's followers. Insight wants you to track them down (there's a chance it might be you).
- A vendor has started a pyramid scheme selling Insight-branded merchandise. One of their representatives wants you to join.
- The Rum Runner needs some help scavenging an abandoned building. Bring back whatever you can.

[B Y   D A N A   C A M E R O N]

They say that the original zoos housed a staggering variety of living, breathing animals from all over the world. Nowadays, zoos are mostly memorials to the first widespread victims of unchecked capitalism, with far too few exhibits sheltering real living creatures. Parents point at what's left and say to their children, "Lions looked like this, pandas rolled like that, gibbons screamed just so." They are a reminder to those of us who still care that if we don't fight back. Now us street folx will soon be just one more memory in a cage.

Maybe that's why we're drawn here. Not just those of us who are on the streets fighting the corps tooth and claw, but those who help us, hoping to help save what is left of value on this planet: the technicians, the veterinarians, even the shop workers. Here we get our tech and flesh patched; here we can pick up rumors, here we can trap our prey...

How The Caged contact you:

1. When you pick up your zoo ticket, you suddenly smell an animal's musk and must follow it to its source.
2. A hippo stretches its mouth impossibly wide, revealing a door.
3. In the Night Exhibit building, the bioluminescent worms write their manifesto.
4. You receive an injury at the edge of the District. A rat bites you, transmitting directions to Dr. Kuberon's clinic.
5. After eating an ice cream cone from one of the zoo's kiosks, a lion asks you what you will risk to avoid extinction.
6. When you pick up a stuffed toy at the Zoo Gift Store, you see that it is actually a disposable organics-based handgun, buzzing with hunger.

< N P C S >

Dr. Kuberon
Specialist—Veterinarian

Dr. Kuberon is very tall, hairless, and has long fingers that can split into extra nimble digits when needed. They are always clean and tidy. Obsessively so. They have a noticeable limp, which, for some reason, has not yet been corrected with an implant.

Interactions with PCs

Dr Kuberon is a skilled professional, even if they have a better bedside manner with non-humans. They will treat severe biological injuries and viruses quickly and competently for 150 VF. They also have some skill at installing tech that is organic or integrates primarily with biological functions, which they will do for 250-500 VF depending on the scope of work.

The Caged
Unknown

Most of the resistance at Central Zoo aren't humans... at least as far as you can tell. If you want to get the latest intel, download the hardest firewall, or take on the most dangerous jobs, you go to the animals. You don't know if they are the progenitors of these things or if they are merely output vessels for some hidden faction—you aren't sure you want to find out.

Interactions with PCs

Some of the animals on display can be interacted with by the PCs. These NPCs include both extinct animals and those that seem to be real flesh-and-blood. Different creatures prefer to communicate in different ways: a lick of a raspy tongue, a stroke of soft fur, a screech of primal challenge, a mouthful of bloody flesh.

What The Caged may tell you:

1. A biotech corp has an animal thought to be extinct in their lab. Bring them to the safety of the zoo.
2. Suspicious people have been poking around. Determine if they are friend or foe, and deal with them accordingly.
3. Some of the other animals in the zoo have been glitching. Who is trying to hack their code?
4. One of the docents has access to a corp-developed bio-virus. Start a war by using the virus against that corp's rivals.
5. A data pack containing vital research on how to mine the Marianas Deep Sea Trench is being couriered across town as part of a merger between two megacorps. Destroy it.
6. Someone or something has been wantonly killing the wild rats, stoats, and reptiles who live in the areas that surround the zoo. Stop them and bring them in: dead or alive.

< S T A N D I N G >

When you increase your standing with The Caged to +2, Dr. Kuberon will provide medical carefree of charge, and the Zoo Gift Store will give you a 20% discount. When you reach a standing of +3, you will be able to access a low-level information network throughout several Districts provided through street vermin, such as rats. Additionally, at +3, animals at the zoo will help you dispose of organics, such as bodies, through consumption.

<DR. MARA'S COMMUNE>

[BY EVLYN MOREAU]

Cutter DR. Mara Wrench

Once a prominent pharmacorp bio-engineer, Dr. Mara is now an elderly trans woman street doc who runs a clinic in the sprawl. She and some other trans folx occupied an old apartment building and turned it into a commune—a refuge for transgender street kids. The building includes the clinic, a laboratory, a hydroponic garden, a garage, security systems, and 12 apartments (usually shared by 1d6 people).

Shortcut   Pearl   Ghosty   Spooky

Players can get access to these services in order of trust:

- Hormones (trust+0): the clinic provides low-cost hormones to people in the District. Many exchange services for them.
- Treatments (trust+0) Dr. Mara can heal injuries and treat different illnesses. Locals consult her as their family doctor.
- Cyberware installation (trust+1) the clinic is equipped to install, fix, or tune-up cyberware.
- Laboratory analysis (trust+1) Dr. Mara can do forensic lab work if needed.
- Join the commune (trust +2): you can apply to get a room in an apartment.
- Hideout (trust +2) the commune can hide someone. To do so, they use a mute agender digital persona nicknamed "Spooky," everyone in the District and the adjacent ones know Spooky, what they don't know is different people wear the persona to move around anonymously.
- Nanobots injection (trust +3) before running away from the corps, Dr. Mara worked on a digital nanobot prototype for healing and reconstructing body parts. She is worried about releasing the nanobots in the wild, but she could be willing to inject someone to save their life or aid them in some extreme situation.

< P I L L A R S   O F   T H E   C O M M U N E >

- **Dr. Mara Beyene** (*elderly trans woman*)**:** she takes good care of her own but still holds a secret grudge against her mother pharmacorp. She is very fond of Cecill, but Cecill avoids bonding with her, ashamed of her corporate heritage.
- **Cecill "Ghosty" Cerreta** (*young adult trans woman*)**:** Ghosty had a brilliant future as a talented digital designer but fled her corporate family. She is still unsure about taking hormones and wears a digital persona to transition, she sees digital peeling (peeking under a digital persona) as a personal violation and is good at coding anti-peeling safeguards. She wrote the "Spooky" persona and treats anyone wearing it as her close friend.
- **Bonnie "Shortcut" Winter** (*young adult trans man*)**:** Ex gang member, Shortcut work as a courier and a smuggler (mostly transporting medical drugs and synthetic organs), he knows the adjacent Districts well and knows how to move around avoiding detection. He likes new faces and is usually friendly and welcoming.
- **Sau "Wrench" Helderman** (*mature non-binary*)**:** Sau worked as a rent-a-cop, then as a licensed social worker until, frustrated with the system, they left. Sau is a bit grumpy but is well-liked by the kids. They usually work in the garage, but they are not afraid of using their cyber muscles if necessary.

- **Santina "Cutter" Vanni** (*young adult trans woman*): Former street kid turned sex worker, finally becoming a razor girl bodyguard. A firefight disfigured her during her facial feminization surgery. She now wears a synthetic cyberface that she needs to remove two times a week. She is protective of street kids, and distrusts trigger happy runners. She assists Dr. Mara during cyberware installation, and her cyberhand's precise movements are impressive during the micro electrolysis hair removal sessions she offers.
- **Pearline "Pearl" Denes** (*gender fluid teenager*): Pearl ran away from an adjacent District, takes hormones to maintain an androgynous body, and wears a digital persona that shifts from masculine to feminine, reflecting who they are interacting with at the time. They often hang out with kids from outside the commune and are good at finding rumors. They love creepy urban legends to share with Ghosty. They like pretending that Spooky is a real person and is pretty good at stealth and urban exploration.

What is going on at the commune? (d6)
1. Rumor of flirting between a random NPC and someone from outside the commune.
2. Planned recreational or celebration activities. PCs are invited.
3. A kid from an adjacent District joined the commune and has some juicy rumors to share.
4. A random NPC needs something delivered to a nearby District.
5. Wrench needs help for maintenance or community chores.
6. A random NPC is feeling down or moody.

Local troubles (d6)
1. Something odd was found in the District (a prototype, corpse, drugs, drone, spyware, etc.), and rumors abound; ask the characters what they have heard.
2. Someone seriously wounded is brought to the clinic.
3. A random NPC is worried about a missing trans kid.
4. Petty vandalism or a local gang is trying to expand its territory.
5. The friend of a random NPC has gotten into trouble with someone from an adjacent District.
6. The commune's medical drugs supplier is not responding, or drugs were stolen from the clinic.

Before going up against the 'corps you need to get your neurochip off the company grid. Rumors and whispers circulate as to how to do it. Hardware modifications, infecting yourself with malware, or a drinking a virus cocktail. Some methods seem more likely to get you killed than to get you off the grid. One of the most reliable places is said to be a self-expression shop (SES) called Execute Prerogative. There, people say, they'll hack your chip' with nothing but ink. Low risk, high reward.

According to rumors, to find Execute Prerogative you must:
1. Buy some digital fugazi kicks from a street vender and follow the instructions on the wash tag.
2. Consume a waypoint HUD marker by ingesting some cheap, digital food served by a roving food truck.
3. Find a condemned building tagged with a corporate logo defaced with halo-paint.
4. Go to a riot or protest and look for a Contact that has an animated white rabbit tattoo on their upper shoulder.
5. Purchase a specific kind of bioluminescent temporary tattoo from a vending machine, which then swings open to reveal a door.
6. Walk up a seemingly invisible staircase inside a club named GLAMOUR.

Once you enter Execute Prerogative:
1. Waves crash against walls; a digital sun screams into your skin.
2. There are blistering white walls inside an old barbershop.
3. People sit on red stools below checkered floors in an 80s aesthetic diner.
4. Luminous tubes stemming from a crystal chandelier power tattoo guns.
5. People lay on coarse sand sunning themselves, tattoos rising out from still-wet lotion.
6. There is a wall of coffins inside a pristine morgue; former identities put to rest.

Hoarse

Breaker - Unknown

Hoarse is bare chested and wears a pair of plastic pants with animations playing across the fabric, cycling current news, classic comic book panels, or, sometimes, endless eyes blinking. A horse head replaces their human one. When they speak the mouth of the horse unmoving. The voice is simultaneously raspy and deep.

Interactions with PCs: Provides everyone with a digital tattoo that takes them off the grid. Money is no object. The program is simple: When the person gets the tattoo, they must then perform actions that disconnect themselves from those in the grid still. Doing so facilitates the mind hacking the 'chip it's connected to, decoupling the former identity from the grid. Once the act of severing oneself from their life is complete, the program is done; they're off the grid. They'll also always be given a method of returning to Execute Prerogative, even as it shifts locations.

Mimi

Specialist – Data Runner

Wears a ripped and distressed, fuchsia body suit. Mimi is adorned with a northern cardinal head, rather than a human one. Mimi sounds young, feminine, and is known to be very cautious around new people.

Interactions with PCs: Mimi can upgrade tattoos, enabling data carriage for 150 VF. Running data is an easy way to making inroads, increasing Standing with EP. Mimi makes it known to others that EP's runners are good people; when they earn it.

Standing:

When you increase your Standing with Mimi to +2, they'll link you with the other runners, allowing you to contact and coordinate runs together. If you increase your Standing to +3, your tattoo will be expanded to represent a trusted member of EP, and task you with setting up a new location outside of the current District.

Odd Jobs you can get at the shop:

1. A data runner with an expensive package has gone dark on a run. Mimi needs them found.
2. Find and trace a bee-line around another runner to throw off a possible foot pursuit in progress.
3. A package is to be delivered to an off-grid shop; delivery needs to beat the 'Corp police raid occurring soon.
4. Data jacked from a 'corp is encrypted to a suspicious geolocation.
5. Glitches and intrusions into the hybrid reality of EP need fixing.
6. A local vender at a pop-up market wants protection from a 'corp officer that keeps coming 'round to extort them.

<REAL ART GALLERY EXPERIENCE>
[BY KIRA MAGRANN]

Real Art is a collaborative hybrid reality art show that rotates artists, performances, and exhibitions. Originally started in Tokyo, the idea spread across the globe to multiple cities through open-source art tech collaboration. The core concept of the collab is to create an immersive art experience that inspires participants to rethink the world around them. Famous shows include digitized scenes from the wild, each visitor recreating their identity as half-human, half other creature; historical fiction that teaches hidden histories from oppressed minorities; and horror shows that push the boundaries of what is taboo. Because these shows require anonymity, they've become a neutral meeting ground for people who'd prefer not to be spotted by security algorithms. It's in a huge space, with an attached bar, restaurant, and dance club, all of which are spaces visitors may enter as part of the immersive experience.

In the Gallery, you might see:
1. People pulling on full-body display suits, completely blending in with the hyper-reality installations.
2. A dance party in a 17th century France courtroom.
3. A vast room made to look like an expansive island with people as chimera, gorgons, and unicorns.
4. Ancient Roman gladiator simulator.
5. Giant human insects in a cuddle puddle high on hallucinogens.
6. Korean karaoke and game room.

<NPCS>

Marko, The Curator

A tall masculine person with a bun loose on their head and beard, wearing immaculately hip collared shirts and ties that are weirdly devoid of any hyper-reality augmentation. Kind, helpful, and caring about the local community and artists.

Interactions with PCs:

Marko has extensive connections with a global group of anonymous activist artists. Though their primary role is to oversee Real Art here in the city, their legit status in the art world gives Marko leeway to do illegal things no one would ever imagine them doing. They use their resources to support people truly in need, and the anonymous art activist group known as the Da Vinci Droves.

Sadia, the Regular

Always in disguise, she'll reveal herself with a physical calling card stamped with a digital broken heart. No one knows what she really looks like, though her voice is clear and clever.

Interactions with PCs :

There's always drama going on at Real Art, and Sadia wants to be involved in every single part of it. She's heard every whisper and knows every regular patron, even the ones who think they're making secret deals. She'll trade one bit of gossip for another.

Jobs in Real Art:

1. Someone's gone missing inside Real Art, and Marko suspects they've forgotten an outside reality exists.
2. You're supposed to pick up a package from a unicorn girl, but the packages get swapped, and now you have to trace down the fake unicorn girl who stole your goods.
3. Two assassins have been hired to kill each other here, but they are too evenly matched, and both try to hire you to help kill the other.
4. Marko tells you the Da Vinci Droves want your help hacking all the ads in the city as a show of anti-capitalist art activism.
5. Several bougie folks recently had their identities stolen here and are offering a considerable bounty to find whoever did it.
6. Star crossed lovers from two different gangs secretly meet here but are discovered by a jealous rival. They need your help keeping their secret safe.

<TOO FAST FOR DELIVERIES>
[BY KIRA MAGRANN]

The main modes of transportation have shifted mainly to self-driven mass transit busses and shuttles throughout the city. There are still some who invest in cars though. Primarily electric, these vehicles are more computer than engine, and most have the ability to self-drive or remote drive through Smart Pavement streets. People who need a few extra gigs use an app called SelfPost, which turns their self-driving car into a delivery vehicle to pick up and drop off goods. People sometimes ride in the car while doing other work, and other times program their car to drive the route. While most have good cybersecurity shields set up, occasionally, they get hacked. The Smart Pavement streets notoriously go through "bad" parts of town and use simulated interactive environments to hide the "ugliness" from car users.

While driving on the Smart Pavement fastways, you might see:
1. An immersive underwater experience, complete with extinct whales and sea turtles.
2. Interactive ads that are first-person shooter video games and gain you "points" you can spend with various brands.
3. 3D Sales ads directed to whatever algorithm you've constructed via your digital presence.
4. A "self-care" mode that clears all hyper-reality except ads for self-care products.
5. Real Street "safety mode" which shows you the smart pavement fastway you're on with digital road signs and white road with digital guidelines on it.
6. If you roll down the windows, you'll see glimpses of historical brick, empty, overgrown lots, hear the occasional shouting, music, smell the street food.

<NPCS>
Vickie, Illegal chop shop owner
Neon fashion overalls and color-changing neon hair adorn a tall, muscular Latina woman. She seems like she could easily use that muscle for both wrenches and punching someone's face in.
Interactions with PCs:
She's part mechanic, part hacker. Can add or remove modifications to a burner smart car if needed for a job. Typical mods include spraying temporary smart pavement to trick smart cars, disabling speed regulations, turning off safety codes, stealth mode from traffic violations, and cameras for short bursts.

Dorian, Driver

Incredibly hot soft boy looks, androgynous in styling, with old denim jeans and jacket. Has a digitally overlaid frowning expression regardless of real emotions at the time.

Interactions with PCs :

An expert driver; can drive any vehicle dangerously and deftly for a cut of the job. Notoriously a loner, will never join up permanently with the team. Can offer a ride when needed, a getaway car, a carjacking, a shortcut, an untraceable (well, mostly) stolen car, or some kind of specialty vehicle for a particular job.

Jobs on the Smart Pavement fastways:

1. Hacking a car to steal the package within... while it's driving.
2. Protecting goods from being stolen while inside a delivery car.
3. Stopping a car with a bomb from its terrorist run toward a crowded area.
4. Kidnapping some execs who are the package being delivered.
5. Chasing someone in a car who just stole something from you.
6. Winning the heart of another driver with your cool moves.

< W H A L E F A L L >   [B Y A A R O N BURKETT]

As the traditional nation-states crumbled like the coastline under rising waters, the ultrawealthy embraced an old fantasy to ensure their status and security - seasteading. Now the yacht-enclaves of ALTO MAR aggressively defend their position as the last, true Remnant Society via threats of mass economic destruction, weaponized satellites, and a coalition of PMCS readily deployed. By extension, they disrupt attempts at imitation, hoarding their technologies and developments lest they fall into poorer hands.

But accidents happen and you've identified their elusive ship cemetery - Whale Fall, called "the Zone" by locals. ALTO MAR implements schooling as their first line of defense, the surrounding waters choke on a chaotic mess of plastic garbage and floating ship carcasses, while the heart is dominated by the semi-submersible shipbreaking rig, 100HNDZ, and the Matsya I, an Indian super-dreadnought that left Mumbai to drown.

According to rumors, you need to watch out for:
1. The drones providing aerial security and surveillance identify friend vs. foe via simplistic pattern recognition.
2. Desperate coyotechs slip in and out of the Zone, providing illicit services for the work crews.
3. Ignore the digital palaces around you. The slightest hint of hybrid awareness draws apsara attention (virulent datalife, once used for pleasure and self-gratification).
4. VF doesn't spend out there, so make sure you bring material barter.
5. ALTO MAR requires the suppression of neurochips for all their employees in the Zone. Breakers suffering from digital withdrawal pay for nodes - a neurochip precursor technology susceptible to apsara possession.
6. Don't get in the water without a complete enviroseal; the surrounding waste tide will Mess. You. UP.

< N P C S >

GULL [they/them] Specialist - Watcher (Surveillance Specialist)
Wrapped in a hooded rain poncho with lazy clouds scudding around the fringe, adorned with a haphazard bird's nest for a face. Their low-pitched, husky voice contrasts with the squawks, hoots, and squeals of the Attuned birds crowding every improvised perch.
Interactions with PCs: Self-appointed leader of a squatter network laced through the shipping containers and latticespires, Gull is interested in the necessities of sustaining life out on the water. Food, water, medicine, fertilizers, smart clothes, caulking, whatever. Their kleptoparasitic relationship with 100HNDZ persists through disdain more than anything. However it makes the relationship with Makara tense.

MAKARA [she/her] Heavy - Precise Instrument

An attractive, floating head pokes unsettlingly out of an armored dive suit sheathed in adaptive aquaflage. The edges and bulk continually blur, shift, and diffuse the figure while a low hum from idling power tools fills the space. All the worst because you can't see them.

Interactions with PCs :A promising engineering student turned undersea salvager and erstwhile treasure hunter, Makara looks for a data cache left by her father. One of the masterminds behind the Matsya I, he died in indenture after ALTO MAR bought the super-dreadnaught and all its work contracts. As a 100HNDZ foreman, the coyotechs and squatters are a constant annoyance. She's eager to obtain any data caches, floppies, and hard drives the Glitches can find.

Once you enter Whale Fall:

1. A skyline dominated by broken heavens of the ultrawealthy. Abandoned, decadent, intermingling, copulating, and out of fashion.
2. Peeled, skeletal hulks of super-yachts, ocean liners, and flotels choke the water's surface, tugdrones paint rainbow-hued smears around partially submerged spars from reefed vessels.
3. A snowglobe of industrial brutality cuts through the digital noise. At its heart - 100HNDZ. Enormous pneumatic arms of industrial lattice stuff the shipbreaking bays with bygone luxury.
4. The wake of schools of barracuda drones drawing near the surface on patrol.
5. A nauseating pall of clashing scent hangs over the area - bird shit, industrial acid, bilgewater, hot metal, fuel leaks, salt spray, and cloying hybrid perfumes shift with from their wakes and currents.
6. The open sky is constantly churning with swarms of small security drones and flocks of seagulls.

ODD JOBS IN WHALE FALL:

1. An ALTO MAR Executive is celebrating the Matsya I; there's a bounty on their chip's fingerprint.
2. Someone poached several of Gull's birds, probably to reverse engineer their Attunement. Get them back and destroy all the data.
3. Makara posts a bounty for burnouts, with a bonus if the Glitches remove the infected nodes.
4. Cloud of apsara begs the Glitches for transit out of the Zone, they claim a rakshasa stalks and eats them. They barter with blackmail material instead of VF.
5. Drones sank a coyotech running supplies you need. The goods are still intact but now undersea.
6. The Glitches are hired to work security for a meet between 2 underworld figures hiding behind ALTO MAR's obfuscation.

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