

DEMON

COPS



A mini-
supplement for
Sorcerer

*by Ron
Edwards*

*Illustrated by
Brian Martinez*

DEMON COPS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Mario Bonassin, Dav Harnish, and Elizabeth Miller are my fellow culprits in developing the setting presented in this mini-supplement.

CONTACT THE ARTIST

Demon Cops' artist, Brian Martinez may be reached at bmartinez37@hotmail.com

Demon Cops is copyright Adept Press, 2001

WHAT'S A MINI-SUPPLEMENT?

These are role-playing products for *Sorcerer*, sold from the website. Most offer detailed setting and scenario material, which also means a unique interpretation and application of the rules for demons, sorcery, and Humanity.

The especially cool thing is that all the money goes to the author, not to me. (Of course, this particular supplement has *me* for the author, but it's an exception.) This is indie-punk RPG publishing at its best – if you can write a good *Sorcerer* mini-supplement, why, you can sell it!

INTERESTED IN WRITING ONE?

The one stopping-point is that a mini-supplement must pass my review in order to be included on the site. I'll review any proposal, whether it's a fifty-page tome or a few paragraphs in "pitch" format. But my approval, including any necessary editing or revisions, are absolutely required.

What can be in a mini-supplement? It still follows *Sorcerer* guidelines, that it must be useful for others' role-playing. It can include any or all of the following:

- ☞ setting and background material
- ☞ specific interpretation of humanity
- ☞ specific interpretation of demons and sorcery
- ☞ role-playing scenario (preferably with a relationship map)
- ☞ art! (the more, the better)

☞ fiction – note however that it must be complete – no snippets, color text, or excerpt-style prose are acceptable

Any rules-interpretations or tweakings are welcome, but of course they will remain entirely unofficial and limited to that mini-supplement.

MINI-SUPPLEMENTS SO FAR

Schism by Jared Sorensen. What if "demon" meant your own psychic power? What if its use meant the dissolution of your mind? The only question is, will you die proud or groveling?

Urge by Clinton R. Nixon. Animal totems as demons, animal urges as sources of power. Get down to basics with this one.

Electric Ghosts by Raven. Bits, bytes, and other sorcerous technology – yes, as you've probably suspected, your computer can be possessed. Or it can possess you.

Hellbound by Dav Harnish. Hell's cracked open, and the yuppies are running guided tours! And damned sorcerers on every level are scheming to escape ...

The Sorcerer home page is

www.Sorcerer-rpg.com



LAYOUT

CONTENTS

SORCERER ANIMÉ	4	BEING A DEMON COP	19
The Premise	4	Character creation	19
References	5	Arturo Amadi	
Films	5	Defrocked Doctor and Divorced Dad	22
Comics	6	Riley Morgan	
WELCOME TO DIABLO DEL REY	7	Butt-Kickin' Babe	23
History	7	Philip Crothers	
The City	8	Occult Expert with a Dark Side	24
Peninsula Overview Map	9	RUNNING THINGS	25
Atmospheric Stuff	9	Visuals, animé conventions, and role-playing	26
Districts of the City	9	Um, is this porno?	27
Downtown Del Rey Map	9	Scenario creation	28
Pacifica Map	10	SCENARIO: FAMILY TIES	30
Downtown Obispo Map	11	The back-story	30
HUMANITY, DEMONS, AND SORCERY	12	Characters	32
Humanity	12	Preparing	34
Demons	13	Events during play	35
Sorcerous Rituals	16	How it turns out	37
Demons and the law	17		
Important NPCs	18		

CHAPTER ONE

SORCERER ANIMÉ

A PICTURESQUE HARBOR city ... a brooding nexus of occult forces ... where sea-demons wail on the rocks at midnight and tourists line up to take pictures of the historic lighthouse at noon. It's the prettiest city in the nation, built in little pockets or townships on the Del Rey Peninsula in coastal California. It also happens to house an enormous, slumbering demon inside its central mountain range. This is Diablo Del Rey, at once the scariest and most fun city in the world.

This mini-supplement does not present a realistic setting. It's an urban backdrop with a strong dose of dark magic and demon-stuff, and let's not get hung up on how that relates to national economy or history or anything like that. It's based on Japanese animé film and some similar sources, and the setting is a reasonably interesting excuse for grotesquerie, crime-solving, a little bit of humor and soap opera, and knock-down, drag-out action.

The Demon Cops, about a dozen individuals total, are part of the Diablo Del Rey police department. Some of them use non-sorcerer police partners and some don't. The squad came into existence about 30 years ago to combat the vicious, widespread sacrifice cults that infested the Peninsula, who exploited the darker aspects of the Del Rey Demon's sleeping psyche through sacrificing appropriate "triggers."

Today, the Cops consider themselves overt heirs to the legacy of Kaspar Tweet, the sorcerer who led the fight against the cults; he died about ten years ago. Since the cults are now mainly gone, the Demon Cops' duties have expanded to cover any and all demonic weirdness insofar as it affects the well-being of the people of the city. And there's plenty of it, too.

THE PREMISE

The style of *Sorcerer* presented in this mini-supplement is definitely "light." Few if any player-characters will have paid high and awful prices for their knowledge; few if any player-Bound demons will be horrific and soul-shattering. It's demonic, sure, but cool-and-fun demonic rather than cathartic and disturbing.

However, there is always an undercurrent of Humanity-threat to *Sorcerer*, so, under all the dance-pop combat music and adventurous doings, there may be some emotional substance involved. At least as much as it takes to generate a decent TV episode. So playing a Demon Cop is intended to address the following issues. At the most basic creative level, any or all of them should be personally interesting to you, in order for you to enjoy this material at all.

Demon Cops' main duty is to deal with demonic and sorcerous infractions of city law, so a lot of crime-solving is involved, interspersed, one would imagine, with a fair amount of combat. The city is weird, wild, and complicated, presenting tons of problems and puzzles to face.

As with any popular entertainment involving law-enforcement heroes, the “cop thing” is going to be the source of most of the drama involved. Being a police detective offers all sorts of possible Humanity conflicts, which should not be overdone in *Demon Cops*, yet must certainly be invoked. Justice is a difficult concept, and its nuances are intuitively considered by anyone who reads or views a “cop” story.

- ☪ As a cop, the player-character puts his life on the line for the citizenry at large. How does such a character stay compassionate, faced with constant transgression?
- ☪ He or she is a civil servant with a great deal of authority but very little personal power. When does resentment of the populace overcome the desire to protect?
- ☪ Also, as an expert specialist – a sorcerer – the character has one foot in the world of the criminals he or she hunts. How does one keep one's own demonic tools focused on the “thin blue line”?

So the task of the whole role-playing group is twofold: (1) keepin' the whole thing light enough so the combat and demonics are fun, and (2) paying enough attention to the substantive issues so that everyone involved cares about the developing story.

REFERENCES

Preparing and running *Demon Cops* should incorporate the distinctive animation and visual techniques of the source material.

Films

- ☪ ***Bio-Hunter***. This earlier film is perfect for illustrating Humanity issues and the general premise of expert agents coping with a horrific, occult threat in a modern city.
- ☪ ***Wicked City***. This is the single most important reference for *Demon Cops*. It's perfect for “the city” and the cops' responsibilities, as well as the specific characters and obligations of the heroes.
- ☪ ***Ninja Scroll***. Although the setting is medieval-fantasy rather than modern urban, the especially-nasty demons and the intense, highly personal plot are well in line with good references for this mini-supplement.
- ☪ ***Demon City Shinjuku***. This is not really a central reference; it's mentioned only for its cool demons and combat visuals, as otherwise it's a relatively shallow, incoherent film.

Comics

☙ *Leave it to Chance* (Homage Comics). This wonderful comic is perfect for the atmosphere, as it's a lot lighter and more optimistic than the films listed. Its sense of inspiring fun and adventure, with a blend of humor and scary stuff, is just right. Furthermore, the city Devil's Point is my direct literary reference for Diablo Del Rey.

One should not get too involved in the back-stories, histories, and explanations of the peculiarities of any of the settings. In all of these sources, the specific rationalization for the occult content (e.g. the "DNA virus" in *Bio-Hunter*, "Blackworld" in *Wicked City*) is so much piffle. The point is the result: the urban sensibilities and light cop/agent drama meeting outrageous, mind-blowing demonic visuals.

Animé films have their own visual conventions, including oddly youthful appearances, spikey 80s hair, iconography of specific emotions or reactions differing subtly from western animation. However, the above sources from the middle and late 1990s tend to be more naturalistic, at least in their models for the human characters, than the earlier material. The above references are just about right for the look and feel intended for *Demon Cops*.

Mainly due to budget constraints, animé tends toward expressionism rather than highly-rendered, high depth-of-field naturalism. The framing, iconography, and standards for backgrounds developed quickly in the selective circumstances of the 1980s Japanese film industry into a distinctive style that's now receiving its critical due. Some ideas for how to incorporate this Look & Feel into the process of role-playing are presented in Chapter Five.



CHAPTER TWO

WELCOME TO DIABLO DEL REY

HISTORY

THIS LITTLE peninsula on the California coast always was a strange place, as the Sleeping Demon has, well, slept under its mountains since time immemorial. The Native American tribes who lived there prior to the coming of the Europeans were avoided by all others, and little is known of them now except in half-forgotten legends. When the Spanish built their missions up and down the coast, those tribes were already gone ... and the missionaries poked through villages and camps that looked abandoned only moments ago, puzzled both by the mysterious disappearance and by the worried warnings of their native servants.

The Compact with the Demon remains, however. Father Junipero Serra established contact with the demon and cut a deal, which since then has been adapted to each new culture to inhabit the area. His missions remain as tourist attractions today, although you can bet the secret rooms are closed to the public eye, and even more so the rites that the Demon Cops honor in those rooms, every seven years.

But that's getting ahead of the story. As English and French wars raged over the ownership of the east coast in the 17th century, and as the English colonists carved out their own nation a century later, the west coast remained a hodge-podge of Spanish ownership, Mexican influence, and ongoing immigration from the east. The gold rush struck in the middle 1800s, and very soon afterward, California became American. Sixty years later, a sleepy town far to the south called Hollywood found itself the site of a film-shoot; some decades after that, a revolutionary bridge design made San Francisco one of the seven wonders of the world.

But most of the history in the textbooks left the Del Rey peninsula alone. It was too far north of the bustling southern scene, too far south from the wild San Francisco. Even as late as the 1950s, it remained a sleepy little set of towns, only one of which had a podunk downtown, with buildings dating back to the 1920s. The "historic buildings" so admired by tourists today survived only because no one thought to develop the properties they stood on.

In the 1960s, though, modern life and development began to arrive. The population doubled, then doubled again, and the towns scattered on and around the Pen-

insula became unified. Its old Spanish name was resurrected, and modern buildings and roads began to pop up all around.

About that name ... it means “demon of the king,” or, “the king’s demon,” and no one’s quite sure why. Perhaps there’s a story behind that.

During the birth of the modern city, or as modern as it would ever become anyway, a horrifying secret was revealed. Centuries-old sorcerous rites were in full and active use behind the closed doors of many a Diablo Del Rey home. These rites, perverted from the original Compact, exploited the powerful mind of the Sleeping Demon – manifesting the various unsavory aspects of the unimaginably vast being’s personality. To do such a thing, a sorcerer would feel and carry out corresponding passions, usually upon a sacrificial victim. Bands of individuals who Summoned and Bound demons through these rites – “sacrifice cults” – had permeated the power structure of the community. And one man, Neal Rowland, was slowly unifying them into an unstoppable occult force.

Fortunately, the cults were opposed, exposed, and eventually defeated by the efforts of other sorcerers, headed by the first Demon Cop, Kaspar Tweet. They re-established the terms of the Compact and integrated themselves into the law-enforcement community, sworn to uphold the conditions that keep the Sleeping Demon that way and ensure the possibility of a decent, if perhaps not entirely normal life for everyone else.

THE CITY

Diablo Del Rey refers to the whole Peninsula and is considered to be a single city. However, its component parts, or districts, are extremely distinctive. They include Del Rey, Pacifica, Crescent Cove, Obispo, and Laguna, as well as some smaller areas.

It’s still a small city, about the size range of Portland, Baltimore, San Diego, or Austin, and not very easy to get to, at least not by accident. It’s serviced by one small airport and well away from all Interstate highways. Road access is mainly by a narrow coastal highway and another little two-laner from inland, neither of which is highly travelled except during tourist season.

When looking at the maps, one must recall that this is a seriously topographical area. The Peninsula has a central “spine” of a turning, branching mountain range dominating its geography, running from the mainland through the center of the Peninsula almost to the sea. Flat land is only found around its edge; therefore, looking inland from the shore at any point, one is always facing uphill. The larger area also includes a pair of inland mountain ranges defining the Obispo valley, and the steep mountains and cliff faces defining the coast to the south.

(Yes, yes, I’m using the Monterey Peninsula again, just like I did for a scenario in *The Sorcerer’s Soul*. So what? I grew up there, so I can set role-playing stuff in it all I want to. And in this case, I’m radically changing everything anyway.)

ATMOSPHERIC STUFF

The fog, the fog. Diablo Del Rey is a foggy place, pea-soup quality, the kind of thing you thought was only a special effect in movies using ridiculous amounts of dry ice. It's present every morning of the year and often lasts all day. The creepiness is enhanced by the archaic and ornate lampposts and streetlights.

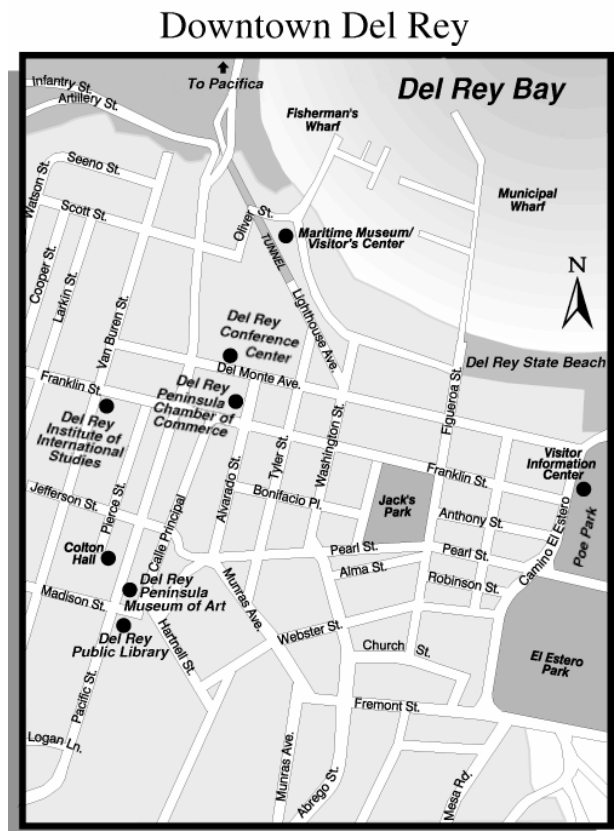
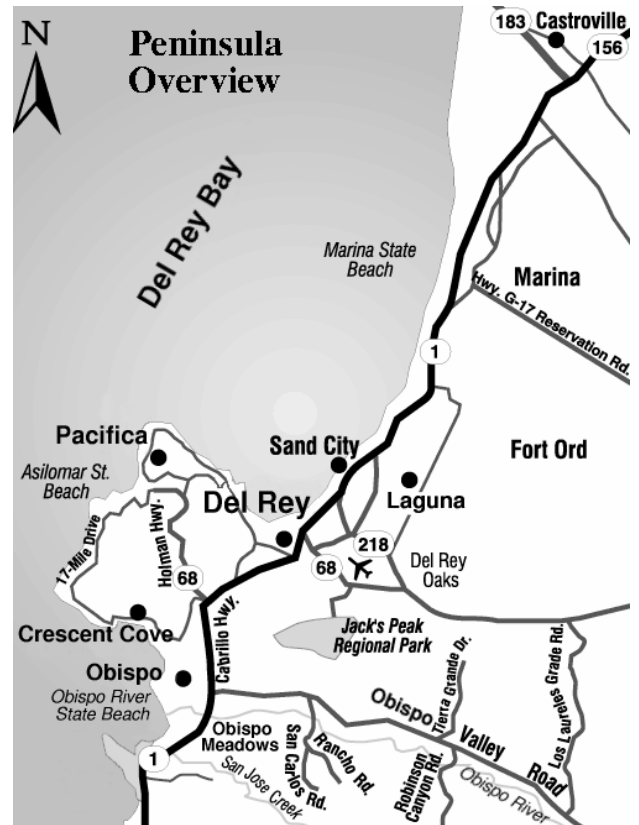
And that's not to mention the various details of living right over a great big demon. There are long-tailed, mildly-draconic-looking bats; and sea-demon babes who roam at night and pick off tourists. The diamond-shaped warning signs on the highways sometimes have silhouettes of deer on them, as one might expect, but sometimes silhouettes of, well, other things. Visitors might be surprised at the elaborate, carefully-observed funeral rites for each and every person who dies in Diablo Del Rey. Locals are evasive about these customs, but they never fail to perform them.

Inhabitants of Diablo Del Rey mostly have Lore o, but they are blasé about occult and demonic events to some extent, not enough to be totally dismissive, but far more so than anyone from anywhere else. "Look, Marcie," says an accountant, sipping his morning coffee and reading *The Diablo Herald*. "The Demon Cops caught that awful impling who was stealing all the high-heeled shoes." Faced with a tentacled monstrosity, they will still run screaming, but their world-view does include such things.

DISTRICTS OF THE CITY

Del Rey proper is the largest and most bustling district, with the most commercial-chain businesses, hotels, a big convention center, noisy wharves, bars, movie theaters, and an active downtown. It includes the relatively flat land curving along the north edge of the Peninsula and the "shoulder" of the connecting mainland, as well as the steep slope up to the top of the ridge. The residential areas are a lot like San Francisco in their myriad of pastel colors, and although there are lots of trees compared to most cities, locals consider it highly developed.

Notable areas include the Golden Dawn College high in the hills, a community college with a real library and some very odd elective courses; Mandrake Towers, a re-



cent and highly-modern convention center downtown; and the Poe district, a quaint woodsy area at the intersection of most of the area's main highways. Oddly, it includes a popular kids' park exactly opposite and in full view of an old cemetery.

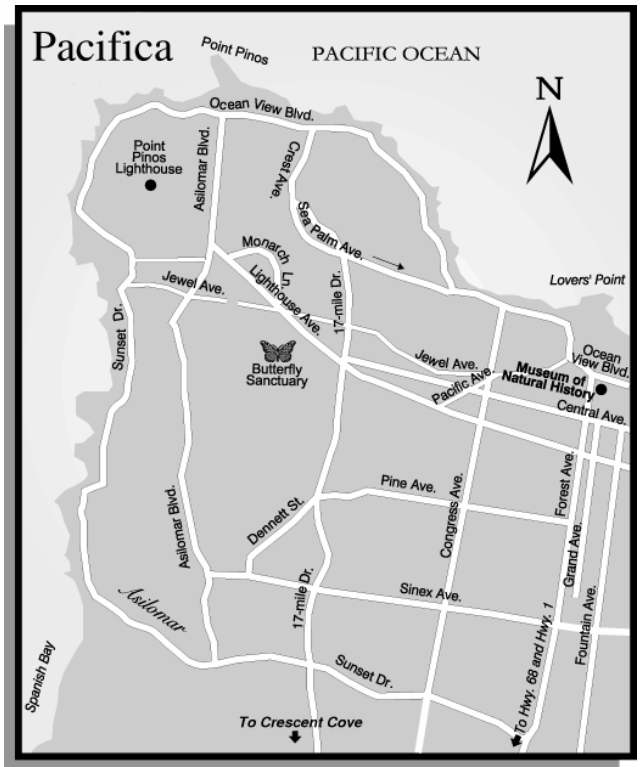
Pacifica is just about the opposite – a quiet, sizeable community with an eye toward not evolving into Del Rey. Its downtown, for instance, consists of a few coffee shops, an art theater, one little strip with a locally-owned department store, and a scattering of restaurants relatively free from national chains, often in converted Victorian houses. Pacifica is notable for the plots and lines of original forests everywhere, such that one can literally traverse the town in several directions without leaving forest trails. A secondary effect is to isolate many of the residential neighborhoods from one another.

Pacifica covers as much territory as Del Rey, but it's remarkably quiet and peaceful; in most residential areas (the bulk of the district), kids can play ball in the streets without much fear of traffic. The coast is undeveloped by law (as in Obispo and Crescent Cove) and consists of several beautiful miles of relatively wild city park. As the northern point of the Peninsula, the rocks defining the Pacifica coast are continually battered in waves and framed in crashing, frothing spray.

Far up the mountainside from the coast, tucked away from any other part of Pacifica in a bend of the highway, is Belladonna Park – a scary, recently-annexed isolated neighborhood built on a steep hill. It has long been its own, weird community, with incredibly spooky houses, deep woods connected with those of Crescent Cove, and no crime whatsoever. It includes many untouched lots, connected by trails known only to children and stray animals.

Crescent Cove is a gated community housing some of the most expensive property in the country. It has no commercial or shopping areas at all, and the police are entirely self-contained. Phenomenally classy: gorgeous, huge properties, ancient and tasteful mansions as well as some newer, smaller homes in the angular 70s style; few if any lawns, most yards are semi-wild; huge stone fences. Mountainous coastal terrain; all roads curve radically to follow the contours and wind among little hills. With the exception of the famous golf course and a few things like polo fields, this district is practically all original forest.

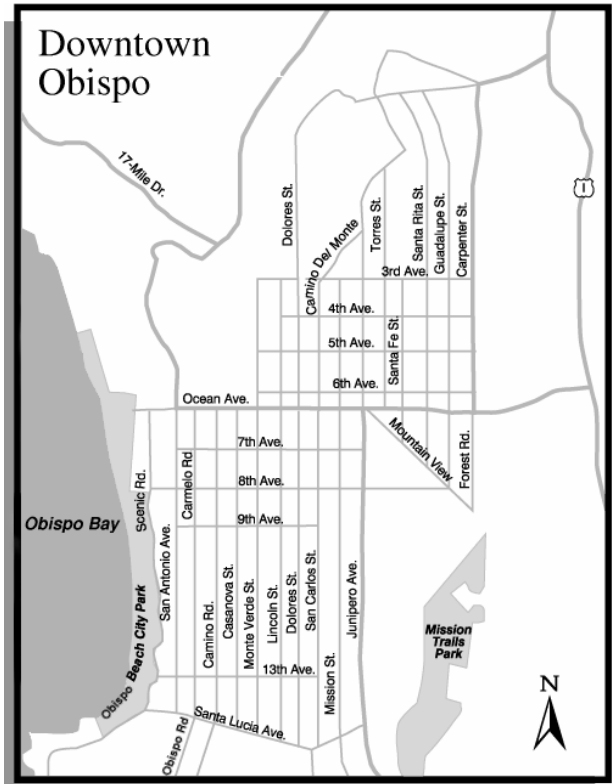
Obispo is the last word in tourist-quaint, full of dilettante artists, wealthy retirees, alienated affluent teenagers, and clever people who sell gourmet food and expensive candles. Lots of shops on the single "strip" which runs up and down the extreme slope of Ocean Avenue. Otherwise the town consists almost entirely of residences, although it does have its community centers, a famous outdoor theater, and many pricey restaurants.



You can't get more quaint and picturesque than Obispo. Built on an extreme slope from the mountain ridge down to the broad beaches, its scenery is its primary resource. It's the home of the annual Sand Castle Contest on its extensive beaches, the most recreational (but still not developed) on the Peninsula. It's famous for every property having at least one pine tree, and many have dozens.

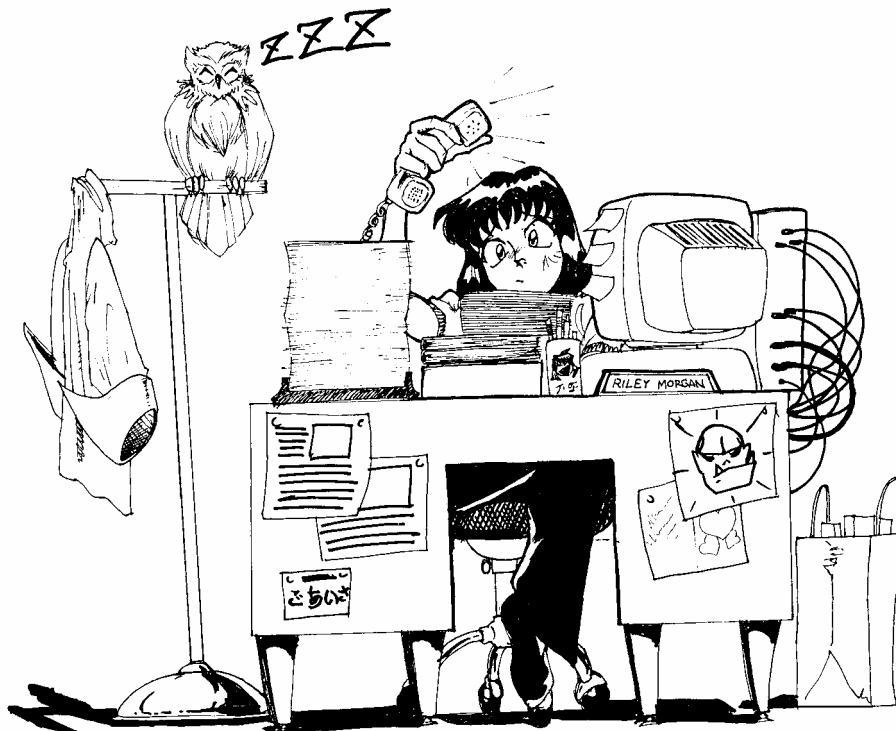
Other notable areas include Obispo Valley stretching into the mainland, and the Obispo Highlands down the coast. Both are rugged and outdoorsy with incongruous-looking "dream homes" built into unexpected places.

Laguna is the poverty-stricken, crime-ridden district to the north that never gets mentioned in the tourist guides. It is inhabited mostly by the honest working poor who travel into the other areas for their service jobs, but it's regarded by other residents of Diablo Del Rey as "over there," not often considered as part of the city at all.



Laguna and the northern part of Del Rey are built on hard-packed sand and have a surprisingly desolate look despite the many trees.

On the beach side of Laguna is Sand City, which is as close to industrial as the Peninsula gets, including glass plants, aircraft repair, and odd little businesses in mysterious-looking warehouses, all set among sand dunes and cracked-pavement lots. Also, completely out of place, is Laguna's one ritzy neighborhood, Del Rey Oaks, set in a shady valley out to the east.



CHAPTER THREE

HUMANITY, DEMONS, AND SORCERY

HUMANITY

AS ALWAYS, defining this term is central to the entire process of playing *Sorcerer*. To a Demon Cop, Humanity is mainly defined as the specific responsibilities of a ranking police officer, in terms of actual service to the legal and occult well-being to the community. The parameters of his or her activity are defined as follows:

- ☞ Jeopardizing the life of a citizen is a very bad thing, and much to some cops' despair, this includes those of individuals who have not yet been proven guilty of a crime. (Being possessed by a Possessor demon, by the way, would qualify nicely as such a threat to a person's life.)
- ☞ Property and the general power structure of the city are also to be protected, second only to individuals' lives and rights.
- ☞ The main responsibility is to investigate crimes that have been committed, as well as practicing as much preventive medicine as possible without violating rights.

Acting outside these parameters constitutes Humanity threats for a Demon Cop. This definition applies only to player-characters; other characters' Humanity refers simply to their personal empathy with others and the basic concept of social cooperation.

For player-characters, Humanity challenges are mainly based on judgment calls regarding crime investigation, identifying citizens from perps, striving to improve the quality of life for the former, striving to provide justice regarding the latter.

If you need examples, check out any typical cop drama, but the fun comes in translating it into the demonic/animé context. All sorts of difficult decisions have to be made on the spot for these characters, and many of them force a Humanity check no matter what decision is made.

- ☞ Preserve life of a hostage at the expense of capturing a crook?
- ☞ Let a perp go in order to nab a bigger one?
- ☞ Permit a plea bargain?
- ☞ Give a punk another chance?

⌘ Bust in without a warrant?

A player-character who hits Humanity 0 simply can't walk that line any more. By definition, he or she must become an NPC, in any number of ways: a rogue cop (for the most obvious choice), a P.I. or security guy, or perhaps making a total career change, all the way to a totally over-the-line criminal. Just what to do with such a character might be a topic of some discussion among GM and players. He could become a villain, or a not-so-bad NPC (just not a Cop), or he could even be redeemed, possibly using the rules from *The Sorcerer's Soul*.

Humanity trading is allowed for some player-characters (halfbreeds; see Chapter Four). The human-to-demon conversion may be applied, but be careful – if a player-character is involved, this process tends to take over storylines.

DEMONS

Demons come in lots of shapes, sizes, and general definitions at Diablo Del Rey, more or less in the following general categories.

The local imminents. These entities are much like little godlings or spirit-beings associated with specific places around the city and landscape; most of them are very old and pre-date human inhabitants of the area. They aren't usually malevolent, although they are all weird and often quite powerful. Sometimes, however, they get obstreperous or irritated and the Demon Cops have to settle them down.

The local imminents have True Names, which give a sorcerer a bonus equal to his or her Lore when engaging in or enforcing a Pact. They are almost always Inconspicuous demons of the "manifest" type; that is, when they are perceived or make themselves noticed, they are very noticeable.

Rielle (*Inconspicuous*)

Stamina 9, Will 10, Lore 9, Power 10

Desire: who knows? Need: to hear others' personal stories

Telltale: gee, could it be her unearthly beauty and diaphanous nightdress?

Mark, Travel (swim), Perceive (target's untapped urges), Link, Ranged, Boost Stamina

Shapeshift, Vitality*, Fast*, Perceive (night vision, acute smell and hearing)**

This being is a sea-nymph, usually found on the rocky shore, staring wistfully out to sea. She Pacts with anyone who will talk to her, conferring upon them the ability to change into their "spirit animal" and "fulfill their dreams," which usually entails the rampage of a were-beast about town.

Rielle is an outright menace, but no one can really bring themselves to rid the town of her (she's so sad!), and she only really gets her hands on tourists anyway. The posted signs on the Pacifica beaches ("Do Not Approach the Sea-Nymph Demon") are of dubious effectiveness, unfortunately.

The Dogs of Belladonna Park (*Passers*)

Stamina 5, Will 6, Lore 5, Power 6

Desire: mayhem, Need: to play

Perceive (intended harm), Travel (to wherever another dog is defending the neighborhood), Vitality, Special Damage (rend), Cover (dog-ness)

Telltale: intelligent, discerning gaze

This is why Belladonna Park is such a nice peaceful community; these dogs roam about and “take care” of anyone who creates or even intends any trouble. They abide by a very ancient Pact which is taken seriously by the residents, who never explain their tolerance of all these local mutts to outsiders.

The sacrifice demons. The darker urges of the Sleeping Demon are perhaps the most dangerous element of the entire city, because they can be called into existence by unscrupulous sorcerers. To do this, a sorcerer must be driven by a passion or invoke that passion among others, and whole demons are shaped simply from the interaction of those human passions with the corresponding, unconscious aspects of the Sleeping Demon’s mind. Extra power is usually added through sacrifices, which are carried out in whatever unsavory fashion reinforcing the passions involved.

Groups dedicated to this disgusting activity are the infamous “sacrifice cults” of Diablo Del Rey, which at one time represented the real power structure of the city. Fortunately they are now rare, most often seen as revivals by newcomer sorcerers, leftover pockets or hiding demons from the old days, and inadvertent invocations.

The demons produced this way may be any Type, but they are very often places and objects that have become imbued with demonic consciousness following prolonged use by a sacrifice cult.

The Shed (*Object*)

Stamina 9, Will 10, Lore 9, Power 10

Desire: Ruin, Need: blood spilled in hatred

Cloak, Psychic Force, Shadow, Hold, Taint, Big, Armor, Protection, Vitality

This utterly horrible demon appears to be one of the many small shacks or sheds scattered around the wooded areas of the Peninsula, either associated with some normal business or sitting by themselves. It is left-over from the sacrifice cults of Rowland, and its Taint ability confers knowledge of the practices of that cult, which provide its Need. It loves small children.

Scurlock (*Possessor*)

Stamina 6, Will 7, Lore 6, Power 7

Desire: Mayhem, Need: camaraderie

Hop, Travel (motorcycle), Spawn (biker babes), Fast, Confuse, Cloak (hides Hop)

Telltale: music in its presence always seems to be about cars, motorcycle, tattoos, drinking, and bad women

Scurlock is a leftover from the 1970s, who occasionally escapes from the Belladonna Park sorcerer who keeps it in a Contain in her garage. It acts as an instigator for several guys to get together, form a biker club, and go about raising hell. As a subtle, Hopping Possessor, it can essentially control a peer-pressure scene such that no one manages to question the change in all their life-styles. Generally, you'll encounter a squad of bikers (middle-class sorts now clad in leathers, on real Harleys), with sinister babes perched behind them, with a rockabilly soundtrack playing somewhere. Scurlock will be in any one of them, Hopping at will, encouraging them to bust up bars, scare more law-abiding drivers, and do doughnuts on any asphalt surface.



The Possessor-Passers. These horrible things are the latest big problem for the Demon Cops. They are exceptionally good and covert Possessors, with Cover and Perception that permit them to know what others expect them to be doing. If they can establish themselves in a host long enough, they become Passers.

This “breed” is almost always high-Power and entirely malevolent. They do not have Hop. They do have True Names, but in an unusual way – part of the process of Possession, for them, requires that they forget their identity as demons. Therefore saying one’s Name in its presence will disrupt the Possession, to some extent, and reveal the demon to anyone who can see it (and unfortunately put the host in grave danger).

Stephanie Blazer, *the perfect(-ly terrifying) secretary (Passer)*

Stamina 6, Will 9, Lore 8, Power 9

Desire: Power, Need: organization

Perceive (what’s expected of her), Cover, Confuse, Protection, Cloak, Psychic Force (fatigue), Warp, Perception (bytes, document details)

Telltale: her hair is literally metallic

She is efficient, trim, pretty, intense, and curt, the perfect 30-year-old professional office assistant. Stephanie is indispensable, her bosses say proudly. Of course, she subverts the office structure to suit herself, manipulating the politics and logistics of the entire organization. Her Cloak ability permits her to wear people out with her Psychic Force and confuse them without them noticing, as well as to show up suddenly a lot. Given time, she can radically shift the entire function of a corporation.

Fringe sorts. Diablo Del Rey is more-or-less crawling with low-Power little entities that come in grotesque and surrealistic form, like pocket imps, guns with eyes, scary-looking replacement body parts, or instant-monster pellets. They are most often Inconspicuous, Object, or Parasite demons, and they afford perfect opportunities for playing secondary cop characters and small-time criminals who don't mind informing on the side.

Schmertz (*Object*)

Stamina 3, Will 4, Lore 3, Power 4

Desire: Competition (with other demons), Need: ooze freely about once in a while

Hold, Warp, Confuse

This demon is basically a pocketful of helpful goop. To use Schmertz, the sorcerer has to toss it at someone, as it moves very slowly on its own.

The Jeebles (*Inconspicuous*)

Stamina 3, Will 4, Lore 3, Power 4

Desire: mayhem, Need: golden oldies music

Spawn, Daze, Psychic Force

This demon manifests as a bunch of hairy little screechers, floating and bobbing around. It's just right for "softening up" a hostile group. You can always tell the Demon Cops who make use of the Jeebles, because they say "What?" a lot.

SORCEROUS RITUALS

Three general sorts of sorcery are available in this setting; each corresponds to a Lore description in character creation (see Chapter 4).

Demon Cop trained. One sort of sorcerer has practiced only in the context of the Demon Cops; his or her sorcery is literally part of the job-training. The activities deal mainly with licensing, dealing with local imminents, and maintaining the Compact. These sorcerers employ a generally legalistic approach to Binding, mainly with Lore, although in a pinch the other scores may be used as well in very crude, non-scholarly ways, such as raw physical dominance (Stamina) or personality-dominance (Will).

Demons are sometimes "licensed" in Diablo Del Rey, usually only those with Power of 3 or less and whose Need is not illegal. Demon Cops are expected only to Bind licensed demons (in fact, the Binding would establish the license), although in practice this is often not the case.

Cop-trained sorcery

Binding requires setting up a License for the demon, which must accord with the following: legal strictures, Cop regulations, and cooperation on a case. The demon becomes a kind of deputy, and should be demonstrably

an actual asset to a specific cop role and effort. Failing to control or consider the consequences of legally-empowering a demon in this way is a serious misuse of Demon Cop status.

Adepts. An adept, on the other hand, learned sorcery before he or she became a Demon Cop, and his or her special skills may have played a big role in landing the position. Adept training is the most varied. It is always strongly linked to a given ideology, such as seeking transcendence, basing all actions on the principle of fair exchange, or conforming with theological obligations.

Adepts may use any score for Binding, although a given adept will probably use a specific one most of the time. Their rituals are strongly tied to the appropriate belief system, usually employing lots of symbols and rituals and invocations.

Adept sorcery

Binding requires a formal, philosophical congruence between demon and sorcerer, such that the demon and sorcerer both consider themselves equal partners in an intellectual endeavor that only secondarily carries physical aspects. Some possibilities for Binding rituals include:

- ☙ *A martial arts form based on Stamina*
- ☙ *A philosophical debate based on Will*
- ☙ *A tea ceremony based on Lore*

Halfbreeds. Human beings with demon in their ancestry may come by their sorcery by being born into its practices. Their understanding and training are embedded in family issues, whatever the details might be, for better or worse. Their rituals are very social and informal-looking, and Binding tends to rely heavily on Will

Halfbreed sorcery

Binding requires setting up friendship and kin-recognition between sorcerer and demon; the two should consider one another to be family, or near enough. It may even require getting several demons together during the ritual in order to figure out the genealogies involved.

DEMONS AND THE LAW

Overall, the Demon Cop's job includes the following:

- ☙ Co-investigate mundane crimes with other police if a demonic twist is suspected or possible.
- ☙ Keep the imminent happy, limit access or interference with them by citizens or tourists.
- ☙ Monitor the nuances or sorcerous potential of architecture, school spirit chants, or anything else that might inadvertently turn into a ritual.
- ☙ Run down dabblers and rogue sorcerers, most of whom are certain to bite off more than they can chew in Diablo Del Rey.

☪ Look out for real evildoers, always watching for a resurgence of the sacrifice cults.

Demons of any sort have no rights under the law. Dealing with them, from start to finish, is handled solely within the Demon Cops. However, there are guidelines for procedure that have arisen out of years of interaction with demons, and in many cases used as precedents. These guidelines, modified case by case, are followed by the Demon Cops almost as if they were law, mainly for practical reasons. Here are some of the outcomes of these guidelines:

☪ Banishing is employed only when a demon has demonstrably flouted Diablo Del Rey law. It is usually an act of desperation, as the ‘Cops know full well that a Banished demon may be re-Summoned some day.

☪ Demonic miscreants are not prone to lying about their acts if they’re caught, so lawyering about who did or didn’t do something isn’t common. However, they often claim a “no blood no foul” position, or a “first offense” plea. These are handled case-by-case.

☪ Harming a Demon Cop is acknowledged by most demons as a bad idea – it results in a city-wide crackdown on unlicensed sorcery that inconveniences them.

☪ Killing a demon – formally Binding it, then executing it – has been known to occur, and it comes under the jurisdiction of the Demon Cops themselves. That’s right: no judge, no jury. However, it is not considered right to carry this out on one’s own, but rather in consultation with the other ‘Cops.

IMPORTANT NPCS

Mayor Vicki Kemp supports the ‘Cops, but insist they be tiptop. She is a brisk woman in her forties. Her use in the game is much like that of Jim Gordon in the Animated Batman series: support from the power structure, a source of inside information, and on occasion the voice of conscience.

Captain Tate, the chief Demon Cop, can only be described as George C. Scott. He’s an aging sorcerer who doesn’t seem to have any demons of his own, but he scares the crap out of all the player-character’s demons. Tate is the GM’s hole card for sorcerous might, as well as a fun channel for abusing them more or less constantly.

Mrs. Karahallios runs a self-help center (in another state, it would be a church group) for both demons and people. She is a good resource for those looking for some Humanity recovery.

CHAPTER FOUR

BEING A DEMON COP

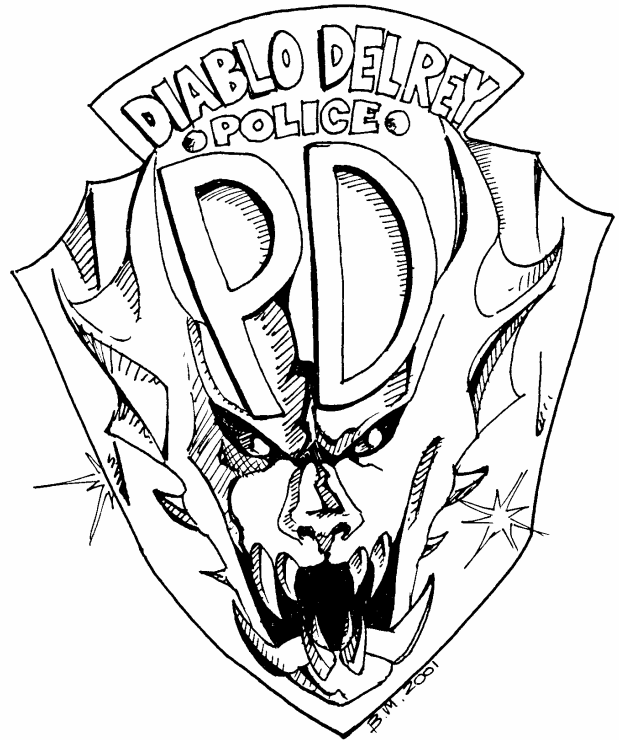
WHAT MAKES a good protagonist for this setting? *Demon Cops* is not based on the wide-open, disturbing, surreal stuff presented in the basic *Sorcerer* rules; it's not concerned as much with the limits of personal transgression. It's a given: your character is a Demon Cop, and he or she wants to do the job (no one is blackmailed into the 'Cops, for instance). The story often concerns crime-solving and soap opera in a distinctive animé style. Therefore, he or she must be spunky, inspiring, and intriguing; the kind of person you want to see expressed as a hero in an animé-action adventure. Scary and perhaps not always true-blue, sure, but still a police detective and still a hero.

CHARACTER CREATION

The scores and descriptions should be considered the literal model for a team of artists to animate the character. They define how the character looks, moves, and does things in the specific vocabulary and imagery of Japanese animation.

The Stamina description provides the basic physical framework for the artist

- ☙ **Buffed.** You have an athletic build, with big muscles and lots of ripples and bulges. Be prepared to lose clothing in fights.
- ☙ **Arcane regimen.** Sorcerous rituals provide you with physical energy and competence. You are definitely not athletic in appearance, perhaps knobby and bony, for instance, or slim and elegant, or very out of shape. (Or, if this description is combined with Buffed, your muscular physique is definitely odd-looking or disproportionate in some way.)
- ☙ **Just plain fit.** You have good metabolism, good genes, and you're probably good-looking too. This description is animated as a "normal guy." This descriptor should not be combined with any of the other Stamina descriptors.
- ☙ **Martial artist.** You are a regular practitioner of fighting arts. You are graceful, have good posture, and move quickly without being hurried.



The Will descriptions are much more focused than the descriptions in *Sorcerer*; they are built specifically to address what sort of *cop* the character is. Each one also includes extensive nuances and should be further customized for each character. In choosing a Will descriptor, give some thought to what sort of voice-acting would be best for the character in an animated film or TV episode.

- ☙ **Hot-shot.** You enthusiastically tackle the trickiest, high-profile cases. Perhaps you're an ego-hound who likes the glory and rep, or maybe you relish the danger. Or you're a cold, ambitious climber. Regardless of nuance, these characters always have trendy haircuts.
- ☙ **By the book.** You rely almost solely on Demon Cops policy and precedent. You could be burned-out and doing the minimum, or you could be dedicated to the 'Cops ideals and traditions, hoping to represent them as well as possible.
- ☙ **Do-gooder.** You have a mission to make the world a better place, both on the job and off it, and it's working. You might be a strident preachy type, a quiet type who never quits, or a community activist.
- ☙ **Quiet pride.** You have a personal philosophy, formal or informal, that provides you with inner strength. It may be expressed in a wide variety of ways: for instance, you may be relaxed and serene, rude and arrogant, quiet and self-effacing, or a well-spoken natural leader.
- ☙ **Angry.** Your strength of personality is mainly derived from resentment, inner hurt, and perceived injustice. Again, this outlook may be expressed in all sorts of ways: a hot temper, a cold hatred, or a sense of mission. You might inform everyone you know of the source of your pain, or it might be known to no one but yourself.

Non-player-characters who are not Demon Cops should be created using the Will descriptions in *Sorcerer* instead.

Lore descriptions follow the basic definitions of sorcery given in Chapter 3. Only these descriptions are permitted for Demon Cop characters, and none of them have any recommended score value. In choosing a Lore descriptor, remember that in animation, the main characters follow a set "model" for their characteristic actions. Therefore, consider the "look and feel" of the character's sorcery, up to and including personal schticks (spiraling flame, a certain phrase, a characteristic passing motion with a sword, etc), to associate with the Lore descriptor.

- ☙ **Demon Cop training.** You learned sorcery as part of your training as a Demon Cop, and your knowledge is concerned with demon accordance with city law. Your only Telltale is the badge.
- ☙ **Adept.** You learned sorcery before becoming a Demon Cop, and your rituals are based on a defined system of thought. Adept characters must have, in addition to the badge, a more typical Telltale referring to their style of sorcery, perhaps a yin-yang tattoo, a Christian cross, or any other mystically-significant symbol. This category includes both Apprentice and Adept as described in *Sorcerer*; i.e., in Demon Cops, you can be a "beginner Adept" with a low Lore score.
- ☙ **Halfbreed.** As part demon, you learned sorcery that trades well on demon inter-relationships and status. In addition to the badge, the halfbreed's Telltale, of

course, is any physical sign of his or her ancestry. (Optional: a halfbreed character may trade in one point of starting Humanity for a one-point increase in any other score, adding the adjective “unnatural” to that score’s description.)

All Demon Cops have a distinctive badge which serves as an obvious Telltale when they wear or flash it.

Cover. All Demon Cops have one Cover score, but it has two parts. The first is always “Demon Cop,” which provides the character with full police powers of arrest and law enforcement, training in forensics and other investigation skills, proper procedure, armed and unarmed combat, some legal background, and the necessary coping skills in a city bureaucracy. Demon Cops are automatically detective-rank policemen and their proper title is “Detective.”

The second Cover term refers to another field of endeavor of any sort, whether it’s a secondary type of police work, a personal sideline, or even a previous career. Obviously, this aspect of the player-characters is intended to vary widely, including but not limited to such diverse things as medical doctor, environmental consultant, self-defense instructor, actor/dancer, college student, banker or CPA, manual laborer, housewife ... Nearly anyone can become a Demon Cop if they are qualified and acceptable to the department, so that leaves a lot of latitude for previous experience and range of activities.

Price. This score may be defined in nearly any way suggested in *Sorcerer*, with the exception that it may not be anything that would disallow a character from being a good cop. So, no sociopaths, no “can’t stand authority,” no “hates the law,” or anything similar. Aside from that, just about anything goes.

Also, halfbreed characters may take any of the following as a Price, although it is certainly not required that they do so.

- ☪ Bad rep with certain demons: family alliances generate prejudices that affect any roll concerning a specific sort of demon.
- ☪ Especially nasty demon feature: the character has some physical trait that is pretty weird even by Diablo Del Rey standards, affecting all social interactions.
- ☪ Actual Need: The character has a Need like a demon’s, although the effect of not getting it is only the usual Price penalty (one die). Of course, the penalty applies to absolutely anything the character tries to do.

Kicker. Kickers in this setting should be built for the short-term, the sort of thing that can be resolved in the context of two or three play sessions. The best bet is an immediate crisis that addresses the basic premise: a sudden change in one’s personal obligations such that they might come into conflict with one’s police role, an unexpected twist in the relationship between Cop and demon, or a link between the character and a series of crimes.

ARTURO AMADI

DEFROCKED DOCTOR AND DIVORCED DAD

Stamina 2 (just fit), Will 5 (by the book), Lore 3 (Demon Cop trained)
Cover 5 (Demon Cop + doctor), Price -1 (slovenly)
Humanity 4; Telltale: talks to “himself” (see below)

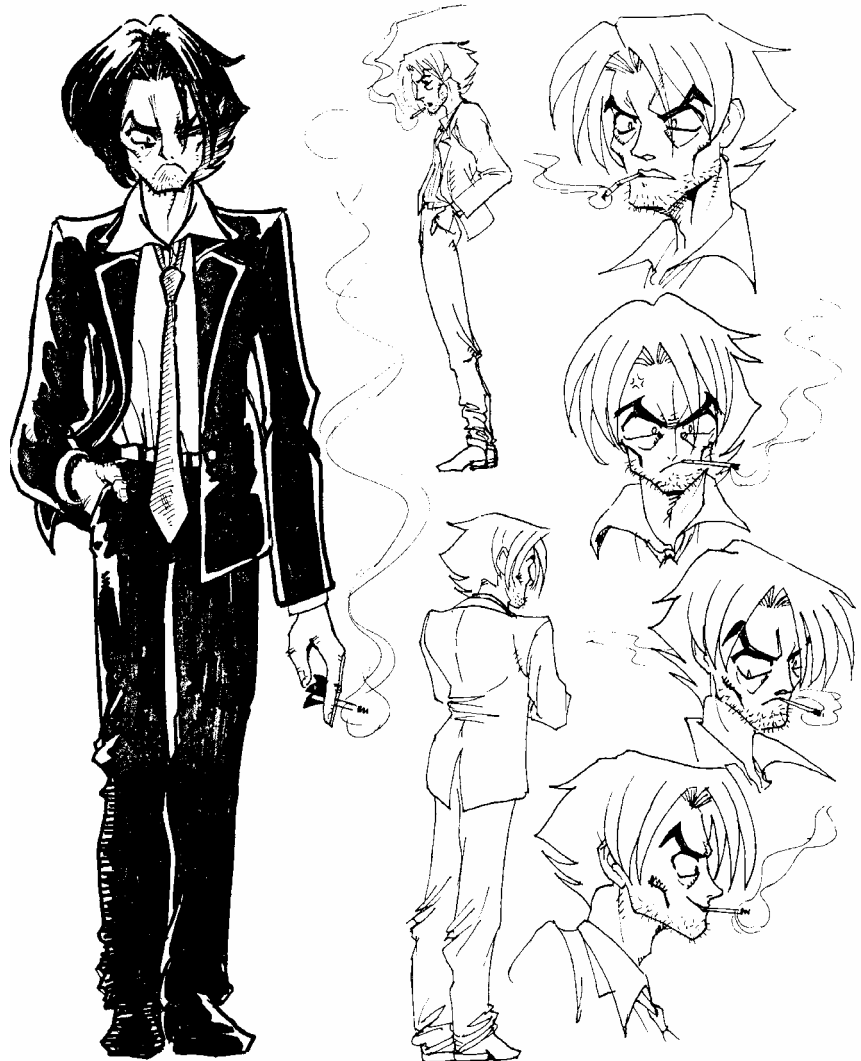
Three years ago, this successful young doctor was diagnosed with terminal cancer. He only survived by Binding a Parasite demon, and rapidly went through a divorce, professional censure, and disgrace due to its effects on his personality. He found a new home and purpose in life in the ‘Cops.

Demon: Iado – Parasite, Telltale: speaks using Arturo’s mouth and voice
Stamina 4, Will 6, Lore 5, Power 6.

Desire: Sensation, Need: healthy body fluids (i.e. not Arturo’s)
Vitality*, Perception (health)*.
Special Damage (lethal)*, Spawn, Daze

[* = ability conferred on sorcerer]

Kicker: Arturo’s fifteen-year-old daughter has left her mother (who hates her ex-husband’s guts) and demanded to move in with him, prompting a custody battle.



RILEY MORGAN BUTT-KICKIN' BABE

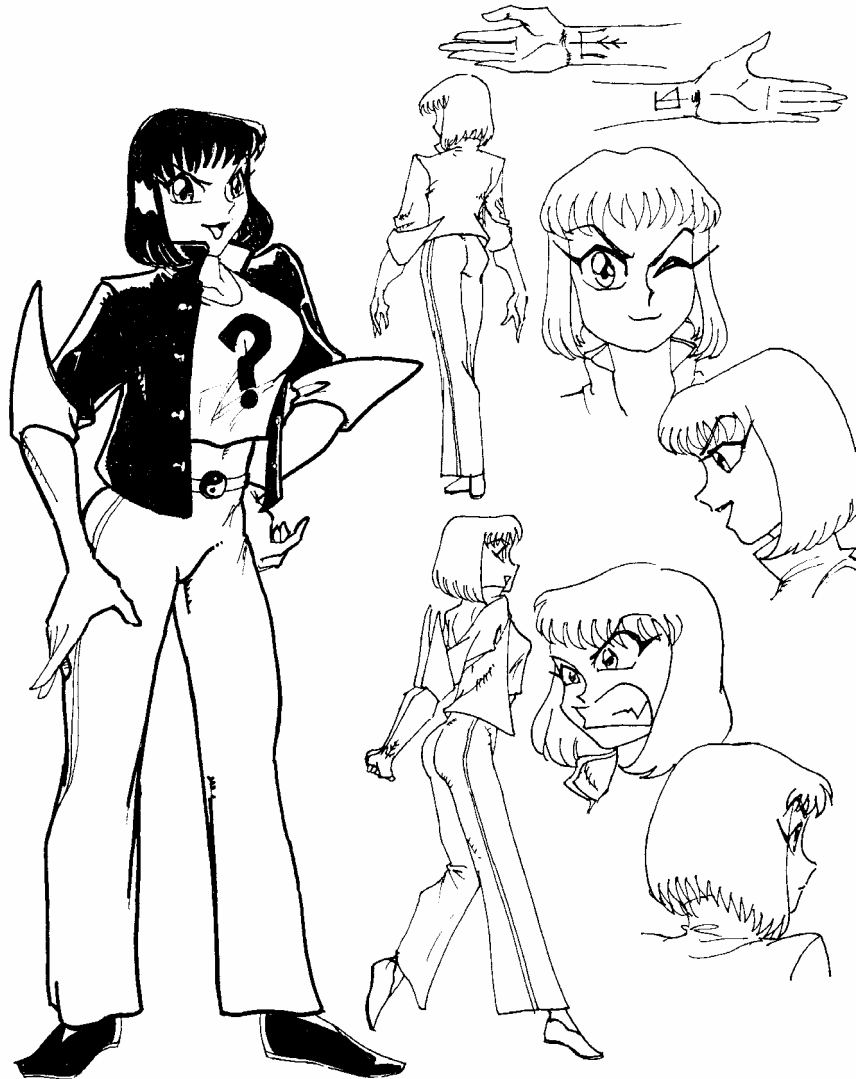
Stamina 4 (martial artist), Will 4 (hotshot), Lore 2 (adept)
Cover 5 (Demon Cop + bartender), Price -1 (socially clumsy)
Humanity 4; Telltale: yin-yang tattoos

The product of sun-baked syncretic California mysticism, Riley found a spiritual mentor and simply did whatever he said to do, thus learning martial-arts-based sorcery. When he flaked out completely, she was stuck in Diablo Del Rey with no job skills and no one to tell her what to do. Fortunately she helped out the 'Cops and was soon picked up by them as a recruit. In comparison to the near-brainwashing of her oh-wow mentor, Demon Cops authority and responsibilities seem like a breeze to her.

Demon: Akuma-te – Passer (owl), Telltale – distinctive red tail-feather
Stamina 4, Will 5, Lore 4, Power 5.

Desire: Mischief, Need: stealing
Link, Special Damage, Cloak, Boost Stamina (all abilities confer to Akuma-te)

Kicker: Riley has just discovered that for the last week or so, Akuma-te has been stealing the prescription drugs of all Diablo Del Rey's elected government officials, nearly all of which are antidepressants of some sort. Politics in the city are due to get very interesting, very soon.



PHILIP CROTHERS

OCCULT EXPERT WITH A DARK SIDE

Stamina 3 (arcane regimen), Will 3 (do-gooder), Lore 4 (halfbreed)
Cover 3 (Demon Cop + consultant), Price -1 (remorse)
Humanity 3; Telltale: small horns, forked tongue

An occult consultant and “demon rights” activist, Philip only moonlighted for the ‘Cops until one day his demonic side unleashed itself, and some people got hurt badly. Since then, he’s worked hard and sincerely to redeem himself and be the best Demon Cop possible.

Demon: Umbriel – Inconspicuous (imp), Telltale – strong brimstone smell
Stamina 3, Will 7, Lore 6, Power 7.

Desire: Mischief, Need: eat small animals
Special Damage (lethal)*, Ranged*, Travel* (Philip sprouts wings), Link, Hint, Confuse

Kicker: Philip’s mother has recently revealed to him the existence of his twin brother, Avery – and recent demonic crimes on the peninsula appear to be linked to such a person ...



CHAPTER FIVE

RUNNING THINGS

THE KEY to *Demon Cops* is pacing, based on some specialized thinking about Bangs in the context of short television shows. The GM is responsible for making sure that information arrives regularly – the effect is a punchy, driving narrative that calls upon the player-characters to act at every step. There’s nothing vague about this style of play; events may be mysterious or their causes may be unknown, yes, but not vague.

Here’s a model that might serve, although it’s by no means obligatory. (Quick note: the word “establish” as used below may refer to joint creation by the whole role-playing group, as well as to the GM presenting material to the players.)

- 1 In the first fifteen minutes of play, establish that a legal crime has been committed. Such a thing works best experientially, as when a player-character stumbles across a body or is called to a crime scene, but it may also merely be a folder that crosses the character’s desk.
- 2 In the next half-hour of play, establish all personal, professional, and sorcerous hooks into the back-story. Emotional conflicts and commitments among all characters should begin to emerge.
- 3 The following half-hour to an hour should place any relevant character into danger, as well as move any ongoing plots or goals into fruition or disaster. In other words, this may be considered the “NPCs strike back” phase. The underlying relationship-based conflicts and back-story is probably emerging into the players’ understanding by this point.
- 4 For the remainder of the game, resolve conflicts, or aspects of conflicts. The GM and players may be quite free with time and space to maneuver anyone practically anywhere for this purpose.

These stages will of course overlap and trade off a bit among one another, so do not feel obliged to stop one and start another like a robot. Also, this model may be used within a single session without “giving away everything” or finishing all aspects of a larger-scale conflict. It helps to think of such a larger-scale conflict being composed of mini-conflicts that may be handled in the above fashion in a single session.

I strongly recommend viewing *Batman: the Animated Series*, especially those episodes written by Paul Dini, to see how all of the elements of a story are established to the viewer within ten minutes of the episode’s running time.

VISUALS, ANIMÉ CONVENTIONS, AND ROLE-PLAYING

Everyone in play should think and speak in terms of cinematic cuts and frames, within the specific context of animation. As mentioned in Chapter One, this style had to make the most of decidedly less-than-Disney budgets, resulting in a highly expressionist style rather than a representational one. I'm talking about the actual structure of action: composition, cuts, focus, and music techniques.

A player announces that the character is leaping and shooting in a classic John Woo action shot. In live-action or Disney-style animation, this is a matter of capturing every motion of body, expression, clothing, and gunfire on the screen, to be enjoyed in every detail, usually through slow-motion.

However, in animé, the action may be expressed far more iconically. The background disappears. The character might hang in the air without moving at all, almost completely non-animated. Behind him, speed lines are flowing, and the only other motion is the repeated flash and crack of his gunshots.

The gunshots, you see, occur in real time (Bang! Bang! Bang!) but the character and the gun itself, visually anyway, aren't moving at all. Oddly, this creates a very powerful impression of leaping and shooting unique to the animé style.

Following this shot, the animation might switch into a naturalistic mode, such as a high-depth image of the immediate area, and the character would land in the foreground, roll, and come to his feet deeper in the visual field.

Watching the reference films and plenty of other animé will give the right idea. Other examples of animé-style descriptions and presentations of action include:

- ☪ For emotional moments, use a close-up on a still, non-animated shot of a character's face, cutting back and forth to a still image of whatever prompted the emotion, with a fuzzy colorful background and a "rocking" effect caused by rotating the camera slightly back and forth.
- ☪ For a climatic physical act, slow down the aftermath of the action: a sword emerging from someone's back, or a person falling after being shot, often with alternating solid white and solid black on the background.
- ☪ A charging character is viewed full-front, running, but without getting closer. Speed lines travel from all four edges of the screen to a vanishing point behind the character.
- ☪ Keep details flat and uniform at medium range, but in closeups, use stunning details.

☙ Whenever demon tissue or parts are involved, they should be pulsing, heaving, and fleshy. Demon gore spurts and spatters like nobody's business.

Music is another big part of the animé style, and GMs should consider either an actual soundtrack or at least describing or referring to background music during play. Regrettably, most animé action sequences are accompanied by the most appalling, corny pop dance mix, although less so in shows and films made after the early 1990s. If you use this stuff, fans of the genre will appreciate the verisimilitude and everyone else will probably run screaming.

So what does all this have to do with actual role-playing? Bringing these conventions of animé into our distinctive medium requires breaking down some long-cherished assumptions of role-playing. Specifically, the group should get away from the idea that the GM always describes the action. Instead, each member of the group should consider himself or herself to be a member of the team of animators.

During the first-ever run of Demon Cops, the players attempted to Contain a particularly nasty demon, acting in concert. The primary player rolled the dice and succeeded, as it turned out. She said to me (the GM), "What does it look like?"

I looked at her for a moment. "You," I said, "are the animator."

The player took a deep breath, and then delivered the most astounding and cool description of the events in question. Green lights swirled at the four compass points around the demon, then it sprouted glowing streamers that wove into a cage; the acting character's face was lit into horrifying shapes; the captured demon wailed and its flesh literally writhed away from the edges of the Contain independently of the motion of its limbs.

*My point? That playing this game is a matter of sharing creativity and authorship. The player's account of the action is what happened – her role in the group was not simply as prompter for the oh-so-great GM's creativity, but as creator in her own right. She delivered the perfect description, **because** it was her character's action, which I by definition could never have done.*

The *Sorcerer* bonus system goes a long way to provide incentive, as players should recall, of course, that delivering such descriptive accounts of the action *before* the roll will result in dice bonuses.

UM, IS THIS PORNO?

Well hell, what you do in the privacy of your own role-playing group is your own business, but here are some of my thoughts about nudity and related issues in this style of animation.

At first glance, animé looks pretty damn pornographic. But when you break it down into three separate components, a lot of it is tamer than it looks.

T & A. Standards for Japanese TV and film differ from those of the States. Basically, boobs and butts may be nakedly displayed for all to see. They are still emotionally-charged images, usually revealed to emphasize a character's vulnerability or comedic circumstances. It's just that in an American cartoon, if a character is hanging by his hands from a high place, and if another character, in falling, seizes the first character's legs and pulls down his pants, he'll be wearing boxer shorts. In an animé show, his rosy li'l butt will be exposed.

The point about T&A in animé is that it has nothing to do with "mature" themes, or even with overt sexuality. Tossing it into *Demon Cops* is highly recommended in order to establish the animé convention.

Adolescent jokes. Some animé includes a lot of potty humor, ranging from a lot of fart and pee talk to unwanted (clothed) erections in public. Sometimes watching this stuff is embarrassing to western audiences – after all, who wants to see [*trademarked cat character's name deleted*] get a boner when a pretty female cat walks by? – but really, this stuff is pretty minor and it's always played for humor. In *Demon Cops*, such things are probably out of keeping with the source material, but individual role-playing groups are free to do as they will.

Flat-out hard-core porn. There is a whole sub-style of animé, exemplified by the notorious *Legend of the Overfiend*, which will drop the jaw of any western viewer. It is truly crude, combining demons, triple-X, and excesses of rape and bondage. This isn't at all what I had in mind in terms of *Demon Cops*, and if you put it into your own game, that's fine, but don't blame me for it. My only point is that this style is a category unto itself, and a game based on animé doesn't *have* to employ its conventions, no matter what someone in your group (probably one of the sweaty, twitchy ones) might say.

SCENARIO CREATION

Plots and stories in this setting are definitely based on cop, community service issues, based on conflicts of interest, personal lives, and the virtues and limits of the police officer, at least in media-land. However, most of this is handled via the Kickers.

The shared situation of the role-playing adventure, or the back-story, is different. The GM should combine the following elements to present a real hassle for the Cop characters.

- ☙ Appropriate crimes: that is, crimes in terms of the actual law.
- ☙ The Crime: by this, I mean a moral failing – an act or acts that harm and diminish others to the advantage of the culprit, but that may not be against the law at all.
- ☙ Demonizing things: it's Diablo Del Rey, after all!

⌘ Personalizing things: always take a few days to consider the Kickers and see how they are linked to, or point to, or at least cross the path of the elements of the back-story.

Finally, unlike the darker applications of *Sorcerer*, *Demon Cops* is predicated on the possibility of positive outcomes. Love and innocence can prevail in this setting; and their validity is always reinforced even if they fail. Of course, if such idealism doesn't suit you and your group personally, that's fine, but in the source material, such things are held up as the highest, best, and most importantly *possible* outcomes.



CHAPTER SIX

SCENARIO: FAMILY TIES

THIS SCENARIO is superficially based on the president of a construction company using demons to drive a competitor out of business. However, at its heart, it is based on the determination of two sisters to regain their sense of self-worth through ruthless material acquisition, up to and including murder. The relationship map underlying the scenario is based in part on Sara Paretsky's novel *Deadlock*.

Construction in Diablo Del Rey is a big deal. Property is expensive, and every inch of the peninsula is carefully zoned for development and use. Many buildings and neighborhoods are protected from further building by complex historical designations. Still, given the high income levels of much of the population and the ever-present need to renovate and revise one's living space in comparison to one's neighbors, it's a lucrative thing to do. The overhead is enormous, and the risks high – but so are the profits if only for some.

The construction business works on the bid basis – the client describes the job to be done, and the various companies in the area bid to see who can guarantee its completion with the optimal combination of time and cost. Since the community is relatively small, bids for construction and development are fierce and individual reputations for quality and sticking to one's bid are highly valued. The contract wheeling and dealing, the alliances and backbiting, and the general politics of the situation approach Borgian levels of intensity.

THE BACK-STORY

The top construction company on the Peninsula – or the biggest, anyway – is Bella Vista Construction, owned by a piratical, charming man named Tom Sutton. It was begun by his father and he's built it into the giant it is today. Of course, that's not much to look at, being a single-building office with a tacky façade, a parking lot full of large, dusty machines, and a couple of full-time employees, located at the boundary of Del Rey and Laguna. But millions of dollars move from account to account, and a look at Tom's residence in Crescent Cove and the extent of his wife's charity work shows it.

Some years ago, a young man named Andy Alvarez worked for Bella Vista, starting as an intern and working his way up to foreman and eventually contractor. This was during the last year of the founding Sutton and the first years of Tom's stepping into command. Andy had a shadowy past, including a brush with the law as a

teenager as well as the stigma of being a demon halfbreed, and Tom lost no opportunity to tell him what a chance he was being given.

Now, twenty years later, Andy has struck out on his own and revived a construction company that was on its last legs. Few people know where he got the crucial bank loan that allowed him to do this, but it was due to Tom's reference. Andy, in return, swore himself to silence regarding some of Tom's shadier practices.

Much to Tom's distress, Hayward is frankly a better company. Andy did not make Tom's mistake of buying large, expensive equipment, nor does he practice Tom's common trick of under-bidding the competition but then raising the costs during the actual job. Recent legal redefinitions of property zoning on the peninsula are hitting Tom hard, and doing Andy fairly well. No one really realizes this except for the construction moguls themselves, but Bella Vista – which everyone *says* is the biggest and most successful company – is hitting the skids.

Here's the other half of the picture. About twenty-five years ago, a wealthy rancher in Obispo Valley lost every dime in an ill-considered development deal. His two daughters, Caitlin and Heather, experienced a sudden downturn in their previously privileged, horses-and-prep-school existence, and neither forgave the world for it. The two sisters only trust and confide in one another, considering everyone else to be an enemy. They only value status, wealth, privilege, and power. Caitlin, now a moderately successful singer who uses "DeFors" as her professional name, is Tom's lover, and Heather is the wife of a man named Brian Wych, who runs the main office in Pacifica for Ocean Grove Real Estate.

Given the pressure from and the alliance between their romantic partners, Sutton and Wych have arrived at a deal. Wych doctors the bids from various clients such that Bella Vista gets them even if under-bid. Tom kicks back some of the profits involved, which is possible because the original costs are being altered at the Ocean Grove office as well. This scheme is proving very effective for both of them, or more accurately, for Heather Wych and Caitlin DeFors. The Wyches have recently been accepted into a most exclusive community organization (Tom's wife Patricia sponsored them, as a favor to Tom), and Caitlin is living in one of the best condominiums in Pacifica.

None of this would be possible without demonic help. The Koney sisters achieved quite a lot without it, including Caitlin's career as a singer (although not national celebrity, she's well-known in the state) and Heather's marriage to a reasonably affluent man. However, that wasn't enough. They were still not counted among the hoity-toity social aristocracy of Diablo Del Rey, and for this, extreme measures were called for. See below for the explanation of the demons' role.

The last step in the back-story concerns the death of a fellow who wandered into this situation and started making waves. Braxton Holmes was a tennis pro who'd retired early about two years ago due to an injury. He went into real estate, did well in his studies and job-hunting, and began his new career as second-in-command at the Pacifica branch of Ocean Grove Real Estate. Certain incongruities about the business began to bother him, and despite warnings from Brian Wych, he started to investigate them. He found not only evidence of the financial tam-

pering, but also that Bella Vista construction sites were being sabotaged ... and that the orders originated from Tom himself. This latter twist represents Tom's desperation as Bella Vista slides further into debt, as he is collecting enough insurance to cover costs, for now.

As a semi-famous, handsome, local personage, Braxton did not think it odd that the similarly-positioned Caitlin DeFors would take a fancy to him, and they began a relationship that, to him, seemed like a dream come true. Until she pressured him to lay off Ocean Grove's business practices, and he refused. Enough was enough: Caitlin and Heather decided, Tom was told by Caitlin, Brian was told by Tom, and Stephanie cornered Braxton at night near a Bella Vista construction site and beat him to death with an iron bar, then tossed the body to where it might have fallen from a platform.

CHARACTERS

Cross-reference the following descriptions of the characters with their positions on the relationship map.

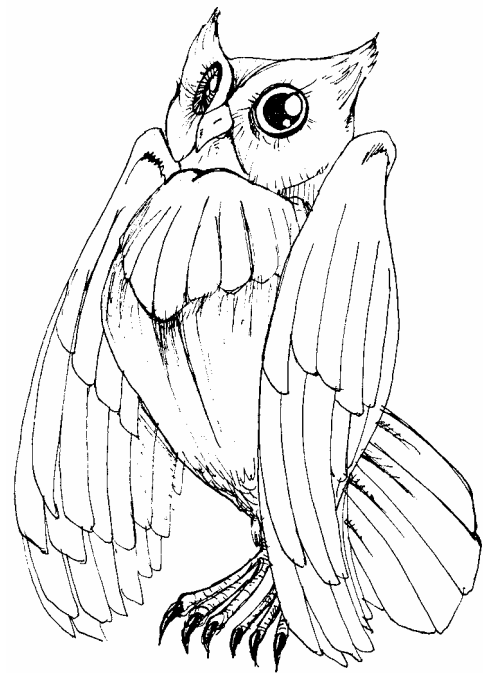
- ☪ Tom Sutton. 57, a jovial good ol' boy, with iron-grey hair and hard eyes. Tom is the owner of Bella Vista Construction. He is driven by his ego and by the demands of his mistress into "removing" threats to his profits in any way possible.
- ☪ Patricia Sutton. 54, aging gracefully, embodying her given name ("patrician") in every way. She is emotionally disconnected from her husband Tom and knows very little of his extra-legal activities; she is far more concerned with her charity work. She is independently wealthy and does not rely on his income for her lifestyle.
- ☪ Andy Alvarez. 40, a burly Mexican-American guy, the owner of Hayward Construction. Andy is liked and respected by his clients and employees, but he is prickly and growly toward authorities, due to his ancestry (he's a demon half-breed) and his troubled past.
- ☪ Brian Wych. 36, a wooden middle-manager type, imperturbable and stubborn. Brian lives in a world of denial, with all the trappings of middle-class success and no real happiness.
- ☪ Heather Wych. 37, an uptight social climber, dark blonde, with a slightly desperate manner and vague eyes. Her maiden name is Koney.
- ☪ Paige Wych. 16, a reasonably bland teenager, left as a wild card in this scenario (see below).
- ☪ Caitlin DeFors. 33, an ash-blonde, talented singer and actress, locally famous, and empty of all human warmth, although skilled at making others think that she cares about them deeply. "DeFors" is a professional name; her real last name is Koney.
- ☪ Braxton Holmes. 29, a retired tennis athlete, cheerful and hard-working. A popular contender, Braxton retired from the sports world after a serious ankle injury. He erred only insofar as he brought honesty to his job at Ocean Grove and com-

mitment to his relationship with Caitlin. This error was permanent, as he was killed.

- ☞ Lyle Rasmussen. 34, a lanky, slightly disorganized fellow, perhaps under-qualified for his job as security guard at Braxton's condominium.

All of the above characters may be considered to have Stamina 3, Will 5, and Cover 6, with descriptors appropriate to their personal takes on life. The GM should award a two-dice bonus for actions that are protecting the character's interests and alliances.

Both demons are Passer/Possessors as described in Chapter Three. They are both Bound to Tom Sutton, although they were Summoned by the Koney sisters.



- ☞ "Tom Jr." is the demon who's replaced Tom and Pat's son, who was killed in a boating accident over a year ago. However, no one knows of this except for Tom, Caitlin, and Heather (although Tom is unaware of Heather's involvement). So far, he (the demon) has done a fine job of replacing the young man, although his decisions about his life would seem remarkably in line with his father's expectations, if anyone were to consider the matter. He has Stamina 8, Will 9, Lore 8, and Power 10, with Armor, Vitality, Travel (running), Cover, Perception (others' expectations), Big, Special Damage (lethal; acid bite and spit), Ranged.

- ☞ "Stephanie Blazer" is exactly as described Chapter Three. She works at Ocean Grove, for all anyone can see simply a rather controlling secretary upon whom everyone relies. Of course, the entire place is under her thumb, and Brian Wych lives in complete terror of her.

These demons rely on denying their true nature. They certainly use their abilities, whether for defense or in obedience to commands, but doing so openly upsets and confuses them; they will usually rationalize such unusual events away after the fact, if possible. Too much of this, however, may prompt rebellion against their Binding. Their "expectations" Perception is especially vulnerable, because if it shows them that the person involved *knows* they're demons, it sets up a self-image contradiction that they can't endure to face.

Stephanie has already experienced such a contradiction, when Tom ordered her to kill Braxton. As a result, her Binding strength stands at an even zero (no bonuses for either sorcerer or demon), whereas Tom Jr.'s stands at its original score of 5, in Tom's favor.

The Binding itself bears some considering. These demons are Bound specifically to maintain the integrity of the two sisters' life-styles, which in turn depend on the continued dominance of Bella Vista Construction on the Peninsula. However, the weak points in this goal are extremely fragile, especially (1) the continued blind eye that Patricia turns toward Tom and Caitlin's relationship, and (2) the increas-

ing emotional distance between Heather and Brian, who is unlikely to rise higher in the world.

PREPARING

Getting this or a similar *Sorcerer* scenario into play requires involving the player-characters with the relationship map in some way. Fortunately, each character is equipped with a personal Kicker, so he or she is already in motion. It's all a matter of that motion having a high chance to expose some corner of the unstable relationships on the map.

The Kickers of the example player-characters in Chapter Five, for instance, might be applied as follows:

- ☙ Arturo – his daughter makes friends with Paige at school; depending on the GM's intended use of this character (see below), she could be a good or bad influence. Or at least, some puzzling information could be brought to the Cop's attention about some demonic ritual items at the Wych residence.
- ☙ Riley – the city government demonstrates increasingly erratic behavior due to the sudden lack of antidepressants, such that they cannot effectively deal with a bill that affects construction and development practices. If Riley manages to return the medication, she can discover that some legal loopholes are permitting Bella Vista, in particular, to get around some serious injunctions.
- ☙ Philip – add Avery, his brother, to the list of demons under Tom's control. Also, the crime scene that includes a clue to Avery's existence is Braxton's murder, so of course Philip should be the Cop on the scene.

Of course, it would be silly to link all of these Kickers so deeply into the storyline, which tends to get contrived. Two would be plenty, and the close professional relationship between all Demon Cops can take care of the rest. The other characters' Kickers can be used as unrelated subplots to punctuate and counterpoint the main conflicts at hand.

Also, those were just examples. If you're going to be using this scenario yourself, your tweakings or hook-ups of the player-characters' Kickers may be entirely original. They should, however, address at least one of the following issues:

- ☙ A personal relationship with Braxton (he was a pretty good guy)
- ☙ The origin of the two demons, which could well be related to the specific's of a player-character's Lore
- ☙ Some relationship with Paige, for better or worse
- ☙ An acquaintanceship with Tom Jr., and therefore some knowledge of his slight change in behavior over the last year
- ☙ Any contact, legal or personal, with construction and development issues on the Peninsula

EVENTS DURING PLAY

The GM may consider the following sequence of events to be how the various individuals of the piece will interact unless otherwise influenced by player-characters or events caused by player-characters. It begins, of course, with Stephanie killing Brandon. When Lyle investigates the murder in a fumbling, amateurish way, he is killed as well, this time by Tom Jr. All would be well at this point, if nothing were to happen. The threat to the collusion between Ocean Grove and Bella Vista would be neutralized, and Brandon's killing might be written off as an accident, as his injuries are consistent with a fall, or perhaps a mugging gone sour.

Any stress on the situation, however, will lead to tension between Tom and Brian, especially since the latter does not approve of Tom's insurance scam, rightly thinking that it is too risky. Eventually, Tom will command his demons to kill his ally. He will also step up the sabotages on his own sites, laying as much forensic blame as possible on Andy Alvarez. Again, the two demons are his main agents in this regard.

Places that might be visited during the course of the storyline include the following:

- ☪ The Bella Vista construction site where Braxton's body is found. This site includes some minor sabotage of concrete mixes.
- ☪ Two other Bella Vista construction sites, which may be the staging grounds for further, escalating disasters (always a fine place for a player-character to be while investigating)
- ☪ A Hayward construction site, which offers a good contrast between the business practices of the two companies.
- ☪ The Sutton home in Crescent Cove, a good example of the classy dream homes built in some of the most picturesque real estate in the United States.
- ☪ The Bella Vista office in Del Rey, as described above. Any attention to the business going on there will reveal that they are having a hard time getting bids for work.
- ☪ The Ocean Grove office in downtown Pacifica. A converted Victorian home, like many of the "office" buildings in the area.
- ☪ The Hayward office, located in a small industrial strip on the other side of Pacifica. Bids are arriving fast and furiously here, and the equipment is notably smaller and in better repair than that found at Bella Vista.
- ☪ The Wych home in the better part of Del Rey. This might be a nice home if it weren't for the glossy, neurotic perfection of every last detail. One gets the idea that the birds cheep according to a score Heather provides for them every day.

As mentioned above, the events of play of actual play are not wholly constrained. The GM should reassess the situation before each session and deciding which NPCs are about to crack or to lash out. A useful concept is "reactive branching" for each NPC, so that he or she ends up in one of several fates, depending on what the player-characters have done.

- ☪ Lyle is basically a potential victim. He wants to be the heroic fellow who figures out Braxton's death, ends up being a target. Fates: dead or not dead.
- ☪ Alvarez generally reacts badly to law-enforcement officials, and like all members of the construction-mogul community, he's close-mouthed about their practices. Fates: framed for sabotage, possibly losing his business; or becoming an excellent friend and source of information.
- ☪ The staff at Ocean Grove are pretty blasé and obstructive, and if pressed, Brian will get some of his political allies onto the player-characters' backs via the police department.
- ☪ Sutton is expansive and helpful-seeming, but his lawyer or accountant is decamping, frightened by the turn business has taken.
- ☪ Caitlin can go all kinds of ways: she might become a best friend to a player-character or even a romantic interest, or she might be driven to mark characters for death by demon.
- ☪ Paige is the wild card of the scenario. She may be played as one of the innocents who suffers due to the greed of others, like Andy, or she may be a little carbon-copy of Heather, the perfect symbol of status-snobbery and courteous sociopathy. She may also be a fine potential host for one of the Possessor demons who loses his or her identity through stress.

All events should be driven by PC action and NPC reactions. The following list shows the grossest "instabilities" through the cast of characters, any and all of which will fracture under stress – that is, whenever anyone interacts with the people involved and asks any questions about the current events.

- ☪ Pat and Tom are unstable. They don't like one another much, their marriage is essentially a sham, and each regards the other as something of a threat to his or her self-image.
- ☪ Brian and Tom are unstable. Quite rightly, neither trusts the other and is always wary for a betrayal. As stated above, this conflict may well end in Brian's murder.
- ☪ Brian and Heather are unstable. Their marriage is failing to provide Heather with the social status she craves, and she never regarded Brian as much more than a means to an end anyway. Brian, for his part, is realizing that Heather will never reciprocate his financial efforts with anything resembling respect.
- ☪ The demons are unstable in their special ways, as described above, especially once Tom begins to order them into direct action such as sabotage and murder.
- ☪ Andy is surprisingly stable, and if the player-characters do not alienate him, he's a good source of information.
- ☪ Heather and Caitlin are stable regarding one another; each considers the other the only "real person" in the world.

The key relationship-map information is of course the fact that Caitlin and Heather are sisters. The GM should permit this insight to come in its own time. No overt demonstration is necessary, especially early in the story. No one who knows about it sees fit to mention it without being prompted, and no one is trying to conceal it either. Any number of events may provide evidence of a link between

the two: Heather may attend one of Caitlin's recitals, Caitlin may be having tea at the Wych residence, or if anything grim happens to Brian or Tom, one sister may be consoling the other. If a player-character asks about any link between the two characters, anyone in the know responds, "Of course they're sisters, didn't you know?"

HOW IT TURNS OUT

The outcome depends on all sorts of things, and the precise climactic scene may vary among all sorts of confrontations. It may be, for instance, that the two demons are dealt with fairly early, or it may be that a violent showdown with them is necessary as the final act. Or Tom, for instance, may have his crimes exposed early, leading Brian to mastermind the situation; alternately, Brian's corpse may be added to the list as Tom desperately attempts to cover up his latest endeavors. Perhaps the last scene is revealing the truth to Patricia – or perhaps it's vindicating Alvarez from the accusations of sabotage.

If all this seems too vague to you, consider that the scenario is composed only of the following three things:

- ☙ the Moral Crime, which is that the two sisters are willing to make anyone suffer to preserve their upper-middle-class pretensions
- ☙ the legal crimes, committed mainly by Tom and Brian, including contract fraud, insurance fraud, and then murder
- ☙ the demon issues, in that these two demons represent a danger to the citizenry of Diablo Del Rey by their very existence

So any and all actions which lead to resolutions of these three things, no matter what they are or in what order, are perfectly fine. If the Kickers hook the players into action, and if the relationship map begins to be revealed, all ought to move toward such resolutions. And most importantly, the GM must be flexible and responsive to the players in determining which of these three components (and what exact part of that one of them) is the basis for the final, most emotionally charged confrontation in the story.

In playing this loose, many GMs will wonder who is the "villain" in the sense of the person to fight or arrest at the climax? It depends on which NPCs have turned out to have the most dramatic role in the players' minds, and which ones have, in the GM's estimation, the most extreme reaction to the player-characters' actions.

Ideally, it would be nice if Lyle were not killed, if Alvarez were not ruined, if Brian and Tom were booked for murder, if the demons were captured and probably Banned or killed, if the sisters' perfidy were exposed and they were made to face the consequences of their behavior, and if any innocents were generally helped and protected.

Sure it would. But being a Demon Cop may not be that easy.

Demon Cops: Sorcerer Animé Player Handout

The look & feel

This is not a realistic setting. It's an urban backdrop with a strong dose of dark magic and demon-stuff, and let's not get hung up on how that relates to national economy or history or anything like that. Sources and influences are mainly animé and animé-style comics, like *Bio-Hunter*, *Wicked City*, *Demon City Shinjuku*, and *Leave it to Chance*. In making your character and during play, keep the distinctive animation and visual techniques of these and similar sources in mind.

Welcome to Diablo Del Rey

A picturesque harbor city ... a brooding nexus of occult forces ... where sea-demons wail on the rocks at midnight and tourists line up to take pictures of the historic lighthouse at noon. It's the prettiest city in the nation, built in little pockets or townships on the Del Rey Peninsula in coastal California.

You're "demon cops," the special branch of the police force that deals with day-to-day incursions and malfeasances of the supernatural, as well as maintaining the all-important Compact with the humongous demon sleeping below the mountains that permits the city to exist at all.

The Demon Cops number about a dozen individuals total, including Captain Tate; they mostly work independently on shared projects. Some of them use non-sorcerer police partners and some don't. The squad came into existence about 30 years ago to combat the vicious, widespread sacrifice cults that infested the Peninsula, who exploited the darker aspects of the Del Rey Demon's sleeping psyche through sacrificing appropriate "triggers." Today, the 'Cops consider themselves overt heirs to the legacy of Kaspar Tweet, the sorcerer who led the fight against the cults; he died about ten years ago.

Most demons in this setting are low-Power little entities that come in grotesque and surrealistic form, like pocket imps, guns with eyes, scary-looking replacement body parts, or instant-monster pellets. However, there are also the Possessor demons, who if they can establish themselves in a host long enough, become Passers. This "breed" is almost always high-Power and entirely malevolent. Another interesting group includes local demons who are highly associated with buildings or geographical features, and act almost like little godlings or spirit-beings; sometimes they get obstreperous or irritated and the Demon Cops have to settle them down.

Demons are sometimes "licensed" in Diablo Del Rey, usually only those with Power of 3 or less and whose Need is not illegal. Demon cops are expected only to Bind licensed demons (in fact, the Binding would establish the license), although in practice this is often not the case.

Humanity for this setting is defined as "service to others" in the true public-servant sense. It's a tricky thing in practice.

Places to know about

Diablo Del Rey is divided up into several townships or boroughs, as follows:

- Ⓒ Del Rey proper: the largest and most bustling area, with the most commercial-chain businesses, practical hotels, a big convention center, noisy wharves, bars, movie theaters, and an active downtown and night-life.
- Ⓒ Pacifica: just about the opposite – a quiet, sizeable community with an eye toward not evolving into Del Rey.
- Ⓒ Crescent Cove: a gated community housing some of the most expensive property in the country; no commercial area at all and the police are entirely self-contained.
- Ⓒ Obispo: the last word in tourist-quaint, full of dilettante artists, wealthy retirees, alienated affluent teenagers, and clever people who sell gourmet food and expensive candles. The home of the annual Sand Castle Contest.
- Ⓒ Laguna: the poverty-stricken, crime-ridden, highly ethnic area that never gets mentioned in the tourist guides. Inhabited mostly by the honest working poor who travel into the other areas for their service jobs.

Sorcerer for beginners

Dice work like this: roll a handful and note the highest value. It has to exceed the highest value of the GM's roll to succeed. That's it! All modifiers simply add or subtract dice.

Remember that your character can do ANY of the "magic stuff" in the game: Contacting, Summoning, Binding, Containing, Banishing, and Punishing. Any one of these takes a couple of hours (more if you want a bonus), or they can be used as "snap-shots" too.

Don't forget role-playing bonuses – if you do something meaningful in story terms or simply describe it in an entertainingly fashion, you get bonus dice.

Making your character

Divide up 10 points among Stamina, Will, and Lore. These numbers will also set your Cover and Humanity.

Choose a term to refine/define your scores from the following lists.

- Ⓒ Stamina descriptors: martial artist, arcane regimen, buffed, just plain fit
- Ⓒ Will descriptors: hot-shot, angry, do-gooder, by the book, quiet pride
- Ⓒ Lore: adept, cop-trained, half-breed
- Ⓒ Cover is always Demon Cop + [specialty of choice]

The Lore description "halfbreed" follows Sorcerer & Sword rules, such that Humanity Trading may be used to increase the character's initial scores. The Cover descriptor "demon cop" confers police-detective rank and skills; the accompanying specialty may or may not be commonly associated with police work.

Then pick a Price, and you're set with your basic numbers. The next steps are to design a starting demon you've Bound and to think up a Kicker – the reason your character's life has recently changed.