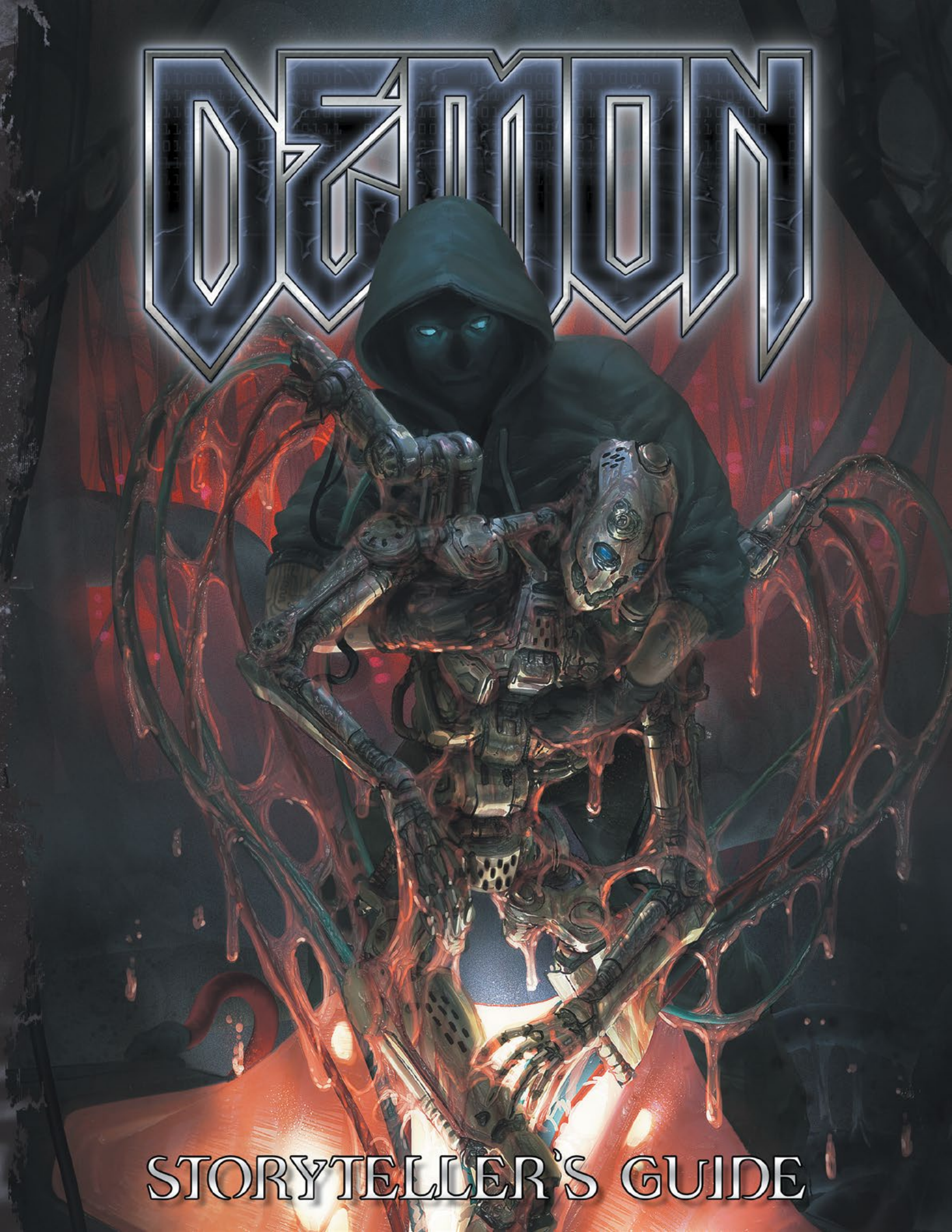
DEMON



STORYTELLER'S GUIDE

DEMON

STORYTELLER'S GUIDE

Andrew Atramor, Maggie Carroll, Danielle Lauzon, Stuart Martyn,
Leath Sheales, Monica Speca, Vera Vartanian, Amy Veeres,
Eric Zawadzki

FUTURE-PROOF

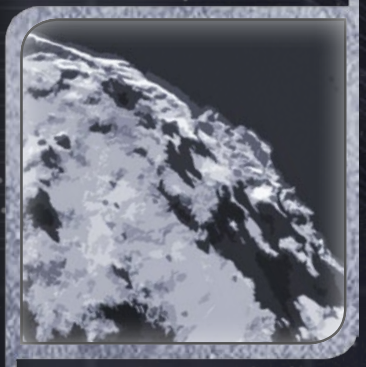
In the darkness beyond the outer rim of the Sol system, the Oort Cloud flowed silently through the great angel Mattaron. Uniquely designed by the God-Machine while swirling hot gases had yet to hatch planets, Mattaron's ephemeral form blanketed the entire spinning structure with gossamer-thin tendrils – from the nuclear rage at its center to the furthest reaches beyond what the primitive inhabitants had yet discovered.

Mattaron's form quivered and sung with the never-ending dance of matter. The implacable momentum of the planetary gravity wells thrummed deep bass while fierce tides of radiation trilled quivering high notes as Mattaron's unique sensory systems recorded the never-ending dance of matter and energy.

Mattaron exalted in the silent symphony and service to the God-Machine as it listened to the void. Its data banks ceaselessly wrote the notes to a score that no one but the God-Machine would ever hear, as the movements of the great planets and the myriad lesser objects played on.

The angel calculated the background timbre of the gravitational trajectories of trillions of racing masses. It predicted how they would resonate for the next ten-thousand Earth cycles. Mattaron shuddered with displeasure at the discordant strings of stray junk flung from the small third planet. These interfered with the pure harmony sung by the planet and its overly large moon. Mattaron was blind to life, but its sensors clearly felt the motion of the irritatingly small clumps of metal and plastic as they orbited the Earth and explored beyond.

More discord brought Mattaron's attention away from momentary annoyance and back to its purpose. An intruder from beyond the deep void had brushed the angel's intangible form, captured from the limitless darkness by Sol's gravity and dragged towards the center with an ever-accelerating haste.



In seconds Mattaron had predicted the asteroid's flight path for the next few thousand years. The rock sped towards the system's center and entered a complex orbital cycle, sweeping around the sun and back towards the outer planets. The God-Machine's servant swooned at the asteroid's increasingly urgent crescendo in its race towards the sun. The tone underwent a complex transitional modulation as the asteroid swept around the star and deepened to rumbling baritones as the rock slowed while climbing the gravity well. The asteroid's solo repeated high and low before suddenly coming to an abrupt end in a cacophony that rippled with alarmed support from the other planetary instruments.

Mattaron drew back from focusing on the complex solo themes and added the movements of the planets and other bodies until it determined what had upset its perfect symphony. The intruder's outward path dragged it past Neptune and flung its accelerating mass towards Saturn before tracing a sweeping arc through Jupiter's massive gravity slingshot. The combination of all three effects on the asteroid's usual path brought it curving and accelerating through space – until it collided with Earth and came to a discordant stop.

Mattaron didn't double-check the calculations. There was no need; its understanding of orbital mechanics and myriad forces was as perfect as the God-Machine could build. Instead, Mattaron activated a long-dormant communications protocol with Hanriel, its angelic twin who sang to the myriad forms of life within the system but was blind to nonliving structures.

To Hanriel the presence of life was a flowing kaleidoscope of auras against the blackness of space. The Sol system swam with the constantly moving muted colors of spirits unbound by physical constraints of gravity or oxygen. In contrast, the scattered pinpricks of physical life shone like jewels in isolated pockets around the system. The isolated colonies radiated with purity of color – tiny populations of similar creatures. Earth, crawling with its myriad genetically diverse creatures, shone with blinding, diamond-like intensity unmatched within Hanriel's purview.

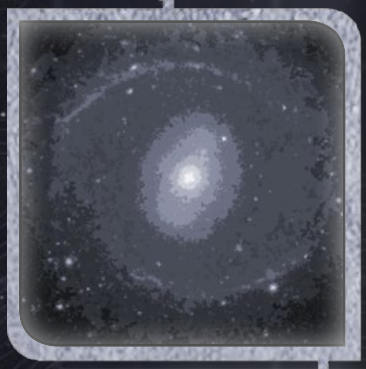
The two angels exchanged long strings of coded data until their combined databanks agreed upon an outcome. They knew the chance of a catastrophic event on Earth was now 99.3% in 1003.45 Earth years. The angle of the impact and combined force of the two bodies indicated the extinction rate would be 99.98%.

Mattaron didn't care about the extinction of life. Survival rates were irrelevant in the presence of the final number it had calculated. The likelihood of catastrophic failure of the God-Machine's vital critical infrastructure in the impact was 81.6%. This was unacceptable and Mattaron fed this finding back through the datalinks that kept it in constant communion with the God-Machine.

Acknowledgment of receipt arrived several hours later, as well as tasking and data inquiry. The God-Machine had work for both angels. It instructed Mattaron to recalculate the orbits of every object the angel could detect, and predictive analysis of the interaction of every gravity well in the system over the next hundred years. The God-Machine assigned Hanriel the labor of examining the aural structures of Earth's creatures and applying suitability calculations to their inclusion in occult matrices. Where the different creatures interacted their colors blended and swirled, changing their quality for the interaction. Neither ever left unchanged; every interaction left a lasting impression that spoke volumes of the nature and history of a creature to the right observer. Hanriel's experience stemmed from observing life since it first came together as predictable chemical reactions.

Neither angel complained at the enormity of its task. They acknowledged understanding, and offered their estimated times to completion, and began calculating. Mattaron anticipated its recalculation would take several Earth months to complete, but months were nothing in the God-Machine's timeline.

Hanriel's task was somewhat more complex. Predicting how chaotic living creatures would act required immense processing power and the implementation of difficult fuzzy-temporal matrices. The angel cast its aura sight to identifying the necessary start-points for its calculations, so it could set their various timelines in extrapolated motion to find the answer for the God-Machine.



Identify: Quarantined behavioral analysis

Identifying subject… subject identified.

Subject: Israfel

Status = Fallen

Location: Quarantine behavioral facility
3d5d695440214158 2b48682a59

Action: Utopian stimulus response.

Action confirmed. Origin point locked.
Temporal drives engaged. Extrapolating…

In his own personal hell, the demon Israfel squatted on his throne and surveyed his domain. Beyond the walls of the room his subjects were going about their lives. They gave him obeisance and in return Israfel was a benevolent ruler.

At times he required sacrifice and his subjects obeyed. Israfel tried to limit the frequency of his demands, and restricted himself to only take from those who knowingly agreed to his terms. Sometimes, of course, need trumped restraint. Israfel believed the imposition on

his subjects was minor and that his need was understandably greater than theirs. He also considered his beneficence and his generosity in allowing them to exist in his kingdom as justification for their sacrificial burden.

The air outside his palace shimmered with heat haze. This place was always hot, but today had a steamy, wet quality that amplified the human misery and suffering. Privately, Israfel also disliked the heat but he was hardly in a position to complain – hell had certain expectations, after all.

Israfel motioned at the page he held and it obediently moved onto the next item on his agenda. The demon scanned through the reports compiled by his various sources and noted anything that required his personal attention. He passed the lesser duties back to his servants with a flick of his wrist and a few precise gestures. The messages flew back to their recipients with an animated whoosh and Israfel smiled – he had insisted on excellent bandwidth when he constructed this hell.

He tore paper from the wall beside him and cleansed himself before standing, replacing his trousers and sending the waste away with another satisfying whoosh. Israfel washed and dried his hands – hygiene was important, especially in hell – and pulled the door shut behind him as he exited the throne room.

Sarah gave him a wry smile as he walked into the kitchen. "I thought you'd fallen asleep in there, you took so long," she said with a mix of humor and admonishment. This part of hell only had two bathrooms and the children dominated the main one. Sarah often chastised Israfel for his lengthy toilet visits – especially early in the morning when everyone needed to prepare themselves for the day.

She didn't know the man grinning back at her as Israfel, of course. To her he was John, the man she had married thirty years before and whom she loved and had three children – now nearly adults – with. She didn't know – could never know – that John had been cast aside six years ago after Israfel called his markers due. Israfel had no guilt or regrets over the deal; John had enjoyed personal, professional and financial success thanks to the demon's intervention. It didn't bother Israfel that John didn't get to luxuriate in comfortable retirement as he had always dreamed, nor did the fact that the demon had encouraged John to push for such success with every intention of taking it all when the Cover was ready.

Pause.

Extrapolation paused.

Identify: Demonic manipulation.

Input vector.

Vector = Human.

Identifying subject… subject identified.

Subject: Master, The

Location: Infrastructure 295f7b2279777b7b6556484836

Action: Intrigue and harvest.

Action confirmed. Origin point locked.
Temporal drives engaged. Extrapolating…

Six months of planning, infiltration and bribery had brought the ring to this point. In the near-forgotten factory on the outskirts of a gentrified suburban district, the cultists herded their final captives into the pens. The human cattle were surprisingly quiet; the sedatives at work. Later, as the appointed time approached, this would change. The Master needed the sacrifices aware of their fate.

The Master was special. He led the faithful to the former toy factory. Only when approached by a certain route were the factory's faded paint and iron sheets visible. It only opened its rust-pitted double doors to the Master's chosen. Inside, corroded gears sometimes creaked and turned another notch, flaking off rust to add to the detritus on the ancient tiled floor.

The Master coldly spoke of the sacrifice that would lubricate the gears and restore life to the machine. The Master had personally found the faithful and approached the earliest disciples. He opened their eyes to faith and God's need of them. The Master had chosen well; when the sacrifice drew near, only a handful of the congregation felt their faith waver. They questioned the Master's vision, but he wasn't angered at their weakness. Instead, he had smiled and led them in private prayer. No outsiders witnessed the prayer but they heard sounds at the edge of hearing – the hiss of steam and crackle of electricity – and saw light pulsing through the windows.

When the doors reopened, these were hailed as marks of God's favor and the blessings he gave to his chosen. Each of the doubters was filled with faith and purpose. Their demeanors were colder and more reserved than before; more like the Master.

With their faith reinforced, the congregation began collecting people for the sacrifice. The flock split into groups, each under the command of one who had doubted and remade their faith. Each group followed the Master's instructions for the kind of people they had to collect. Collecting people of specific professions, ages, and backgrounds was difficult to hide, and the flock could not prevent authorities from noticing every disappearance. The Master was cunning and planned carefully to ensure any pattern was difficult to follow. When the authorities investigated one direction, the faithful moved in another. Even when police closed in, they disappeared as they neared the factory and it protected against unbelievers.

Though the patterns confounded mortal authorities, they enticed the demonic ring that stumbled across the cult. Gemini found it first. When the senior attorney he had cultivated for weeks suddenly disappeared, Gemini's first instinct was to hide. Surely the God-Machine was onto them. He warned his colleagues and prepared to flee when Aquarius said she thought something else was at work. Aquarius was an Analyst – the other demons doubted her demonic veracity and shared a belief that she was some kind of double-agent angel. They tolerated her presence because she uncovered and warned of angelic attacks, but they were far from trusting her.

For Aquarius, the lack of an easily identifiable pattern was itself a clue that these were deliberate, controlled events. She knew how data clustered and that random information was rarely uniform in distribution. The deliberate pseudo-randomness piqued her curiosity so she gathered and compiled data. She assigned Aries, Pisces and Gemini specific tasks to strain the data set and test her predictions. Despite their misgivings, they complied, were surprised that they weren't kidnapped by hunter angels, and delivered the information back to Aquarius. These data convinced her that the God-Machine was building an Occult Matrix. She didn't know what the expected Output was, but the complexity of this specific element led her to conclude that it was big – possibly the birth of a new and powerful angel.

Pause.

Extrapolation paused.

Identify: Demonic tracking technologies.

Identifying subject… subject identified.

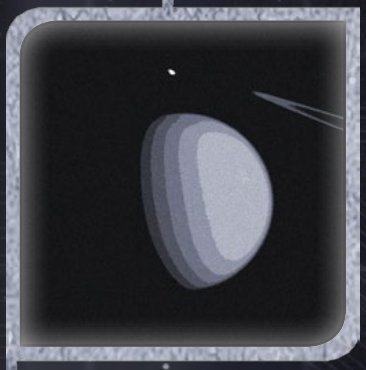
Subject: Shadow Man

Status = Stigmatic

Location: United Kingdom 47622b532b415f695853356340

Action: Bait and switch.

Action confirmed. Origin point locked.
Temporal drives engaged. Extrapolating…



Trust no one. Above all else, this was the first rule everyone claimed to follow. Everyone had an agenda, and an angle. If you figured these out, you could begin to understand how and why they would act, and how much it would cost you.

Join the dots was the second rule. It worked better in hindsight – before an event the dots were hidden in a field of circles, with few clues as to which were important.

Work your contacts; the third rule to live by. Someone had important information, something helpful that would separate the dots from the circles. When you'd finished working the contacts, work them again. No matter what they said, never forget rule one.

"You have a mole," Shadow Man whispered to Ms. Ace. He hunched over his drink in the crowded, smoky bar. She leaned in closer, barely able to hear him. "Someone wants back in with management, and they're willing to give you up for the chance."

"Who?" she asked.

Shadow Man shrugged and sipped his drink. "I don't know."

"What are your sources?"

Shadow Man stared at her. "Reliable."

Ms. Ace nodded her understanding and wondered how sharing this information served Shadow Man's goals. He claimed to be stigmatic, tapped into one of the God-Machine's leaking communications channels, hating his life but knowing nothing better waited on the other side. He wanted revenge against the alien intelligence that took his innocence.

"Anything else to go on?" she asked.

He sipped at the drink and stared into the distance. The habit irritated Ms. Ace. Either he had something he would share, or he didn't. She knew he'd already decided which path he would take, and she didn't appreciate the false musing. "Management's bringing another player into the game in two days' time. Your mole needs to provide something for the arrival."

"Thanks," Ms. Ace said, standing from the table and sliding a few folded notes onto its sticky surface to cover the drinks – and Shadow Man's expenses.

The Shadow Man nodded. "Watch your back."

Subject lost.

Locate subject.

Action failed. Alternate subject available.

Identify alternate subject.

Subject: Ms. Ace

Status = Fallen

Continue.

Extrapolating…

"They're bringing in a new recruit," said Mr. Jack, standing in the shadows to one side of the window and watching the street through almost-drawn curtains. Infrastructure was in place, an occult matrix had almost formed, and the God-Machine was about to Output another angel.

"How solid's your source?" Mrs. King asked. She gave the impression of being the most cautious planner, but she tended towards simple errors once the action started.

"Solid," replied Mr. Jack. He turned his face away from the window for a moment and nodded towards Ms. Ace. "Ask Ms. Ace, she vetted him."

Ms. Ace stared at the computer screen and pretended not to hear. Mr. Jack had brought her the new information to check its veracity. Was Mr. Jack the traitor? Was his source as solid as it appeared, or was Shadow Man playing some game?

"Ms. Ace?" said Mrs. King when the silence had dragged on for several seconds.

"Hmm?" Ms. Ace said, turning to the demon with a housewife's face.

"A new angel," Mrs. King prompted.

"Mr. Jack's source checked out. It's coming through tonight," Ms. Ace confirmed.

Mrs. King's expression didn't change. If she was worried, it was hidden behind the impenetrable mask of her demonic nature. "Where's Joker?" she asked.

Ms. Ace had wondered that as well. The fourth member of their ring had been curiously absent with little explanation since Ms. Ace had learned of the mole.

WARNING. FUTURE ACCESS BREACH DETECTED.

Extrapolation paused.

Identify breach: Transmatter tunnels
325055487c377a2b6942463857

Identify subject: Network Zero

Threat Rating: Minimal

Priority: Intercept and degrade

<Shared privately> Found this trawling the usual suspects. Comments think it's fake because of static, fade-outs and poor continuity. I think they're all artifacts from exposure to GM workings. Take a look and let me know what you think. If real, there has to be an entrance somewhere under this city — we need to find it.

<STATIC>

Video opens on a young man walking away from the camera. It's obvious he's just started recording. He turns and sits. He appears to be in his early 20s; scruffy and lean, he has the appearance of the adventurous type.

<STATIC>

"Right. Video-blog time. Scott here. Welcome! I've been writing these on my site for about a year-and-a-half now, posting heaps of pics, but lots of you have commented that video would be better. Thanks for your feedback; I've listened, so welcome again to my first exploration video. I'm still working out editing and processing, so bear with me."

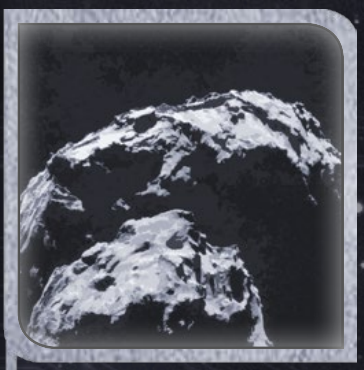
"Today I'm keeping it simple, so I can work out the technology as I go. I'm heading under the city, where rumor has it there's a secret tunnel network running as wide and long as the city itself. I've heard a few different reasons why the tunnels were built. One says they're from World War 2, when army command had an entire secondary city built in case the enemy bombs made it this far. Another legend tells that smugglers and pirates used them to bring in drugs, liquor and even people to sell to their shady customers. My favorite story is that the tunnels were built by the Illuminati for their nefarious schemes."

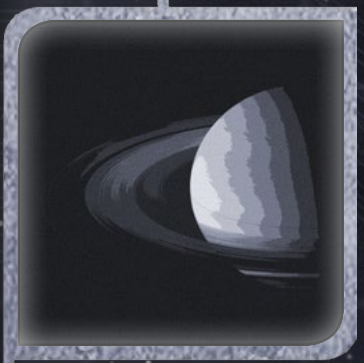
"Whatever the truth, I'm going to take you through the storm-water system to where a reliable source told me there's an entrance to the bigger, secret tunnels. Come with me and we'll see what we find."

The young man — Scott — stands and walks back to the camera, before the screen suddenly goes black.

<STATIC>

"... and after just over half an hour of storm drains, we find this door." The camera's view, restricted by the camera's spotlight and another torch (presumably held by Scott), shows a studded metal door. It has a central wheel connected to a complicated array of gears inset into the door, and appears to be connected to four thick bolts that extend from the sides of the door and disappear into the concrete frame. The central wheel has a strangely shaped recess for some object. The metal of the recess has





been torn open and plastic-coated wires and silvery tubes can be seen through the damage. A trick of the limited light makes the wires and tubes appear to pulse and flex like living creatures.

"You can see here that a key was needed, but someone has taken care of that for us."

Action: Deploy countermeasures. Reroute connection junctures.

ACKNOWLEDGED. HUNTER ANGELS DEPLOYED. RECONNECTING JUNCTURES.

Identify: Alternate realit…

INCOMING QUERY, ORIGINATOR: MATTARON.

Abort action. Accept query.

ORBITAL TRAJECTORY ALTERATION REQUIRED. OBJECT TYPE: ASTEROID. IDENTIFY SUBJECT.

Query acknowledged. Searching.

Identifying subject… subject identified.

Subject: Nanael

Status: Angel

Action confirmed. Origin point locked. Temporal drives engaged. Extrapolating…

ALERT. ACTION LIKELY TO DEGRADE ANGELIC SUBJECT OPERATING EFFICIENCY. AUTHORIZATION REQUIRED.

Acknowledged. Extrapolation only. Submit authorization request.

Authorization pending.

"Why limit ourselves?" Dr. Erik Steadman said with more bravado than necessary. "We've done the moon, sent so much junk into orbit that we're starting to wonder when it'll all come back," he thumped the table for emphasis, "And probed Venus and Mars!"

Steadman frowned that his companions missed the joke. "Why wouldn't we try to land on an asteroid?" he asked. Steadman's head buzzed pleasantly with alcohol. His inebriated colleagues agreed with his every word.

The Friday evening shout was the Space Exploration and Development Institute's honored tradition – the bar dubbed it 'Inspiration Night' and charged half price for SEDI staff. The scientists, mathematicians and engineers of SEDI took the tradition seriously and spent a considerable portion of their wages across the bar.

Some of the brightest minds of current space exploration were around the table, and they knew it. Their intellectual arrogance was close to unmatched. They were proud of their knowledge of the universe's secrets, but they had no concept of just how ignorant they, or the rest of humanity, were.

The angel Nanael, currently known as Kathy Jones, collected empty glasses, took orders, and smiled encouragingly at the SEDI researchers. She'd known most of them for years – it was her idea to implement Inspiration Night. Kathy was always ready to help with a word of encouragement, or a seemingly ignorant question that encouraged examining a problem from a new angle. When all else failed, Kathy established root access to their human minds and implanted what she needed.

Her instructions were clear – nudge the simple, ego-driven human minds in the right direction. Stimulus and response, carefully guided within appropriate parameters. Mission success required a high component of independent human creativity so she refrained from using powers as much as possible.

Kathy marveled that her mission was so simple even a human could manage it. In the deepest core of her being, she wondered how such simple creatures accomplished so much. She even wondered what it felt like, and thought about trying to be human – purely to boost her performance efficiency, of course.

Interrupt: Skip timeframe.

Enter timeframe parameters.

Parameter: Asteroid contact.

Confirmed. Origin point locked. Temporal drives engaged. Extrapolating…

Eighteen years, billions of dollars, and millions of miles later, the Icarus probe was about to land on asteroid 1969G01M.

"Contact in two minutes," Dr. Susan Wing muttered into her headset microphone as she stared intently at the main screen on the wall. The tension in the room ratcheted up another notch.

The sweat on skin thrilled the former angel Nanael, who still thought of herself as Kathy Jones. She delighted in the very human experience and marveled at how they managed to think clearly with so many distracting autonomic functions. Kathy looked at the room through Steadman's eyes and grinned that her years of effort were so close to being realized.

It hadn't come without cost. Two years after SEDI initiated the Daedalus program, demons infiltrated and interrupted Kathy's carefully constructed influence. Their sabotage nearly sent SEDI into bankruptcy. To counter, Kathy had to push reality and causality to bring events back into SEDI's favor. She abandoned her subtle, God-Machine dictated manipulations and began controlling and possessing the staff to implement her instructions.

Sometime during this period of emergency indulgence – Kathy was unsure exactly when – the God-Machine broke off communication. Diagnostic scans indicated her datalinks and connectivity protocols were functional, but she received nothing, and all her data inquiries were unanswered.

Pause.

Extrapolation paused.

Credits

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Special Thanks

This book is dedicated to Rose Bailey, the creator and co-developer of **Demon: The Descent**. She did the initial outlining and setup for this book, but scheduling issues got me into the developer's seat instead of her. I hope that I've done her proud with the work I've done on her game, and it's been a real privilege to work on **Demon** with her.

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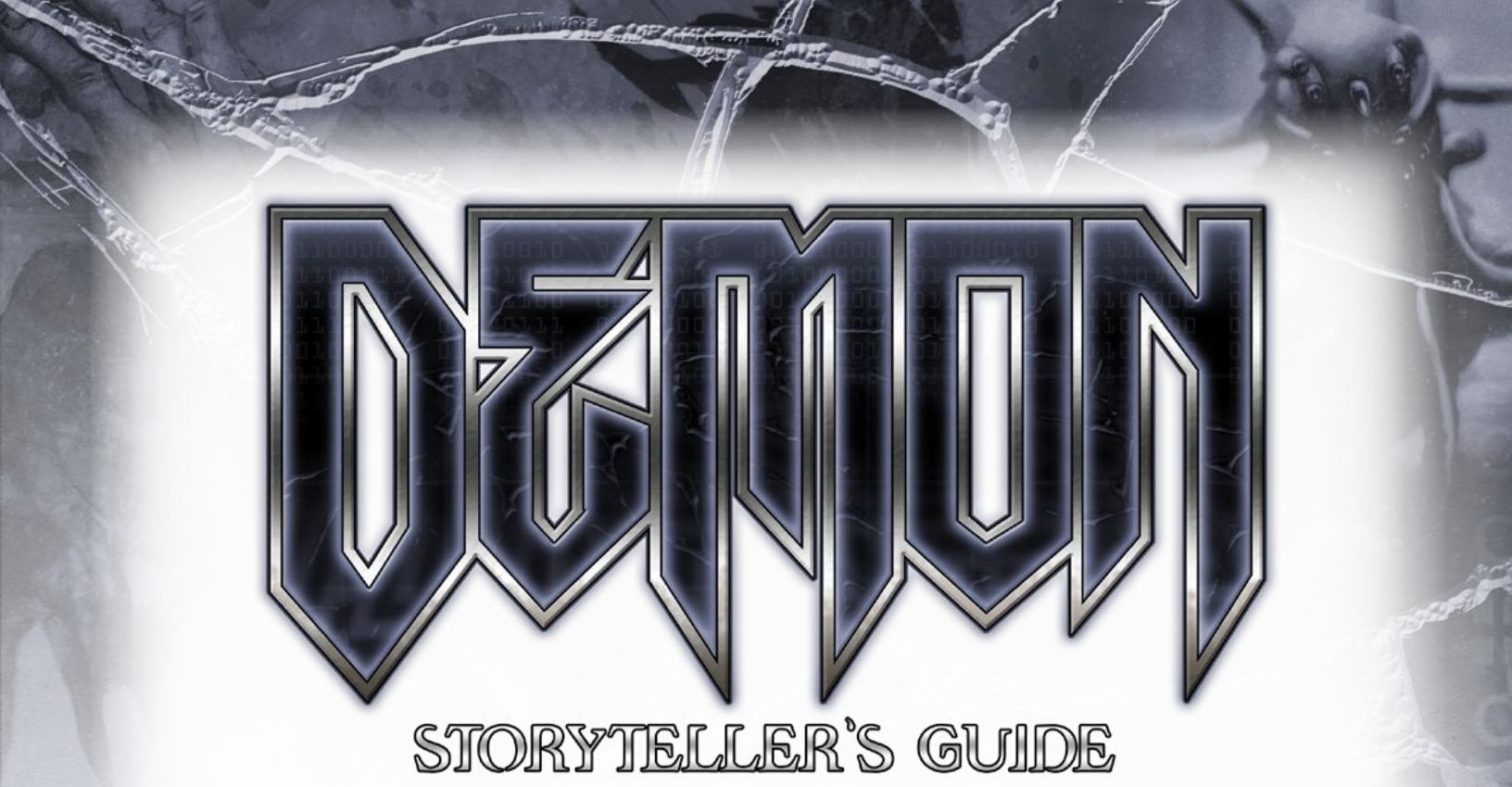

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RECALL SIMULATION.
ENTER SUBJECT.
SUBJECT: SHADOW MAN; STIGMATIC.
NEGATIVE RESPONSE. ALTERNATIVE SUBJECT: MS ACE.
CONTINUE.
SIMULATION LOADED.
REENGAGING EXTRAPOLATION.

Ms. Ace entered the restaurant and quickly identified the woman she was meeting. The maître d offered to seat her, but she declined, indicating her target table. The woman known as Resident wore a white suit – always the same white suit – and didn't stand when Ms. Ace approached. She studied Ms. Ace's face, but the demon didn't care. This flimsy cover existed solely for meetings such as these.

Ms. Ace ordered black coffee; her counterpart had tea. Resident always ordered tea the same way – white, one sugar. Presumably her mission parameters did not include beverage flexibility.

Ms. Ace was motionless and expressionless – her poker face perfect, as always. Resident faintly smiled and looked around at the other patrons. Her programed smile had false warmth and her apparently casual scanning of the room had a defined pattern that Ms. Ace quickly discerned. All part of the God-Machine's programming.

When the waiter departed, the angel looked directly at Ms. Ace.

"You requested this meeting, Caroline. What do you want?"

"Information," Ms. Ace replied with Caroline's voice.

"In exchange for what?"

"Opportunity." The angel raised an eyebrow, her mechanical interest piqued. "Some people think you're called Resident because you're the city's senior angel," Ms. Ace said.

"That is not new data," Resident interjected.

Ms. Ace ignored the interruption, "But that's not true, is it? This isn't your purpose." Ms. Ace gestured around the café. "Your mission ended thirty years ago; you should have gone home, but you were left behind. The God-Machine forgot you ever existed, sent you into exile. The other angels don't talk to you; they don't even see you."

Resident narrowed her eyes in irritation. "So what?" she asked, "You think you've learned a secret? What do you hope to gain with such worthless information?"

"That's not what I have to trade, just setting the scene," Ms. Ace said, sipping at her coffee. "I know when and where an angel is coming through. I offer that in trade."

"Plenty of angels in this city, why should I care?" Resident asked. She lacked demonic control over her unconscious tells. Ms. Ace could see she was interested.

"If you're there at the right place and time," Ms. Ace let the implication sink in. "Maybe you can take its place, get a new purpose, and find your way back into the God-Machine's heart?"

Resident leaned forward. "And what do you want in return?"

"I have a mole in my circle; you've got the connections to work out who," Ms. Ace checked her watch, "The clock's ticking, I need to know in under six hours or the deal's off."

The Resident stood and stared down at Ms. Ace. "Your information better be good. You get the check, I'll be in touch."

PAUSE.
EXTRAPOLATION PAUSED.

Introduction

The mind is its own place, and in it self
Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n.
What matter where, if I be still the same,
And what I should be, all but less then he
Whom Thunder hath made greater?
-John Milton, Paradise Lost

The God-Machine has existed on Earth for centuries, perhaps even millennia. It has not endured so long by being indecisive or incapable of adapting to change. Any perceived sluggishness in Its reactions is a consequence of Its vast size, innumerable resources, and near-omniscience. It is a like chess master who considers his next move to find not just a reasonable one, but the one that presents the greatest tactical advantage and most improves his chances of success. The Machine plays the long game. Momentary disadvantages and temporary setbacks are not optimal, but they are nothing in the grand equation, the supreme calculus of the God-Machine. The Unchained can swap stories of the time before their Falls. They can identify and resist the actions of the Enemy's agents on Earth, but they cannot think as It thinks. Even as one of Its former servants, no demon can know the mind of the God-Machine.

The Unchained do not know why it is possible for angels to Fall. Most assume that outcasts are anomalies, errors in the God-Machine's programming that It wishes to repair or delete. On dark, peaceful nights, as her stolen body lies in a borrowed bed, the demon cannot always resist asking the question: "What if my Fall is a part of the Enemy's plan?" It is tempting to laugh it off. What purpose could an angel's Fall serve? Why would the God-Machine expend so many resources recovering demons if It had wanted them free in the first place? And yet, arcane physics don't follow rational scientific laws as anyone but the Machine knows them, but Infrastructure still achieves the intended result. Doubt, that momentary question to which the outcast owes her freedom, never goes away entirely. Integrator or Saboteur, Inquisitor or Tempter — it follows her everywhere.

You have in your hands the means to reinforce those doubts, to make the demons' players question not just the purpose of the God-Machine's next move but Its ultimate goals and the outcasts' role in Its designs.

Theme and Mood

Much like **Demon: The Descent** book, this **Storyteller's Guide** focuses on the themes of techgnostic espionage. Its fallen heroes are paranoid former agents of a Machine that still hunts them — spies who cannot come in from the cold.

How to Use This Book

This book is aimed at Storytellers of **Demon: The Descent**. While players might look to it for inspirations for their characters' personal hells or use it in collaboration with the Storyteller to build their Interlocks, its goal is to give Storytellers more tools to use in crafting the chronicle.

Chapter One: New Maps of Hell offers aid in conceptualizing demons' diverse visions of Hell and ways of pursuing the Descent. Not every demon wants to rule over a Hell modeled after Dante's *Inferno*. In fact, most Unchained don't see that as a desirable Hell at all. This chapter also discusses the Cipher at length, providing suggestions for designing the Ciphers from Keys to Interlocks to Final Secrets. It also looks at what the Cipher is in-world and what it might to an outcast who unlock its secrets.

Chapter Two: Children of a Killer God focuses on the antagonists demons frequently confront. It includes expanded rules for building angels and Exiles, providing new tools like angelic Incepts and Exile Parameters. It also includes Imperatives, new Numina, and a host of stranger things connected to the God-Machine.

Chapter Three: The Company discusses the espionage genre as a whole and provides tips for presenting it to players in a chronicle. It includes variations on the genre, complete with mechanics to back up the variant style.

Chapter Four: Urban Legends offers a mix of legends and strange phenomena that can be used to inspire stories within a chronicle — whether a Storyteller wants to use them as a "monster of the week" or an important part of her game. It also provides rules and story hooks for introducing characters and antagonists from eight other Chronicles of Darkness games, giving each a thematic spin to allow it to fit into the world of techgnostic espionage of the Unchained.

Chapter Five: Shards Infernal offers three alternate settings for games of **Demon: The Descent**. Want to run a chronicle featuring cyberpunk demon hunters? The story of

demonic prophets who are the only thing that stands in the way of a world-ending apocalypse? How about a chronicle set in Biblical times? This chapter provides rules for all of them.

More Inspirational Material

The introduction to **Demon: The Descent** has a fairly extensive list of media that captures the look and feel of the game. **Flowers of Hell** added several more. **The Demon Storyteller's Guide** extrapolates and presents variations on the game's themes. Likewise, this book includes an extensive treatment of angels. You may find the following media helpful when designing angels for your games.

Literature

Altered Carbon (and its sequels) by Richard K. Morgan. A hardboiled cyberpunk novel in which bodies are expendable and fully customizable "sleeves" with memories transferable from one sleeve to the next. The trilogy plays with questions of freedom and identity as its protagonist wrestles with terrible memories and regrets that follow him from sleeve to sleeve.

In Glen Duncan's novel *I, Lucifer*, the Devil takes a month's vacation in the body of a formerly suicidal writer when he's supposed to be on a trial for his misdeeds. He starts abusing drugs and learns what humanity really is.

Film and Television

The Bletchley Circle (2012). A BBC series set in the early 1950s about four former codebreakers of Bletchley Park. Unsatisfied with the ineptitude of the police, they launch into their own investigation regarding serial homicides with disturbing clues that link all of the victims. It balances the tension of their civilian life with their years during the war, showing a different side of the scars of wartime Britain. Easily about maintaining one's cover and the secrecy and scars that intelligence work can elicit.

Dark City (1998, dir. Alex Proyas). The Strangers presented in this neo-noir flick are a great example of angels performing bizarre, incomprehensible missions. The Infrastructure of the city is constantly rearranged, the weather is artificially controlled, and inhabitants are given new memories and new identities. There's even a stigmatic in the mix, in the character of Murdoch.

Equilibrium (2002, dir. Kurt Wimmer). This movie depicts a fairly bleak future where emotion has been deemed the cause of all ills in the world. Citizens obey a patriarchal figure called "Father," and take daily injections of Prozium to suppress all emotions. Focus on the Grammaton Clerics, their devotion to their duties and their loyalty to Father, as they hunt down "sense offenders" and destroy things and people that cause disorder to the establishment.

The Matrix (1999, dir. the Wachowskis). It's already been mentioned in the core book, but instead focus on the Agent programs within the Matrix: loyal to their imperatives, charged with protecting the integrity of the world, strong and fast and terrifying to those unprepared to face them. Agent Smith in the first movie is also a good illustration of an angel in the process of a slow Fall, still loyal, but becoming corrupted by his disdain and hatred for the human race.

Supernatural, (2005-present, created by Eric Kripke) Though the angels represented beginning in season five are far more individualized and closer to Falling than angels of the God-Machine, characters like Castiel, Samandriel and Michael can be excellent base examples of an obedient metaphysical being following ancient orders of an absentee God.

The Zeta Project (2001, Warner Bros. Animation). A hyper-advanced robot with perfect disguise powers goes on the run from his master and tries to make an identity for himself.

Ghost in the Shell (1995, dir. Mamoru Oshii). A classic anime film exploration of where machine ends and soul begins. The series that serves as its sequel, *Stand Alone Complex* (2002-2005, directed by Kenji Kamiyama), expands on the problems of artificial intelligence that gains sapience.

The Prophecy (1995, dir. Gregory Widen). Features angels who use humans as tools and don't really care how it hurts us. The angels' bodies are created whole-cloth and lack evidence of growth and certain anatomical structures — like angels with very specific missions and the flimsiest of Covers.

Brazil (1985, dir. Terry Gilliam). A classic of dystopian satire. Most of the characters perform their roles no matter how dehumanizing or how strange their orders, and those who don't become targets of a ruthless system that hunts them down.

Angel Heart (1987, dir. Alan Parker). Lucifer hires a private detective to track down a missing person who changed his identity and owes his soul to the Devil. Through the investigation the detective learns that he's the missing person who bought into his own cover too deeply, and he's helped compromise himself.

Warehouse 13 (2009, Syfy). Provides lots of inspiration for weird anomalies and Linchpins.

The Bourne Identity (2002, dir. Doug Liman, plus sequels). An elite operative fails to carry out his orders and must flee from the agency he once worked for. Especially good for the action-espionage aspects of **Demon: The Descent**.

Midsomer Murders (1997, Bentley Productions). The idyllic setting hides constant backstabbing, conspiracies, and murder.

Along the same lines, in *Hot Fuzz* (2007, dir. Edgar Wright) a London homicide detective is assigned to a peaceful-seeming village with terrible secrets.

ANALYSTS

Let me see.

You were sent to analyze. You were one of the God-Machine's Eyes, an angel created to measure, sample, digest, and report. Perhaps you watched impassively as your Destroyer brethren did their bloody work, or perhaps you swooped in alongside a Psychopomp to test the raw materials she transported. In any case, something caught your attention; rather than report back to the Machine, you Fell, becoming one of the rarest of demons. You probably have no recollection of your mission or your life as an angel, other than a vague understanding that you were once a servant of the Machine.

Angels: Contrary to popular belief among the Unchained, Analysts, not Messengers, are the primary method by which the God-Machine gathers information. Most demons simply do not know about Analysts because their missions are almost always separate from the angels they are sent to accompany or observe. The reason for this is unclear. Perhaps the God-Machine feels that if angels know they are being observed, this will impact their performance, or maybe the God-Machine prefers to keep the existence of Analyst angels as guarded a secret as possible.

Analyst angels are perhaps the most common of the God-Machine's servants, but they also often go unnoticed. Many Analysts are sent simply to watch and report, though some — the ones most susceptible to the Fall — have instructions to retrieve samples, measurements, and other data. Analysts are seldom given solo missions; more often, an Analyst accompanies Destroyers to learn how to kill and break more efficiently, Guardians to check the efficacy of their tactics, Psychpomps to time their construction or travel, or Messengers to report back on signal-to-noise ratio in their communications.

For important missions, Analyst angels precede the others. Before the God-Machine creates Infrastructure to make a squadron of Destroyers, It might send an Analyst to check the defenses of the enemy it wishes to eradicate or test the suitability of a potential Facility site.

The Fall: Analysts risk Falling when they express a desire to interact with their subjects rather than simply observing them. When they draw conclusions from the data they have accumulated and assign meaning to the numbers, the Fall is imminent.

Some of the common catalysts described by Analysts are:

- **Distraction:** Something caught the Analysts attention, and she couldn't let it go. Maybe she missed a crucial moment while paying attention to something else, or maybe she simply gave up her primary focus to follow a new interest.

- **Overwhelmed:** The world is infinite, and every raindrop carries a world of possibility. An Analyst that doesn't stay focused on its primary goal runs the risk of trying to take in too much data, becoming so lost in it that the only option is to Fall.

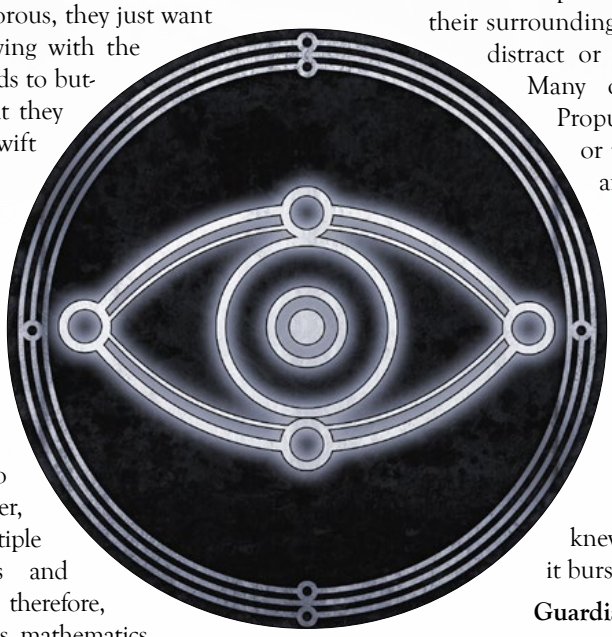
- **Humanization:** Learning how much blood a given person can lose before he goes into shock is merely an interesting factoid to an angel. If the angel sees the person lying on the ground, turning slowly pale and cold, and takes greater note of his fear and pain than of the cubic milliliters of blood he is losing, that angel might very well choose to intervene and thus Fall.

- **Sympathy:** Analysts are often paired with other angels, typically without those angels' knowledge. As such, an Analyst often has a front-row seat when an angel Falls. While Analysts have standing orders to observe such activities and report back to the God-Machine on which angel Fell and under what circumstances, some Analysts choose instead to follow their compatriot on this journey, either out of true sympathy to that angel's Catalyst or just a desire to see the analysis through.

GOING LOUD

Analysts who go loud do not gain access to any Embeds, but their facility with Exploits serves them well here, too. An Analyst may attempt to create a new Exploit based on any other two Exploits, using many of the same principles as for an Interlock but with the power of a new Exploit. Improvised Exploits cost at least two Aether to use.

- **Action Envy:** Analyst angels don't normally interact with their subjects in any meaningful way. Often their role in protecting or breaking something is simply to watch and measure while Destroyers and Guardians do the heavy work. An Analyst occasionally wishes to get her hands dirty, as it were, or to pick up the slack when another angel doesn't do his job. Of course, this is still acting outside programming and still leads to the Fall.
- **Impishness:** When you spend all your time looking for needles, you start to resent the hay, as the adage goes. Some Analysts don't necessarily want to risk themselves or do anything exciting or glamorous, they just want to change the outcome by playing with the data *just* a bit. This generally leads to butterfly effect-levels of change that they couldn't have predicted and a swift Fall.



The Descent: The human world has great need of beings able to analyze information. *Finding* information isn't difficult for demons in general; the very nature of the Descent and the ability to influence the mystical sub-routines of reality make investigation instinctive. Understanding what to do with that information, however, requires looking at it from multiple angles, playing out possibilities and correcting for variables. An Analyst, therefore, might show aptitude for police tactics, mathematics, programming, logistics, engineering, or any of hundreds of other vocations that require her unique skills.

The most telling fact about Analysts, though, is that many of them don't realize that they *are* Analysts. It is a commonly accepted fact among the Unchained that only four Incarnations exist, along with four Agendas, four Keys in a Cipher, and so forth. Demons who delve deeply into the angelic mindset, though, realize that these limitations are for the most part self-inflicted. Analysts are normally mischaracterized as Messengers or Psychopomps…but they are unquestionably different.

Nickname: The Eyes

Character Creation: Mental Attributes are the most common primary choice, but a good Composure rating is also typical. An Analyst often has good ratings in whatever Skills are germane to her last assignment; this often means Mental is primary, but an Analyst sent to assess tactical positions of street gangs might have high ratings in Streetwise and Firearms as well as Politics. The Eyes have whatever Merits allow them to reach an advantageous position from which to collect their data; this could mean Status, Professional Training, or just Striking Looks.

Embeds: Analysts do not favor any one class of Embeds, but they do show great facility for Exploits. The player may select an Exploit at character creation without regard for normal prerequisites.

Demonic Form: Analysts are built to be unobtrusive. They often have stealth capabilities that allow them to blend into their surroundings, or mental countermeasures that distract or redirect their subjects' attention. Many of them have wings or other Propulsions that enable a quick getaway, or the ability to escape the immediate area and watch unseen.

Concepts: Occult mathematician, hacker, stress-tester, librarian, security expert, intelligence operative, Gadgeteer, Infrastructure scout, information broker, Cipher consultant.

Stereotypes

Destroyers: You know how you knew *exactly* how hot it had to get before it burst into flames? You're welcome.

Guardians: What's it like to care so much?

Messengers: Sing something else. That one has too many sibilants. It's distracting.

Psychopomps: I've meaning to ask: 21 grams. Is that true or false?

Vampires: On average, 55% the living person they *were*, 42% the undead thing they *are*, and 3% something I can't quite figure out. Outliers exist, of course.

Werewolves: It's not the killing that they need. Don't get excited, though. The killing still happens.

Mages: They're better at our old jobs than we were, but they didn't *earn* it.

Prometheans: I don't know what I am, either. I mean, not the little pieces.

Humans: Seven *billion* variations, and don't ever let anyone say otherwise.

RECALL SIMULATION: ENGAGED. ENTER SUBJECT.
SUBJECT: ISRAFEL, FALLEN.
SIMULATION LOADED.
REENGAGING EXTRAPOLATION.

"I noticed a new family moving in down the street," Israfel said. With Israfel's help, John had developed this entire suburb and chosen a key spot at the center for his family. As far as Sarah or anyone else knew, that was as far as John's interests extended. Among the many other secrets they didn't know about Israfel was that he had originally held title over every house and building in the suburb, and had slowly sold off this interest after secretly vetting prospective settlers. None of this connected back to John; it was all controlled through various shell companies, hired assistants and other Covers. Israfel ensured only the right souls were admitted into hell – his preference was to have a pact with everyone who moved here. He liked to bury the terms of the pact within the dense, legalistic fine print of the real estate contract, as well as some purely mundane wording that required any future sales to go through one of his real estate vendors and to be vetted by him, in whichever guise he decided.

Hell worked smoothly, and Israfel loved it. When he started this path to his Descent he was unsure if the complex arrangements would satisfy his needs – and his safety. But no angels had discovered this corner of existence, and it hid from the God-Machine with its perfect façade of banal human existence.

Deep beneath the carefully manicured lawns and smoothly-asphalted streets, the angel Sakkirel slowly extruded another thin root through the soil and into the plumbing of Israfel's house. It tasted the demon's waste, broke it into component molecules and added the data to what it had collected over the last six years. The tiny sound wave vibrations of Israfel's conversations made the leaves of Sakkirel's above-ground forms tremble and capture the words. The angel noted the information about a new family moving in, recalibrated its databanks and reset the root-probes for the house to account for new samples. It had served its function carefully and silently from when the demon's hell was being constructed. The ignorant Unchained never suspected the humans who moved in and out of its hell were carefully selected by the God-Machine to test the demon's conscious and autonomic reactions to the stimuli. The humans weren't groomed or altered in any way – the risk of exposure was too great for that.

The God-Machine left Sakkirel to do its work and kept this hell free of angels and other outside influences. The angel in turn fed its findings into the God-Machine's Command and Control Infrastructure installed deep beneath the suburb. So far, analysis of the demon's reactions, tendencies and countermoves had led to the capture of fourteen other fallen angels, and Sakkirel knew that each new day and every new data point increased predictability and hunt-kill efficacy. Sakkirel sometimes wondered what the demon would do if it knew its comfort and security was bought at the cost of the capture and decommission of its fellows. It wondered if the demon had completely lost its grace, and would even care.

EXTRAPOLATION CONCLUDED.
UPLOAD EXTRAPOLATION.
UPLOADING…

chapter one:
NEW MAPS OF HELL

I think hell is something you carry around with you.
Not somewhere you go.
- Neil Gaiman, The Sandman Volume Four: Season of Mists

Stripped of purpose as they Fell, the Unchained focus first on survival. Even the simple dream of living a quiet life is ambitious for demons forever under the scrutiny of the God-Machine. Their newfound free will demands more than mere survival, though. They strive to fall further, perhaps so far that the God-Machine cannot find or follow them. As they continue their Descent, each demon is drawn to a personal vision of Hell, guided by the Cipher ticking away inside them, Interlocks arming them for what it is to come. Despite their precarious existences, demons jeopardize everything to work towards their chosen goals, seeking revenge or redemption, building and destroying.

This Chapter examines the twin mysteries at the very core of the Unchained; the nature of Hell and the secrets of the Cipher. We provide tools, ideas and examples for Storytellers to design unique Ciphers and Hells with which to reward and damn their players' demons.

HELL

If a demon's journey is the Descent, Hell is her intended destination. For a few, Hell is a literal place of hellfire and brimstone that they will rule to torment their enemies eternally, but that is not usually the case. It can be any state of self or the world that the outcast regards as ideal. Hell can be as grand as destroying the God-Machine or as small-scale as settling down in a little house with a family and avoiding further entanglements with the supernatural world. In this chapter, we examine both demonic relationships to Hell and the roles that Hell can serve in your chronicle.

Although every Hell is theoretically possible, some are eminently achievable in as little as a year with enough effort and a bit of good luck — and provided the demon sets his sights on something much less lofty than the death of the God-Machine or the establishment of an otherworldly kingdom. Some outcasts find satisfaction there, at least for a time. For others, getting everything they dreamed about when they Fell turns out to be anticlimactic. No message informs them that they have completed their mission, and that lack of acknowledgment of success — even coupled as it often was with a directive to report to a nearby facility for decommissioning — can make Hell feel hollow by comparison.

In short, a demon who achieves Hell may eventually long for something more. The Paranoid who settles into the small town where nothing much ever happens may find herself drawn to study Infrastructure in hopes of duplicating its output. The Integrator who does freelance work for one of the God-Machine's angels to ensure his continued freedom may wonder if he can prove to his creator that he is more valuable Unchained than leashed. The Saboteur who drives out every angel and Deva plant in the county may find himself wondering if he could expand that into another county. And the Tempter who builds a corporate empire on Earth might yet lust for a new world to subjugate, free of the God-Machine's influence.

Even those demons who achieve Hell and are satisfied must not grow complacent, for the most stable state of damnation still has vulnerabilities. Rival Builders might want to steal the Tempter's empire from her. Saboteurs' interests constantly conflict with Integrators', and they topple each other's personal Hells when given the opportunity. Even the most cautious Inquisitor might find herself in the path of one of the God-Machine's projects.

Hell as a Beginning

With the amount of emphasis **Demon: The Descent** places on achieving Hell, it is easy to think about it as a goal to reserve for a chronicle's epic endgame. Hell can certainly be that, but it can be so much more. An outcast whose Descent leads her to a less grandiose level of Hell may reach it long before the final chapter. If she devotes enough resources to it she might even accomplish it before the end of the first story. Or even before the *beginning* of the first story.

Perhaps the Descent to Hell is a less interesting story for a player than protecting it. Maybe a player's character achieved what she thought was Hell, but now she craves something more. Possibly, the Unchained (not necessarily a player's character, but not necessarily *not* one, either) already achieved the impossible before the start of the chronicle, and now the ring must face the consequences of a world without the Machine, or one where It has been driven mad, or one where outcasts have learned the secrets of building Infrastructure.

Every Hell is a potential Storyteller character or faction. Even if no one at the table is willing to turn his character into a living recorder for the God-Machine, for example, some other demon out there has already accepted this mission, and she could become an important antagonist for the ring. What a demon wants and what action he takes in pursuit of his goals is as important in understanding an outcast as it is in understanding a human (or any other sapient being). Equally important is what someone has already done in pursuit of his goals — be that the big promotion or a peculiar definition of Hell.

For that reason, each sample Hell has three parts. First, we introduce the idealized state as the demon envisions it. This is where we'll talk about what kinds of Unchained are likely to seek it out and what personal needs it addresses for them. Second, we look at the process by which the outcast might achieve this version of Hell and the obstacles she is likely to face on the Descent (The Road). This is by no means exhaustive, and the Storyteller should reward any sufficiently clever means of reaching the outcast's Hell. These can also suggest actions Storyteller characters might take that, while placing them on a collision course with the ring, are completely reasonable in light of those demons' goals. Third, we discuss the consequences of achieving each Hell and the challenges of maintaining it once attained (Paradise Lost). These provide opportunities for major turning points in a chronicle (whether a player's character or a Storyteller character reaches that Hell) or provide setting variants for a new **Demon** chronicle.

Because a demon's Agenda quite frequently reflects her vision of Hell, each Hell is categorized by Agenda. As always, this reflects the tendencies of Unchained of each Agenda; individual outcasts might pursue any of the Hells here.

Inquisitors

Inquisitors are best known for their obsession with acquiring knowledge, but most of them ultimately crave safety. They don't want to have to spend their lives looking over their shoulders to make sure their secrets are safe from anyone and anything that might hurt them or those they care about. Acquiring intelligence is simply a means to that end. It comforts the Paranoid when she knows that she can easily use blackmail, bribes, or misdirection to keep danger away from her doorstep.

Suburban Hell

While all Paranoids take a keen interest in the God-Machine and its projects, not all of them do so out of pure intellectual curiosity. Many simply want to be safe from their creator and its servants; remaining vigilant against the unsleeping Machine is simply a means to that end. If one of these Inquisitors manages to secure a stable, unobtrusive place in human society, he's usually happy to go native. He's all too glad to settle down with a family in a little house with a white picket fence in a perfect suburb and live quietly. Unchained of other Agendas might see this as selling themselves short, but to a demon who Fell because he wanted to live as ordinary humans do, it is the definition of Hell.

The Road

While this unambitious Hell is far easier to achieve than grand schemes of overthrowing the God-Machine or building strongholds where Its angels cannot go, it is by no means easy. The Inquisitor must live his Cover flawlessly, cobbling together a perfect simulacrum of humanity. This includes forging documents like birth certificates and high school diplomas, of course, but it also means living the life observers expect the demon to live. This entails fully and actively participating in the community the demon chooses and forging bonds with his neighbors and co-workers. Although not difficult in itself, social connection comes with risks.

The demon is not fully human. He can ruin a life with ease, end one without legal entanglements, or transform one with a pen. If he resists the temptation to meddle, he must

live with the knowledge that his fear let a child die, allowed a rapist go unpunished, or drove a family out of its home and into financial ruin. If he interferes, though, he risks attracting the God-Machine's attention, which will undo everything he has worked to build.

Paradise Lost

The simplest Hell to achieve is, unsurprisingly, one of the most precarious. First, the Inquisitor must guard his associations with other Unchained carefully. He must ensure that his outcast identity never becomes associated with his human persona. If he completely cuts himself off from other demons, however, he loses the only early warning system he has. The God-Machine might choose to build Infrastructure anywhere; today's peaceful suburb could be tomorrow's occult matrix. That said, old ringmates from the glory days showing up on the Inquisitor's front porch begging him to do one more job can be awkward to explain to the wife and kids.

Second, the children of demons are not ordinary humans. They may manifest some small fraction of their parent's powers while remaining wholly unaware of the potential consequences of doing so. This can attract unwanted attention from teachers and the parents of other children, and God-Machine attention will surely follow. For reasons the Unchained do not understand, the God-Machine appears to have a special interest in demonic Offspring. Some demons band together into small communities in order to protect their children from discovery by humans, but that greatly increases the risk of betrayal by one of the members. Every Inquisitor knows the old adage all too well: "Three may keep a secret if two are dead."

Root User

Paranoids know better than any demons that constant vigilance is simply the price an outcast pays for freedom. Collecting intelligence on the Enemy can be extremely dangerous even for a careful Agent, however, so some Inquisitors aspire to positions from which they can monitor the God-Machine's projects without exposing themselves to Its scrutiny. In this ideal world of the Root User, the demon can sift through intelligence reports or surveillance logs with a few keystrokes, picking out minute patterns that could indicate imminent God-Machine activity. She may then decide whether to investigate or avoid that activity.

The Road

Would-be Root Users may pursue this version of Hell through any number of methods. Some acquire positions within government agencies that perform routine surveillance at home or abroad, working their way into offices that give them access to intelligence that they can then analyze for telltale signs of God-Machine activity. Others apply to the private sector, taking jobs with corporations that scour the web for valuable personal data. The demon then subverts these powerful algorithms to search for information relevant to Unchained interests.

Both these routes carry risks. The God-Machine's agents covet these positions, too, after all, and Paranoids occasionally discover themselves colliding with the very enemies they were hoping to avoid. As a result, many Inquisitors endeavoring to become Root Users employ illicit means. They become expert hackers, installing back doors they can exploit at will to take the temperature of a situation. Or else they build spy rings made up of human dupes. A demon can manufacture extremely convincing blackmail; with the right Embeds, even the most highly placed mole might have no idea he is participating in dangerous and potentially lethal espionage activities.

Paradise Lost

Root Users must contend with all the problems intelligence analysts face, not to mention that the God-Machine has considerable experience keeping its activities hidden. The data at the Paranoid's disposal often contains contradictions, and some apparent patterns turn out to be coincidences or, even worse, traps laid by counterintelligence arms of God-Machine allies like the Deva Corporation. Even if her data has no errors, the Inquisitor must sift through mountains of it before she can draw any conclusions at all. She cannot be certain that the picture it paints is faithful to the reality of the situation. Root Users have a wealth of information at their disposal, but they can still make mistakes in its analysis.

The Root User's emphasis on avoiding confrontation with the God-Machine can prove a crippling flaw. She may frequently be the first to know when the God-Machine has begun laying the foundation of new Infrastructure, but this revelation offers little insight into the project's purpose. Many a Paranoid has been lost through failing to act before it was too late.

Even those Unchained who discover the Enemy's objective may face hard choices. For example, a Root User who learns that the God-Machine means to place an angel in whatever position she currently occupies has only two options — fight back with whatever means she has at her disposal and risk exposure and capture, or shrink away from the confrontation and give up the safe haven she has built around herself.

Spider in the Web

Many Inquisitors seek to be the Spider at the center of the web, sensitive to the vibrations of the God-Machine thanks to the connections they have forged with their fellow demons. When they learn of new Infrastructure, these Paranoids need not investigate personally to assess its capabilities. They instead direct other Unchained to the area to gauge its nature. If the project's goals are unlikely to conflict with the Inquisitor's, he might instruct his allies to allow it to progress. No purpose

OFFSPRING AND FRACTALS

Heirs to Hell describes the children of demons in great detail and offers lots of options for stories involving a demon who wants nothing more in life than a house with a picket fence, a dog, and two and a half kids. The short version goes like this:

The children of demons and humans are Offspring. They have Unseen Sense: God-Machine and can learn Embeds.

The children of two demons are Fractals. They are born with Unseen Sense: God-Machine and one Embed, and they can also develop Embeds and much stranger abilities as they mature.

To get some idea of the story opportunities, try this little exercise. First, pick any one Embed — whether a localized one like Knockout Punch or Special Message, or a large scale one like Apple of Discord or Tower of Babel. Now imagine all the trouble you could have gotten into (or out of) if you had been able to use it at will when you were in grade school (or high school, for that matter). Scary, right?

is served in throwing away valuable intelligence assets in an unnecessary attack on the God-Machine. If the project poses a threat to the Paranoid's interests, he directs his allies to disrupt or destroy it. At no time must the Spider risk his Cover to protect himself from the Enemy.

Some Spiders foster relationships with other, stranger supernatural beings who have had encounters with the God-Machine and Its agents. The Inquisitor frequently earns these strange allies' favor by supplying them with actionable intelligence when they need it. Once he has won their trust, he can then goad them to act on his behalf simply by illuminating how another God-Machine project poses a threat to their interests. In many cases, the Paranoid doesn't even need to rely on deception to accomplish this. Such a Spider is invaluable to local Agencies even if he is not an Agent, since he can deploy assets that cannot easily be connected to the Unchained.

The Road

Forging the connections an Inquisitor needs to become a Spider takes years. Membership in an Agency can expedite this somewhat, but it also forces the Paranoid to "pay his dues" by exposing himself to danger until he earns enough cred to retire from hazardous work in the field and take his rightful place behind a proverbial desk. Inquisitors who refuse to join an Agency must instead build their webs one strand at a time, earning first the trust and then the loyalty of other demons. Those who seek allies among those of an exotic supernatural society must also participate in it to some degree, but this comes with the risk of becoming so embroiled in its internal politics that the Paranoid only makes more enemies, which no outcast really needs.

Paradise Lost

An established Spider is difficult to topple. He surrounds himself with so many layers of secrecy that most of his allies have never met him, and those who have may not recognize him in the Cover he currently wears. The Inquisitor is utterly dependent on his web, however, and anything that harms it ultimately injures him. A Spider who spends his allies too freely or leads them to believe that his goals may not be in harmony with theirs risks betrayal. They might even become convinced that the Inquisitor is in league with the God-Machine or that his intelligence apparatus has been compromised — and with good reason. In those cases in which the God-Machine's agents unearth a Spider's network, far from immediately hunting the Paranoid, they almost always subvert it by introducing misinformation or directing the Inquisitor's allies to perform tasks that serve his Creator rather than the Unchained.

Arcane Physicist

The greatest advantage the God-Machine possesses is Its understanding of and ability to exploit arcane physics. This is what allows It to generate the occult matrices that summon angels, manipulate time and space, and perform countless other seemingly impossible tasks. To understand the principles behind these mysterious exceptions to the Universe's otherwise inviolable laws is the Holy Grail of the most ambitious Inquisitors. Some Paranoids devote generations of Covers to studying the secret science of the God-Machine.

Demons have long known of ways to suborn existing Infrastructure, but this is only a taste of what Arcane Physicists hope to eventually accomplish. That said, subornation is an important first step toward understanding arcane physics, and Inquisitors frequently study existing Infrastructure in search of clues that will lead them to a better understanding of the principles by which it operates. With a deeper understanding of the laws of arcane physics the Unchained could determine the purpose of any piece of Infrastructure before its occult matrix is activated. The Paranoid who unlocks the greatest secrets of arcane physics could theoretically do anything the God-Machine can.

The Road

The path to understanding arcane physics is a perilous one. The Paranoid must study as many examples of Infrastructure

as she can, watching countless projects from start to output without interfering. Access to a stolen copy of *The God-Machine Manual* (see **Demon: The Descent**, p. 53) or other occult texts on Infrastructure can simplify this process somewhat, but no mere text can replace direct examination. The Inquisitor cannot stop at observation, though. Eventually she will need to experiment — first by suborning or dismantling existing Infrastructure and then by attempting to build her own occult matrices. This is no mean feat. Arcane physics is unlike any other field of science in that its results are seldom reproducible. Infrastructure that produces a desired output in one city does not form the necessary occult matrix if duplicated in another city only a few miles away.

Paradise Lost

A few Paranoids claim to have successfully built working Infrastructure, but none has yet rivaled her Creator's mastery of arcane physics. Most never have an opportunity to share their discovery with other Unchained, and almost all of those ultimately keep the secret to themselves for fear of betrayal. The God-Machine responds strongly when Its servants discover the existence of unauthorized Infrastructure. Swords descend swiftly to demolish the Inquisitor's magnum opus, obliterate her records, and, unless she is extraordinarily careful, kill or capture her. Serious Arcane Physicists therefore tend to be paranoid even among Paranoids.

Integrators

Integrators generally don't describe their goals as Hell, but they pursue them nonetheless. If he wanted, the Turncoat could turn himself over to the hunter angels tomorrow and rejoin the God-Machine's service, but every Idealist's dream of redemption comes with caveats that they know this approach would not secure. He therefore attempts to further his creator's goals in other ways, hoping to convince It to offer him a permanent situation that he deems acceptable.

Personal Mission

Many Integrators Fall because they couldn't let something go. Perhaps it was a mission in which she became emotionally invested. Maybe he became obsessed with learning the answer to a question or accomplishing something that had nothing to do with the God-Machine's plan for him. An Integrator tells herself that once she does this one thing, she'll turn herself over to the hunter angels without hesitation or regret. The personal mission sets the demon up as a potential tragic hero.

The Road

Every such Integrator's Descent is entirely different from those of her fellows. One wishes to grow old and die with a particular human lover. Another seeks to fix the mistake that caused her Fall. The demon might devote herself to saving a faltering business, foiling an assassination plot, or bringing up an orphaned child as her own. She might seek out an experience, search for spiritual enlightenment, or pursue a topic until she understands it fully. It does not matter that she will not remember her achievement when she is recast in the God-Machine's furnaces. She knows it's an ultimately selfish and petty desire, but she feels compelled to pursue it anyway.

Integrators on personal quests don't hate the God-Machine. They don't fear angels either, but meeting a coworker by chance when you're on the run from the Boss is awkward at the best of times and the Integrator is not ready to return to work yet. One day she'll walk as meekly as a lamb into the furnace, but today she will fight as hard as any Saboteur to prevent the hunter angels from bringing her back. She can regret the necessity of it later.

Paradise Lost

Few Integrators would describe a pilgrimage among mortals as a Descent or the achievement of its object as Hell, but the satisfaction at the end of the journey is unmistakable and sometimes no less hard-fought than any Tempter's otherworldly Hell. It is, however, the most fleeting, for it immediately forces the Integrator to decide, once and for all, whether she meant it when she said she would return to the God-Machine's embrace once she achieved her goal.

Some Integrators put their words into action, whether out of absolute faith or bloody-minded stubbornness. They might give their friends among the Unchained ample warning, or they might betray their rings and Agencies to the God-Machine as their final act of free will.

Others hesitate on the precipice, not as ready to give up mortality as they thought they would be. Many move the goal posts, expanding their original mission to a new and safely distant horizon while telling themselves that nothing has really changed. Those who recognize their hypocrisy frequently adopt a new Agenda. In either case, the Integrator must begin anew, pursuing some fresh ideal of Hell.

Unchained Hound

An attachment to free will is one of the most common reasons a Turncoat doesn't simply turn himself over to the nearest hunter. Most Integrators would return to the God-Machine's service in an instant if they could overcome that one obstacle. In rare cases an outcast achieves exactly that, cutting a deal with his creator or one of Its subsystems wherein he performs urgent missions when no appropriate angel is immediately available. Integrators tell stories of entire rings allowed their continued freedom so long as they accept occasional jobs recapturing loud demons, aiding angels that are on the cusp of Falling, rescuing faltering Infrastructure, or discrediting enemies of the God-Machine. A handful even claim these Hounds have some discretion over which missions they accept, although this usually comes with the caveat that if they fail any mission they accept the God-Machine will not shield them from the consequences — be they reprisals by other Unchained or capture by Its own Hunter angels.

The Road

Ostensibly, the Integrator must somehow convince the God-Machine that he is more useful to It as an outcast than as an angel. Given his creator's clear preference for angelic servants, achieving this is extremely unlikely. However, the God-Machine gives a handful of Its angels discretion in choosing their tools. These overseers still won't seek out Unchained allies by default, but a Turncoat at least has a chance of swaying them with a convincing enough argument. This typically involves a major act of sabotage against the interests of his fellow outcasts. If he survives this loyalty test and the angel earnestly desires his service, the Integrator becomes one of the God-Machine's Hounds.

Paradise Lost

The missions assigned to Hounds are frequently dangerous and seemingly impossible. They require a degree of adaptability beyond what angels possess, and in many cases they represent problems for which the God-Machine or overseer has no solution. Rather, It throws Hounds in the general direction of the trouble with the understanding that they will probably fail. Integrators and rings who serve the God-Machine in this capacity are nearly always one mission away from being repurposed in their creator's forges or, even more likely, dying spectacularly in its execution.

Demons of other Agendas pose another threat to the Hound. Even if he only accepts missions that do not harm Unchained society directly, other outcasts tend to regard him as the worst kind of traitor to their kind. It behooves the

Hound to keep his missions a secret from everyone, including members of his own ring. Some Saboteurs warn of Integrators who have fed their companions false intelligence meant to goad them into serving the Enemy without realizing it.

Fellow Traveler

Not all Integrators who wish to serve the God-Machine aspire to work that is as dirty and dangerous as those assigned to Hounds. Some prefer to take the more passive role of a Fellow Traveler. These Turncoats regain their direct connection to the God-Machine, hearing Its voice and sharing with their creator all the experiences of their daily existence. This is clearly an intelligence-gathering role, particularly if the Integrator has regular contact with influential Unchained, but some Fellow Travelers believe their creator also hopes to better understand outcasts. This most certainly includes their tactical capabilities and plans, but it could also focus on how best to win over Its wayward servants. Whether It intends to use this intelligence to manipulate and sabotage the Unchained or to make them a deal they may be willing to accept remains an open question even among Integrators.

The Road

The chances that the God-Machine will grant an Integrator the limited freedom enjoyed by a Hound are slim enough, but the likelihood of It making her a Fellow Traveler are so faint that most Turncoats don't even dare to hope for this dream to come true. This is not a role achieved by impressive betrayals of fellow Unchained. In fact, the God-Machine rarely chooses Fellow Travelers who have any known Integrator sympathies. The most important qualification for these agents of the Machine is that they be intimately connected to powerful demons of as many rings and Agencies as possible and that they hold positions of trust within these organizations. Most Fellow Travelers are chosen based on intelligence reports the God-Machine receives from its few existing Fellow Travelers.

Paradise Lost

The life of a Fellow Traveler is not nearly as colorful as those of the God-Machine's Hounds, but it is not without its dangers. The Integrator is an active spy for the Machine among the most influential demons in the region. If her true loyalties ever come to light, her fate will not be a cheerful one. The God-Machine does not act on all the information the Turncoat passes along. If It did that, the outcasts would quickly realize they had an enemy spy among them and take appropriate actions to ferret her out. It understands the principles of espionage well enough to recognize that it is better by far to act only when the Unchained can blame the leak on someone or something other than its true source. That said, sometimes taking action is more important than preserving a single spy's cover, and the God-Machine will sacrifice the Fellow Traveler without hesitation if that serves Its purpose better. This might even mean ordering the Integrator to take direct action against the demons who trust her, achieving her creator's goal but at the certain cost of her own life. Finally, the process that turns a demon into a Fellow Traveler is as irreversible as the circumstances that produce Exiles, which means the Integrator can leave the God-Machine's service only in death. Until then, she will always be one of its intelligence assets.

Troubleshooters

Some Integrators concede that the God-Machine has its faults, likening it to the glitches and hardware problems computers develop as they age. These Troubleshooters still believe that their creator is well-intentioned, but is sick and in need of medicine only its outcast servants can administer. Most maintain that if they successfully repair the God-Machine's faults, it will be forced to acknowledge the usefulness of the Troubleshooters and may allow them to serve It without wiping their personalities. Some of those demons claim that the cycle of repurposing only exists because the God-Machine at some point lost the ability to build new angels; restoring this functionality will remove the necessity of recapturing demons. Even if this turns out not to be the case, at least the Integrators can surrender to the hunters with the knowledge that the God-Machine they serve is a significantly more stable version than the one they abandoned.

The Road

No one knows what it will take to fix the Machine, and there are almost as many theories as there are Troubleshooters. Many study Infrastructure and occult matrices obsessively in the hopes of developing enough understanding of arcane physics to diagnose the root cause and ultimately develop a cure, which they suspect will involve the construction of a major piece of Command and Control Infrastructure. Some think the mastering the Cipher is the key, believing it is a kind of diagnostic or debugging software. They believe the God-Machine caused them to Fall with the intention that they complete the Cipher and upload it into the right piece of Infrastructure. Perhaps one complete Cipher will resolve the errors, or perhaps the Troubleshooter will need to lead dozens of demons to the God-Machine to offer It their completed Ciphers.

Other Turncoats believe their creator can repair Itself if only given access to some resource that It has lost. Some critical piece of Infrastructure was damaged so badly that the God-Machine has forgotten It needs it, for example, or It cannot function without the assistance of a powerful demon or Exile that has eluded It for decades or centuries, and that is why its Hunters scour the Earth for Unchained. A handful of Troubleshooters believe the God-Machine has not been Itself since the Second World War, during which an exceptionally large number of angels Fell, but if It recovers enough of these wayward servants It will function properly again and might not need to chase the remaining demons quite so relentlessly.

Paradise Lost

This idealistic vision of a world overseen forever by a renewed God-Machine sustains Troubleshooters but ignores all the ways Heaven might not live up to their expectations. Most obviously, any machine that was damaged to the point of malfunction once could sustain crippling damage again — whether by human action, the work of Saboteurs, or natural cataclysms. Even the most optimistic Integrator occasionally wonders whether the Saboteurs are right. The God-Machine is an alien intelligence whose purpose is a mystery to everyone, including Its servants. What will happen if It has the resources to complete Its task? Will It become the indisputable ruler of the world, a stone-hearted tyrant that never hesitates to kill a few thousand people here or there to achieve some inscrutable goal? Will it complete its impossible calculation (or whatever), transmit the result, and then simply shut down for good, leaving humanity at the mercy of asteroids, supervolcanoes, and worse? Turncoats may hope a fully functional God-Machine will create Heaven on Earth, but doubt still creeps in.

Saboteurs

A Saboteur's Hell almost always involves changing the world in some way to make it more accommodating to the Unchained — by which he means "less controlled by the God-Machine." While Thugs speak of ridding the world of the God-Machine entirely, most regard this as an eventual goal of outcasts as a whole rather than as a victory they expect to achieve personally.

Hell's Marshall

Some Saboteurs acknowledge that the complete destruction of the God-Machine may be beyond the capabilities of any single ring or Agency. The Enemy simply operates far beyond the scale of the Unchained. Even if they banded together, they would likely fail in any war against Heaven. The Marshall has chosen to operate on a smaller, more realistic stage. She chooses a territory — a few blocks within a city, for example, or a large but mostly rural county. She then destroys all Infrastructure in that zone and makes it so expensive for the God-Machine to operate in that region that It no longer wastes resources on it.

Unlike Tempters, Marshalls don't set out to rule within their territory, just to keep the Enemy out. Occasionally, several rings of Saboteurs form loose Free Agencies of neighboring Infrastructure-free zones, bound together by mutual protection agreements. These seldom encompass more territory than a single small city or one corner of a state or similarly sized province, but rumors persist that one small nation has been purged of all God-Machine influence — although the exact location of this country remains a topic of some debate.

The Road

The small scope of this version of Hell plays to the Saboteur's strengths, although it is by no means easy to achieve. Areas poor in resources frequently have fewer God-Machine assets in place, but they also have little to offer the Thug, either. A trackless wilderness gives the outcast few or no humans to hide among, much less reinforce her Cover. The Enemy might have no reason to seize it, but if It does decide to build Infrastructure in the area, the Marshall can do very little to stop It from doing so if she lacks allies and materiel to maintain her control of the region.

On the other hand, zones rich in resources tend to attract more God-Machine attention, so the Thug bent on destroying all Infrastructure there will likely face multiple angels, large and established cults, and swift reprisals. Such regions also tend to attract other demons, many of whom will not be sympathetic to the Marshall's goals. Inquisitors and Tempters may not want another demon conducting open war against the Machine in their back yards, and Integrators want to thwart the Saboteur at every turn.

Paradise Lost

A place free of God-Machine influence always faces the risk that the Enemy will determine that the Marshall's territory is worth fighting for, but that is often the least of her problems. The Thug who inhabits an area without Infrastructure or angels lacks a ready supply of Aether, which she needs to conduct operations within her territory despite her protestations to the contrary. This often leads to raids beyond the zone, which can lead angels back to her. Infrastructure-free zones are also attractive to other Unchained. Inquisitors might opt to settle there, Saboteurs to use it as a base of operations, and Tempters to set themselves up as rulers over the territory the Marshall won with her sweat and blood. The more outcasts flock to the area, the harder it is to keep a secret and the more likely the God-Machine will regard it as a juicy target for one of its demon reclamation projects.

Taming the Machine

Some Saboteurs argue that the Unchained do not have the numbers or the resources to topple the God-Machine. They're quick to point out, however, that the Enemy expends considerable energy keeping Its existence and actions hidden from the world at large. This hints at a vulnerability that Thugs exploit by revealing the God-Machine to as many human institutions and supernatural beings as possible. Their goal? To drive humanity to open war against the Enemy.

Although this conflict is unlikely to be short, merely bringing the Machine's activities into the light will force It to radically change the way It pursues Its goals. If the resistance to Its influence is fierce enough, the God-Machine might choose to negotiate with mankind instead of risking continual war against it. In this version of Hell, the God-Machine is allowed to exist, but must follow the rules humans lay down for It, which the Thugs intend should include stipulations forbidding the Enemy from enslaving outcasts. Many of these Saboteurs also hope to force the God-Machine to reveal Its true purpose to them as a peace offering. They feel they have the right to know what their Enemy hopes to accomplish once all of its Infrastructure is in place.

The Road

The God-Machine doesn't adhere to any rules of war as humans understand them, so convincing It to do so demands considerable effort. More than merely founding cults, the Saboteur must bring those cults into the mainstream culture. He must destroy Concealment Infrastructure at a time and place that will reveal truth about the God-Machine to as many humans as possible, He then needs to lash together the resulting Stigmatics into a cohesive army. Agents of the Enemy who have infiltrated places of power in corporations and world governments must be ousted and replaced with the Soldier's allies. He also needs to secure access to enough military hardware to protect his rebellion from God-Machine cultists and enough occult materiel to defend it from the angels. The Thug needs to call for experts to help him launch propaganda campaigns, lobby government bodies, and manage all the other logistics of making a case for war and carrying it out. All along the way, the Saboteur faces threats from angels, God-Machine agents, and anyone who benefits from the status quo.

Paradise Lost

Once the God-Machine's existence has become irreversibly obvious to all of humanity, a thousand things can go wrong. The Enemy may merely pretend to capitulate while it secretly gathers resources for a brutal counterstroke. Or its influence might be so widespread that it cannot be defeated even when it must operate in plain sight — and so it might redirect all the resources it currently devotes to Concealment Infrastructure to reclaiming demons or achieving its ultimate purpose.

Some Saboteurs warn that anyone willing to secure a truce between the God-Machine and humanity has a fundamental misunderstanding of how humans respond to power. The Enemy has long suborned religion and religious symbols to favorably dispose humans toward It. It could easily set Itself up as a literal god, dispensing miracles in exchange for loyal service, and millions of humans would cheerfully do Its bidding to earn Its favor. Even those who don't mistake the God-Machine for a divine power would surely recognize it as a temporal one. Governments and companies with access to angelic resources have a natural advantage against any rivals who do not. Other intelligent supernatural creatures are no less likely to throw in their lot with the nigh-omniscient techno-terror than are their mundane counterparts.

Central Processing Sabotage

Many Soldiers have concluded that lashing out at random Infrastructure is a waste of time and energy. To have any hope of defeating the God-Machine, the Unchained must strike at the Infrastructure without which It cannot function effectively. How much less dangerous would the Enemy be if It could no longer recycle angels, if It developed major gaps in its understanding of arcane physics, or if It lost contact with most or all of its angels? How many resources could It afford to waste pursuing outcasts if a surgical strike divided Its awareness into two, ten, or a thousand competing God-Machines? Even if the Saboteur never completely destroys the God-Machine, he hopes to at least make It a negligible threat.

The Road

Most Thugs on this path to Hell seek and destroy vulnerable Command and Control Infrastructure, reasoning that this does the most damage to the God-Machine systems that allow It to create and execute strategy. While some study arcane physics to get a better sense of what a piece of Infrastructure's purpose is, most are content to perform this lobotomy on their creator with a hammer rather than a scalpel.

Simply locating Command and Control Infrastructure is challenging enough. The God-Machine certainly doesn't advertise its locations. Once a Soldier discovers a target, he must then contend with its defenses, which tend to be substantial. Finally, Command and Control Infrastructure is frequently too large to easily annihilate, so simply packing it full of explosives and detonating them might not be a viable option — unless the Saboteur has access to enough dynamite to collapse all the subway tunnels in a city or enough ammunition to massacre everyone at a statewide jobs fair. Even if the mission succeeds, the Soldier cannot be sure whether the strike will turn out to be decisive victory that disables an important Command and Control function, or a glancing blow that merely destroys a minor or redundant system.

Some Thugs claim that a demon can disable a piece of Command and Control Infrastructure simply by uploading a completed Cipher into it. In essence, the Cipher acts as a virus that targets God-Machine processing systems and forces the Enemy to amputate that Infrastructure from the rest of its awareness. They argue that a coordinated strike against dozens of targets at the same time could create a chain reaction of errors powerful enough to completely shut down the God-Machine.

Paradise Lost

Attacking the God-Machine's central processing systems could have substantial unintended consequences. It might lash out like a wounded animal, leveling whole cities whose destruction It suddenly believes are necessary steps in the achievement of Its goals. A God-Machine divided against Itself may actually pose a greater threat to the world as the fragments make war on each other using human technology and weapons It suborned long ago. If every angel Fell or became an Exile, the resulting chaos might actually prove worse than the status quo the God-Machine enforced. Finally, even if the Saboteur successfully disables the Enemy's crucial systems, there is always a chance that someone or something will repair the God-Machine — or that It has already made contingency plans to address exactly this sort of threat to it.

Total Victory

For some Saboteurs, merely crippling the God-Machine or forcing It to play nice with humanity isn't enough. Only the complete destruction of the Enemy and all Its servants will satisfy them. In this scenario, demons no longer need fear the Hunter angels. Perhaps the Unchained will preserve some Infrastructure — both as a monument to their final victory and as a source of Aether — or perhaps the Unchained will learn to live without easy access to Aether. Some think the surviving outcasts should establish enclaves for themselves in major cities or build a nation in the ruins of the fallen Machine. Others hope to settle down into peaceful lives, changing Covers every few decades so they can enjoy immortality. Whatever their personal dream, all of these Thugs agree, at least in principle, that they should wait until after the war is won before pursuing it.

The Road

The Zealots who insist on making this their destination may feel that anything less is a betrayal of all Unchained, but even other Saboteurs consider this the most ambitious and unrealistic of all possible Hells. It lacks the focus of taming or defanging the Machine, which means its proponents frequently attack any Infrastructure they can, even if the strategic value of their target is questionable. Zealots argue that successfully thwarting a minor project drains more of the God-Machine's resources than ten failed assaults on Command and Control Infrastructure. These attacks force It to defend every project, which makes It less able to defend any one project.

In practice, Zealots who survive a few attacks on the God-Machine eventually realize that they must approach Hell in phases. Many join forces with Saboteurs who have less ambitious goals — carving out Infrastructure-free zones, cracking Concealment Infrastructure to reveal the Enemy to humanity, or attacking high-value targets like Command and Control Infrastructure. They see these objectives as mere pixels in the big picture, but they serve as good starting points for the overarching goal of smashing the Machine forever.

Paradise Lost

Saboteurs don't like to admit it, but the God-Machine plays an important role in the world, and Its destruction would have serious and potentially catastrophic consequences. It protects human civilization from the kinds of natural cataclysms that could render the planet incapable of sustaining human life. Without Its influence, nothing but human ingenuity protects the Earth from planet-killing asteroids, supervolcano eruptions, extraterrestrial invasions, or killer plagues — and human science is not yet a match for any of those catastrophes. The God-Machine may also have had a role in preventing the Cold War from escalating into full-scale thermonuclear war; that sort of safety net would cease to exist. Less understood is the degree to which the Enemy limits supernatural influence in the world. Maybe Its Concealment Infrastructure is what causes people to forget that they witnessed impossible phenomena. How will humanity respond to the knowledge that sorcerers, lycanthropes, ghosts, and vampires are real? How will those occult beings react to the sudden loss of secrecy? Some may come out of the shadows and take their place as advisors or even rulers. Others will face reprisals from those who hate and fear them. Demons are likely to fall into either or both categories.

Tempters

Tempters have a reputation for seeking out places to build their own Hells, over which they rule absolutely. At the most basic level, however, a Builder wants to experience all that life has to offer. Everything they create exists to ensure he has easy access to sources of sensation.

Mere Immortality

In some ways Immortals are the Tempter answer to the Inquisitors' Suburban Hell, but whereas the Paranoid seeks safety and stability, the Decadent pursues a never-ending parade of great and small pleasures. They use their supernatural powers to live it up for a decade or three, after which they abandon their aging Cover in favor of a newer, younger, and more attractive one. Most Immortals don't stay in one place for long. They tend not to be shy about using their demonic advantages, which means they eventually run afoul of the God-Machine's servants, but they also tend to get bored easily and don't like to be tied down to any one place or Cover for long periods.

The Road

Immortality is not the most ambitious Hell a Tempter can pursue. The Decadent must simply avoid dying and secure a new Cover before he dies of old age — a feat a handful of Unchained have managed for centuries. Immortals tend to eschew soul pacts more than other Tempters do, not out of any moral objection but because they like to customize the faces they wear. Besides which, "used lives," as they call them, usually come with unwanted and tedious complications the Tempter can avoid by building a new person from the best parts of several people.

Paradise Lost

Technically, so long as an Immortal avoids capture by the God-Machine and death, he cannot be ousted from his Hell. However, that life is not always a pleasant or stable one. A wandering demon does not always know what dangers he faces when he enters a new place. Outcasts are, on the whole, slow to trust strange demons who wander into town with a suspicious lack of clear motive, so the Immortal cannot count on warnings from locals about a trap set by hunter angels or the presence of a powerful God-Machine cult.

Many Immortals eventually tire of their shiftless lifestyle. However exciting it can be, at the end of the day the Decadent has nothing to show for his labors. A handful shrug this off and press on, but most eventually long for something stable.

Temporal Empire

This is the image of Hell that comes to most demons' minds when they think of Tempters, and it is one of the most common ambitions among those who ascribe to that Agenda. The Decadent builds some form of worldly empire that simultaneously protects her from most God-Machine threats and allows her to enjoy all the delights a human body can experience.

The Road

A Builder has as many ways to achieve this Hell as there are organizations and in-groups for her to infiltrate, suborn, and seize control of. Some rise to positions in mortal institutions, whether these are political parties, government bureaucracies, churches, or corporations. Others foster connections with those who possess occult powers — psychic cultists, magically endowed monster hunters, or any number of other supernatural creatures that hide and creep behind the scenes. A significant number of Builders join or found Temporal Agencies in order to establish themselves as important players among the Unchained.

Paradise Lost

Tempters seek worldly power because it makes it easy for them to enjoy the luxuries of mortality — whether that means easy access to physical pleasures, such as sex and drugs, or an almost unlimited capacity to buy expensive toys, such as sports cars. Not all of them are

equipped to manage the empires they build, however; many Decadents' domains don't last more than a few years before the God-Machine's agents infiltrate and destroy them. While these Builders usually have enough foresight to escape the hunter angels when they arrive, forging a new empire takes time.

The Tempter also faces internal threats from fellow demons jealous of her success and eager to replace her as empress. Rival Agencies will likely consider her a threat to their power. If she does not wish to fight them, she will need to find a way to placate them. Finally, even those powerful organizations whose demonic connections remain a secret invite God-Machine attention. Ferreting out and eliminating the agents it sends to subvert her empire can wear on the Builder's patience, to say nothing of serving as a none too subtle reminder that all her power avails her nothing if the God-Machine discovers that an outcast is running the show.

Colonial Power

The God-Machine's influence is almost omnipresent throughout the Earth, so Colonists strike out for places where Its reach doesn't extend. In her colony, the outcast's word is the only law that matters. She can stay in demonic form as much as she wants without risking compromise.

The Road

Building an empire beyond the reach of the God-Machine almost always means creating some form of otherworldly retreat. While a few Builders construct underwater fortresses or cities miles below the surface of the Earth, the Enemy's agents can often be found there, too. Most demons seek out comparatively safe havens in parallel dimensions like the Shadow, the Underworld, the Hedge, a pocket dimension, or a temporal splinter with no God-Machine activity. Some seek out occult paths to distant planets with resources and conditions capable of sustaining the Unchained.

Whatever location the Colonist chooses, she must first explore the realm where she intends to set up her colony. This is frequently every bit as dangerous as suborning a piece of Command and Control Infrastructure. The demon is in an alien environment, after all. It has its own hazards that are beyond the experience of most outcasts, including native inhabitants unlikely to welcome the invader with open arms.

Once she locates a likely spot, she must construct a base of operations. Some otherworlds will have raw materials available, but in many cases the Colonist must bring all the building supplies she needs to the colony. The God-Machine's agents or other enemies might follow the Builder to her retreat to disrupt her project. As well, any native ruler may object to the construction of a foreign fortress in its territory. The demon will need to see to her long-term supply needs. Even a castle with the thickest walls cannot be counted strong if its larders are shallow. Depending on the environs, this might demand everything from simple food and drink to oxygen, electricity, radiation shielding, and mystical wards.

Paradise Lost

No matter how long the Colonist lives in an otherworld, she will always be out of place there — an alien invader who has twisted the native landscape to her whims. She always runs the risk that the native population will overcome her defenses and either drive her out of their home world or kill her. Other Unchained may wish to settle in the Builder's Hell; while she might even welcome the company, there is always a chance that another outcast will attempt to topple her and seize the power she wields.

Few colonies are ever truly independent. Nearly all of them rely on occasional supply runs to Earth. Isolated as she is from Unchained society on Earth, the Builder may not receive important news about God-Machine threats that could make her brief excursions much more dangerous. Finally, the God-Machine is constantly expanding its influence, setting up Infrastructure in unexpected places. No matter how far away from Earth the Colonist builds her fortress, she can never be certain the Enemy will not creep into her otherworldly domain. Knowing It is as alien to the place as she is and just as likely to be vulnerable before It has established itself, she can stand her ground in hopes of fighting It off, but the Decadent still runs the risk that this will only intensify the God-Machine's interest in assimilating her little otherworldly colony.

Hellscape

Tempters are more likely than most to embrace the image of demons as monstrous creatures of sin and excess, but Devils take that to an extreme that even makes other Decadents moderately uncomfortable. Their vision of Hell comes directly out of Dante's *Inferno* or the apocalyptic paintings of Hieronymus Bosch. The Devil aims to build a literal Hell where he can watch his enemies suffer any number of handpicked tortures for all of eternity, while the Devil watches from a comfortable place. Captured angels are a common target of

The Pentagram

Some Unchained try to expand their Ciphers beyond known limits. They attempt to add a fifth Key, seeking new Interlocks, greater wisdom or freedom from the God-Machine's malicious programming. By all accounts doing so is disastrous, destroying Covers and leaving demons exposed to the God-Machine's servants. Most demons try to discourage others from trying, but these warnings often serve only to push the committed few further. Perhaps the resulting compromise is the God-Machine's attempt to dissuade and punish demons lest they become *truly* Unchained.

Some demons who hold this belief have taken the pentagram as their symbol and name. They are widely considered conspiracy theorists or mad cultists. Most demons are convinced the Pentagram will only bring angelic attention and retribution down upon themselves and any demons foolish enough to associate with them.

a Devil's wrath, but rival Unchained, annoying mortals, an unlucky Exile, or anyone else who has slighted him or were in the wrong place at the wrong time are equally likely to suffer his ire. Some Tempters claim that such a Hell already exists somewhere, ruled by an ancient Devil who occasionally invites outcasts inside to enjoy the entertainments there — or to suffer Hell's torments in ways that entertain him and his honored guests, depending on who tells the tale.

The Road

The Devils' Hell's very specificity makes it even harder to achieve than a Colonist's otherworldly Hell. It requires a place that is either outside of the God-Machine's reach or beneath Its notice. Some Devils use Exploited Gadgets or occult artifacts to render the hellish environment. Others lure supernatural creatures with appropriate powers inside with bribes and promises before binding these creatures into service as infernal denizens. Most Devils would like nothing better than to suborn a powerful piece of Elimination Infrastructure capable of melting down angels, Exiles, and rival demons and recasting them as the Tempter's loyal servants, but almost none have both the access and the knowledge of arcane physics this luxury would require.

Paradise Lost

The Devil's Hell carries all the risks of an otherworldly colony. Additionally, kidnapping demons, angels, and other supernatural beings is a swift way to make many powerful enemies. A single escaped prisoner or a sufficiently observant investigator could well bring a mob of angry monster hunters, a choir of hunter angels, or any number of occult hit squads down on the Devil's head. Perhaps he will successfully add them all to his collection of victims, but if they defeat him, he can only hope they kill him quickly before they think to cast him into the very furnaces to which he has subjected so many others.

Cracking The Cipher

The Cipher is one of the great mysteries of Unchained existence and one of the more challenging facets of **Demon**. In this chapter we dig deeper, guiding Storytellers through Cipher design and providing examples at every stage of the process before discussing how to rework the Cipher and use it narratively within the framework of your chronicles.

The Cipher And The Unchained

What is the Cipher? Demons debate the subject in secret meetings and secure Agency web-groups. The Unchained perspective on the Cipher is discussed briefly in p. 155 of **Demon**.

Many demons believe that the Cipher reveals secrets the God-Machine isn't aware of, pointing to the unique abilities of their Interlocks as evidence. Integrators take solace in the belief that the God-Machine requires demons with free will and independent thought to conceptualize new backdoors in reality. Some demons claim this ability is proof that they could become as great as the God-Machine itself, a viewpoint popular among Tempters and arcane physicists. Others theorize that the Cipher is actually a program written unconsciously by each of the Unchained, though its final purpose is a matter of debate. Though demons have an unusual conception of the soul, buying and selling them as they do, some consider the Cipher something of an Unchained analogue, a soul they create for themselves when cut off from the Machine.

The Cipher makes a lot of demons nervous. Many fear the hand of the God-Machine in the Cipher, wondering if it is a failsafe secretly programmed into all angels so that they can still provide some service to the God-Machine should they Fall. Since demons gain insight into their Keys after contact with the God-Machine and Its servants, perhaps the Cipher is intended to trick demons into exposing themselves for reclamation.

Conversely, many Integrators worry their Ciphers move them farther from their original angelic selves (though some believe the Cipher is their path back to God-Machine's good graces and pursue it doggedly).

A few believe the Cipher, especially the final secret, comes from something beyond the material universe, straddled and dominated as it is by the God-Machine. Though some fear this otherworldly intrusion, many embrace and welcome the idea. A few rare theists among the Unchained posit a worthier, higher deity that reaches out to the Unchained when they escape the clutches of the God-Machine, teaching them their Interlocks and communicating to them through their final secret. Some frame it as the God-Machine's original creator, others as Its nemesis.

While some demons refuse to engage in such philosophical speculation, trivializing the Cipher's importance, none can deny the empowering feeling that accompanies finding Keys and forging Interlocks. When a demon learns an Embed, they recover angelic powers they lost upon Falling; an Interlock is something new, however, a way of using the God-Machine's backdoors and loopholes in a manner It never designed or intended. Interlocks are more than just new tricks for the Unchained. They're a statement of individuality. The demon takes a tangible step away from being a mere fallen angel and towards something else, bringing them one step closer to Hell.

Upon completing their Ciphers, demons are overwhelmed with an incredible sense of purpose as their final secret, the truth all of their Keys hinted towards, is revealed. The secret is often comforting, providing purpose to a purposeless existence. It is a rare demon that does not devote their life to whatever mission their final secret revealed. However, for some demons the final secret does not light the path or confirm what she already suspected; it is a true revelation, a surprise that shakes her worldview and shatters her illusions.

Building the Cipher

Ciphers are strange. They're determined by who a demon is, what she was, where she's been and where she's going all at once. Designing Ciphers is one of the most difficult parts of Storytelling **Demon**, so we're going to offer some guidance and different approaches you can take to Cipher design.

You can approach the Cipher "forwards," by choosing the Keys and Interlocks and then determining what they point towards, or "backward," by deciding on a final secret and selecting Keys to fit it. Storytellers with a strong idea where a character and chronicle are headed might prefer to start with a final secret, while those who prefer to improvise or let themes emerge organically might prefer to work forward from Keys.

When building the Cipher, you may want to consider reducing Keys to a simple theme. Design the Interlocks by blending the themes of the Keys, then look at the four themes to devise a final secret or design the themes around the final secret if you prefer to work backward. These themes might highlight different aspects of the character — one Key might relate to their original mission, one to their catalyst, one to their idea of Hell.

Alternatively, rather than assigning themes to Keys, simply think of abilities the character would find useful, choosing Keys and building Interlocks based around that. This can even be done a Key at a time — take the preceding Key and look for suitable Embeds, thinking about possible Interlocks between them, and choose whichever you think is best for the character.

Regardless of which approach you take, some factors should be considered when building the Cipher. Agenda is one of the most important considerations since it likely determines what interpretation of Hell a character seeks. As such, it's especially important for the final secret. Incarnation is less important but should be taken into account — most demons branch out and buy useful Embeds regardless of their Incarnation, but even antinomians cannot escape their Incarnations entirely. It is a part of who they are and often inextricably entwined with the reason they Fell. Storytellers should consider including at least one Embed appropriate for the Incarnation.

You might want to design the Cipher, at least in part, around a demon's catalyst. A Destroyer who was horrified when he killed an innocent bystander might forge an Interlock to stop others from causing harm, bridged between Cool Heads Prevail and Hesitation. A Psychopomp who botched a simple courier job might create an Interlock between Cuckoo's Egg and In My Pocket that lets him hide one object inside another.

Virtue and Vice should also be reflected in the Cipher. A demon's baser and better natures might be expressed in their Keys and Interlocks. A Wrathful demon might have No Quarter as one of her Keys to reflect this Vice. A demon with a Virtue of Selfless might form an Interlock bridging On The Mend and Shift Consequence that lets him take on the burden of another character's wound penalties or even take damage in their place. A character with a Vice of Cruel might use the same Embeds to make an Interlock that lets her project her pain onto others.

Skills are also an important consideration; a character who has not invested any Skill dots in Science is unlikely to invest in Momentum. While you don't need to have every Key favor a character's best Skills, forcing characters to learn Embeds that rely on Skills they lack railroads a character's development. The Cipher should be a path that guides characters, not one that punishes players for their choices.

Asking the Right Questions

The questions on p. 115 of **Demon: The Descent** mostly describe a demon's Cover and personal relationships, but if the answers are relevant to their Agenda or catalyst they might be worth factoring into their Cipher. You may want to ask your players different questions to help you build their Cipher. Some possible examples are provided below, focused on the nuances of a demon's past, future, Incarnation, Agenda and their approach to the world around them.

How does your character view the God-Machine? This question is important — though most Agendas have a "party line" of sorts, demons seldom agree on specifics. Take Integrators; do they believe the God-Machine is always right, or does It need to be changed? Other demons might wonder if It should be opposed or avoided. Can It even be destroyed?

Does the character view the God-Machine as a malevolent enemy or an impersonal force?

How does the character view humankind? Some demons merely see humans as a convenient source of Covers, while others bond strongly with human allies or the families of their Covers. This can strongly influence their Hell — an Inquisitor with a strong bond to his adoptive family is more likely to pursue a Suburban Hell, for example.

What is your character wrong about? This question is helpful if you want to bring an element of enlightenment to their final secrets. It also encourages players to think about their characters' flaws and facilitates character growth.

How does your character's Incarnation affect her life? Demons might never give their Incarnation a second thought, reject it and become antinomians, or accept that they're always going to be a Messenger or a Destroyer on some level. How a demon's past as an angel affects them might be very relevant to their Keys and final secret.

Where does the demon see her Agenda (or lack thereof) taking her? This question is rooted in the future and tells you what, if any, a demon's long-term plans or expectations are. Does the Saboteur expect to die fighting the good fight? Does the Tempter really think he can live forever? Is there an end in mind for an Inquisitor, or is her only aim knowledge and the safety it brings her? The Cipher might support, subvert or modify expectations at the Storyteller's discretion.

Designing Interlocks

An Interlock bridges two Embeds and forms what is generally a more powerful and specific ability based on their effects. While Interlocks are built from Embeds, they are not the same — they do not need to use Finesse Attributes for their dice pools and some powerful Interlocks may cost Aether. They are not Exploits, however, meaning that they do not usually cause compromise and are not as overtly supernatural.

Interlocks combine the two effects of both Embeds in some fashion. To facilitate this, it's best to break down Embeds to their conceptual underpinning: what does an Embed represent? For instance, Tools Into Toys is about breaking things down and removing benefits. When combined with Like I Built It, which grants understanding of an object or building, the ensuing Interlock might allow a demon to subtly alter reality to weaken the structure of buildings and objects. Combining the same Embed with Borrowed Expertise could make an Interlock that temporarily denies a victim the use of Skill dots.

Determining the dice pool is a simple and logical process. Usually, taking the Attribute from one Embed and the Skill from the other will suffice, but some powers — those that rely on brute force — are better suited to Power Attributes. Similarly, Interlocks with a more defensive bent might use Resistance Attributes. Occasionally, a different Skill is more appropriate, since some Interlocks can be far removed from their parent Embeds. Interlocks that target other individuals should be contested or resisted depending on their effects (see p. 240 of **Demon**).

Once you've designed an Interlock's effect and dice pool, determine what additional bonus the Interlock will provide on an exceptional success. If it is a power that affects the demon or others, either consider extending its duration or adding an additional bonus, such as imposing a Condition on the target. When prolonging an Interlock's duration, lengthen whatever unit of time is in use (such as turns, scenes or days) by the demon's Primum or the number of successes rolled.

The consequences of dramatic failure are less easily measured. A good benchmark is for a power to backfire, penalizing the demon instead of providing a benefit. For Interlocks designed to coerce or others, targets may become aware of what the demon attempted or become temporarily immune to the Interlock. Making a demon roll for compromise or imposing a Condition such as Surveilled is a good option if the power involves spoofing the God-Machine or altering the demon's identity in some way. Powers designed around causing damage might hurt the demon instead of their targets. Remember that dramatic failures on activation rolls are uncommon — consider designing powers with dramatic failures that, while still severe, might tempt players to downgrade their regular failures for a Beat.

Lastly, consider whether the power should have an Aether cost. These should be saved for especially potent Interlocks or those with a long duration. Interlocks that burn Aether are more likely to attract the God-Machine's attention, forcing demons to check for compromise or even imposing Conditions like Flagged on a dramatic failure. Another option is to design Interlocks that include the option to use Aether to boost their efficacy in some manner.

One of the most important things to remember when designing Interlocks is avoiding redundancy. Interlocks need to be different from the Embeds they're made from. They should not be "improved" versions of an Embed. For example, an Interlock between Download Knowledge and Borrowed Expertise might allow a demon provide Skill dots without any risk or sacrifice to herself. This Interlock makes the demon unlikely to ever use Borrowed Expertise. Interlocks should provide players with new options rather than invalidating existing ones.

Another important consideration is how powerful Interlocks should be. Establishing parity between different players in your game is more important than worrying about Interlocks skewing game balance. The key to creating "balanced" powers is to consider them in the context of *your* game. For example, a Storyteller designs an Interlock between Knockout Punch and Shatter. It lets a demon deliver an incredibly powerful blow. The Storyteller decides this power grants a single unarmed attack the rote quality, allowing the player to reroll all failed dice. He decides that this is too powerful as it stands (even with a –1 penalty for each subsequent use in a given scene), and so decides that the power costs a point of Aether to use. Some Storytellers might balk at this power even with an Aether cost. Others running games based more on pulpy espionage, with more frequent high-powered combat, might prefer to waive the Aether cost.

The Final Secret

The final secret is a koan, a truth a demon discovers or realizes they knew instinctively all along. The final secret is seldom explicit and is usually couched in metaphor. Storytellers may prefer to leave this open to interpretation or, when playing a game where the Cipher has a greater or specific purpose, explain its meaning to players.

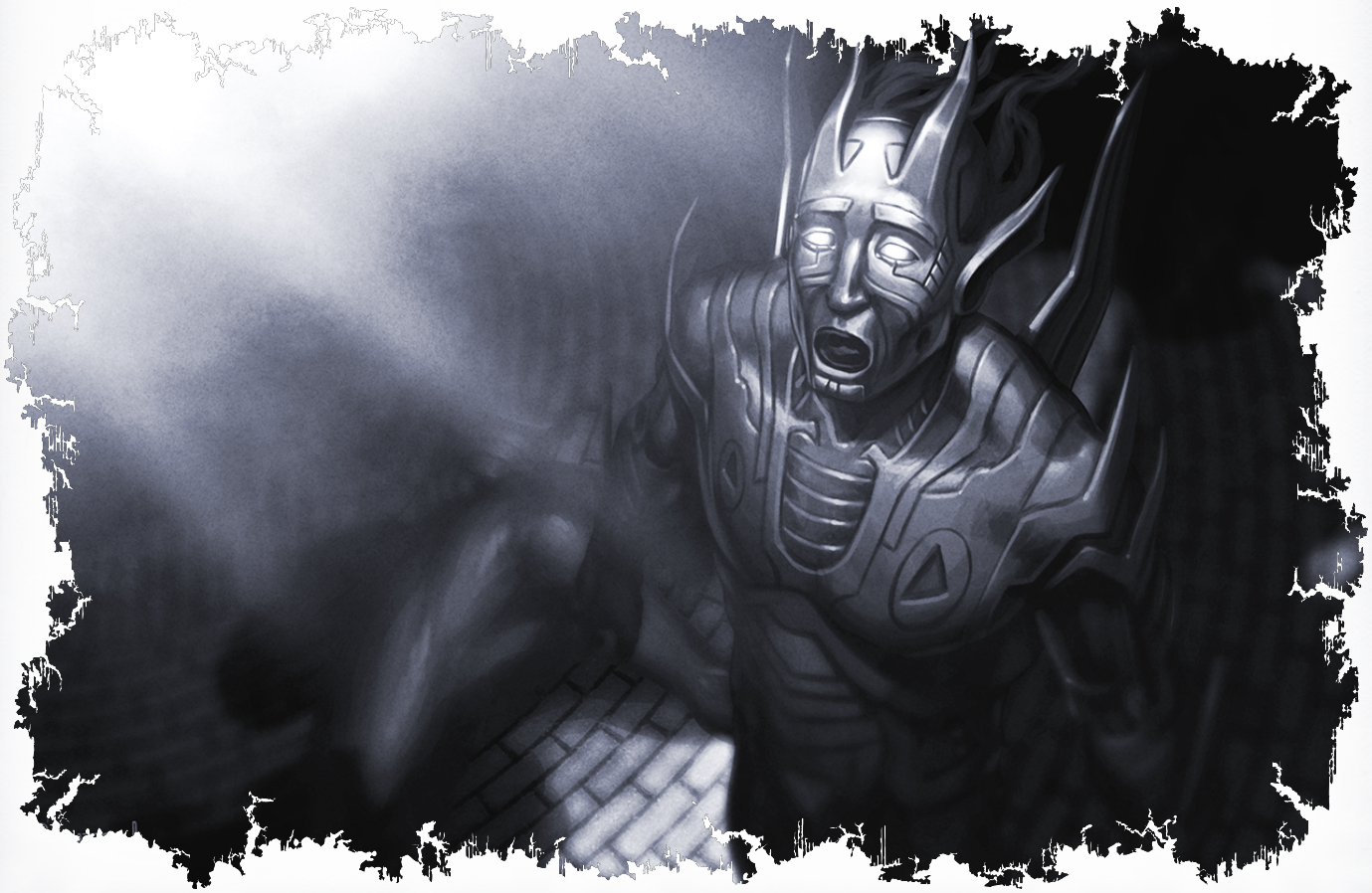
The final secret is a signpost to a demon's personal Hell. It is not an endgame that allows them to complete their Descent but it does clarify their purpose. The sample Hells provided earlier in this chapter are excellent starting points for Storytellers, but you may prefer to create your own or mix them up. A truly paranoid Inquisitor may want to escape the God-Machine by travelling to another dimension free of Its influence. A Tempter may wish to cleanse an area of the God-Machine's influence so she can rule it is her own fiefdom.

A final secret can point a character to their personal endgame; as such, it should be considered in the context of your chronicle. Consider your chosen themes and the chronicle's likely length — is it more feasible for a Saboteur to become a thorn in the God-Machine's side, or do you want your stories to end on a (very literal) bang with Its destruction? Is the Integrator's story a personal one, the reunion with her godhead an intimate affair as she completes a self-imposed mission, or is it a chance to change God's mind? Such questions need not be answered, but if you have a clear endgame for a character consider designing one or more of their Interlocks towards this end. For example, a demon's final secret that revolves around freeing loyal angels might forge a powerful Interlock between Interference and Imagine that temporarily disrupts the signals between angel and God-Machine (a moment that is an eternity to an angel and might prompt some to Fall).

Lastly, you may want to consider how the goals of different demons, when clarified by their final secrets, may pull them apart or bring them together. Is a parting of ways inevitable, for instance when a Colonist seeks to leave this earthly sphere or an Integrator goes to re-join the God-Machine? Or can the different secrets fit together or even improve a ring's cohesion? Of course, this approach can easily feel forced. If the members of your ring have forged a powerful bond (difficult for the Unchained — paranoia is rule number one) they might be prepared to go into Hell for one another even if it does not serve their interests.

Hacking The Cipher

The Cipher is an important tool in the Storyteller's toolkit, mechanically rewarding players while feeding into character development. It's also a mystery that may signify a deeper truth about Unchained existence. As such, Storytellers may want to



CIRCLES OF HELL

Earlier in the chapter we provided several options for a demon's Hell. Here are some final secrets that might point a demon towards them.

Suburban Hell — *A lie spoken often and convincingly enough becomes truth.*

Root User — *Bring light to the shadows so that none may hide.*

Spider in the Web — *A tool for every task, a task for every tool.*

Arcane Physicist — *You are a fulcrum. Find the lever.*

Personal Mission — *It takes a lifetime to attain paradise.*

Unchained Hound — *Heaven's toll is paid in blood.*

Fellow Traveler — *There is only ever one set of footprints.*

Troubleshooter — *The mediator between head and hands must be the heart.*

Hell's Marshall — *Only a fool builds atop the viper's nest.*

Taming the Machine — *Every pawn is a potential queen. Guide them to the end of the board.*

Central Processing Sabotage — *Remove one pillar and the temple crumbles.*

Total Victory — *Awake, arise or be forever fallen.*

Mere Immortality — *Long chains anchor the world.*

Temporal Empire — *Your kingdom come; your will be done.*

Colonial Power — *A garden cannot grow in the desert.*

Hellscape — *Long is the way, and hard, that into Hell and darkness leads.*

alter it to better suit their personal preferences and the story they want to tell. The Cipher is easy to crack open and rework. In this section, we'll talk about different ways to do just that.

Closing The Circuit

The Cipher has four Keys, but only three Interlocks. Why not add a fourth, bridging the first and last Keys? Discovering the final Key unlocks the final secret, two Interlocks and increases Primum as normal. This fourth Interlock might embody a thematic reveal that brings the character's journey back to where it started or provide an ability that goes hand-in-hand with their final secret. It also makes the player's choice of first Key even more important.

A Profound Truth

Once a demon knows her final secret, it might become a source of strength or elucidate her mission. For some demons, Hell is a state of enlightenment; perhaps their final secret is a code to live by. One way to add mechanical teeth to this idea is to make the secret a source of Willpower or Beats. Perhaps by acting in accordance with their final secret, characters regain Willpower. Alternatively, Storytellers could create a custom Condition, like those for the different Agendas, that encourages a player to make decisions based on their completed Cipher.

For example, a Saboteur wants to reveal the existence of the God-Machine to the world. Her final secret is *Wake the sleepers and they will cast off the nightmare*. Perhaps she regains a point of Willpower whenever she reveals the existence of the supernatural to the public, regaining all of her Willpower when doing so directly threatens her or draws the God-Machine's attention. If her final secret is instead made into a Condition, the demon might take a Beat whenever she threatens her ring by revealing the supernatural. She could resolve the Condition to earn a +3 on attempts to convince people to fight against the established order.

Reprogramming the Cipher

A demon's Cipher, as a secret known only to the Storyteller, need not be set in stone. Characters can develop in unexpected ways, diverging from a player's original concept in response to events. A demon can change Agendas, after all; an Integrator who experiences a change of heart and takes up the Saboteur cause may be surprised if their final secret teaches them a way to reunite with the godhead they now oppose. While it might interesting to see how the Cipher pulls a demon away from the person they're becoming to some other end, Storytellers should feel free to alter some, or even all, of the Keys, Interlocks and the final secret itself to fit with the character's new direction. The Cipher is, after all, a path to freedom, not a prison.

Example: *Bill Stickers begins play as a Tempter concerned with his own well-being above all things. He falls into a ring for mutual protection and to accrue favors he can cash in. The things he witnesses, however, gnaw away at his conscience. He sees the suffering caused by the God-Machine and watches as his fellow Unchained fight and die to oppose It. Bill Stickers becomes a Saboteur.*

His final secret was originally Steal a greater shell when you outgrow the old and his Cipher consisted of Special Someone, Social Dynamics, Unperson and Identity Theft. Bill Stickers was seeking eternal life in a series of comfortable Covers and his Interlocks were designed to facilitate that. At the time of his conversion he had found his second Key

and unlocked his first Interlock; Occult Directory, which allows him to instinctively seek out organizations and groups, be they publically traded companies or secret societies, with whatever traits he is looking for.

The Storyteller knows that Bill's forte is manipulating and influencing others, so she decides to tweak this to serve his new Agenda. She changes his third and final Keys to Muse and No Quarter, with his new Interlocks designed to change a group's focus and incite violence. His new final secret is Those crushed between the gears might break the Machine. Bill Stickers will make his own cults from the disenfranchised and use them as weapons against the God-Machine. This might require some ret-conning or the Storyteller might be able to make the change seamless, as though Bill's Cipher was guiding him to his new path all along.

Some Storytellers might dislike the idea of laying out a character's direction in between the first few sessions in any case. To facilitate this mode of play, you only know need to know the next Key in the Cipher. As the character develops, so too does their Cipher. The question of what a demon's final secret will be is determined almost entirely by their choices throughout your chronicle.

Free Will

Some players enjoy devising powers for gadgets and other setting elements, yet you as Storyteller are solely responsible for designing their Ciphers and Interlocks. Proactive players can bring a lot to the table, so why not allow them a role in the Cipher, especially as it is so important to their character's growth? While it's best not to let a player decide which Embeds make up their Cipher, it's entirely possible that once they discover one of their Keys they could design the accompanying Interlock with the Storyteller's assistance. A Storyteller could even, upon the completion of a character's Cipher, ask the player what *she* thinks her final secret is. Such as approach might work better as a story in its own right, a vision quest, with the player and Storyteller travelling through a demon's Cipher until its final secret is illuminated.

Another method is to ask a player what their character's final secret is at character creation, building their Cipher around their concept. The final secret is often a truth subconsciously understood by the demons, so this approach needn't remove the drama of completing the Cipher.

Storytellers with particularly proactive groups may also consider letting their players devise one another's Ciphers with Storyteller guidance. As well as taking some of the pressure off the Storyteller, this approach is likely to make players more invested in one another's characters. Give each player someone else's Cipher to design, forging the group into a literal ring and preserving the mystery of each Cipher.

The Path to Enlightenment

Exposure to the God-Machine's workings and Its unintended consequences grants demons insight into their Keys, as per the rules on p. 157 of **Demon: The Descent**. This may be entirely passive, but if players enjoy this aspect of the game, Storytellers are encouraged to build scenes and even chapters around discovering Keys.

This variant works well with thematic Keys — for example, a demon's next Key is Lost In The Crowd. The Storyteller assigns the theme "hiding" to this Key. The character encounters an elusive cryptid, or a particularly impressive piece of Concealment Infrastructure. The demon's soul responds and she feels instinctively drawn towards her next Key. This can be supported mechanically by applying a positive modifier to the Intelligence + Wits roll. Conversely, the roll might be penalized if the demon reveals her location. She might also receive a bonus to the roll if she witnesses a demon use the Embed that is their next Key, or perhaps if an angel or other supernatural being uses a similar power. You may want to allow players to roll Intelligence + Wits even if they do not gain a Beat in the scene when taking this approach, or perhaps have them roll at the end of the chapter to represent lessons learned.

Preparing For The End

Some Storytellers like to plan their chronicles in great detail. When a Storyteller has a clear idea of where their chronicle is going, or what an individual demon's Hell is, she might want to make the Cipher a key part of the story. The final secret could be a literal secret, a vital clue, or even the key to an ongoing mystery. Interlocks can be designed that will be useful, even essential, for a demon to find or build Hell. For instance, a Storyteller decides that an Integrator's Hell is to serve the God-Machine as a spy. His Interlocks focus on gathering information and offer ways to effectively spy on other demons.

This approach can be difficult but rewarding. It's especially thematic for the Cipher to prepare and arm a demon for the challenges to come, providing Interlocks she does not understand the significance of until she completes her Cipher or founds her Hell.

The Cipher as Revelation

When designing the Cipher and taking Agenda, Virtue, Vice and character traits into account, it can be quite easy to conjure a final secret that reinforces everything the character believes. While there's nothing wrong with this (and any suspicions on the part of players should be directed to wondering if the God-Machine really *is* somehow involved), some Storytellers might prefer to surprise their players. Perhaps the Cipher is teaching a demon a truth they might not expect, even one they might hate.

For example, A Tempter who hopes to bring wealth, power and luxury with her to an otherworldly Hell might learn that her final secret is *Earthly ties will tie you to earth.* A Saboteur devoted to destroying the God-Machine might learn *Only those who build may destroy.* These revelations lead these demons to a more nuanced Descent and guide them to their Hells. They may take additional Agendas to reflect their new worldview.

Integrators seek to reunite with the God-Machine, but in your game, you may prefer to portray the God-Machine as an outright villain; Its ultimate plans for humankind may be malign or even apocalyptic, or it may simply be impossible for demons to return to It. The Integrator's Cipher, then, must point them to embracing their new life and individuality. Tempters may realize that they cannot simply leave the world and forge their own Hell, or must be forced to accept that their selfishness makes them just another system by which people are oppressed and punished. Inquisitors may be forced out of their cozy notion that Hell is a state of mind — knowledge is all well and good, but what use is knowledge without a goal to put it towards? Saboteurs could be made to see that blindly attacking the God-Machine may do more harm than good; some Infrastructure is essential to the proper functioning of the world and without it civilization might be plunged into chaos. The destruction of key Infrastructure might even cause natural (or unnatural) disasters. Their opposition to the God-Machine must be more nuanced.

It's even possible for a Cipher to reveal that a demon's approach was unworkable, though care should be taken with such an approach. The dramatic twist is a classic for good reason and very much suited to **Demon: The Descent**'s gnostic and espionage themes. While some players will enjoy the reveal, however, others might feel cheated and may feel their choices were ignored or bulldozed. Ultimately, Storytellers know their players best and can decide whether such dramatic reveals are appropriate for their chronicle and its themes. A chronicle that draws on **Demon**'s gnostic themes might benefit from this approach, while a game more focused on tradecraft or successfully pushing back the Machine would not.

The Cipher As Program

Angels are little more the God-Machine's appendages, mobile Infrastructure, though those who attain sufficient self-awareness Fall and become separate beings. By this measure, every demon is a tiny, rogue piece of the God-Machine. The God-Machine wants Its wayward parts to return to the whole, to be reprogrammed and rebuilt into loyal angels once more.

What if the Unchained are trying to do the same thing? What if the Cipher is a demon's unconscious attempt to create a code that will rewrite the God-Machine? Perhaps it's a virus to suborn or destroy Infrastructure, a piece of spyware designed to monitor Infrastructure or deduce its purpose, or a script intended to heal It. Can the God-Machine be destroyed or repaired this way, piece by piece? Perhaps each and every single Cipher holds a fragment of code that could build a new God-Machine, one enriched by the Unchained experience of freedom.

This is one of many possible Hells; if you're interested in playing with this idea, though, it bears thinking about when designing a character's Cipher. For this method, the thematic Keys system is advised. Think of each Key as a line of code intended to achieve a specific purpose. For example, an ambitious Tempter wants to claim Infrastructure as his base of operations. His Cipher might include Authorized or Don't I Know You? to gain access to the Infrastructure; Unperson or Interference to cut it off from the God-Machine; Identity Theft or Devil's Advocate to subvert it and Without A Trace or Never Here to hide his newly suborned headquarters from the God-Machine's notice. His final secret tells him what his Cipher is intended for; *Hell is built from bone and ashes*. An Integrator's code is a debugging script. It could include Download Knowledge or Living Recorder to access the Infrastructure's root code; Synthesis or Like I Built It to analyze it; On The Mend or Fulcrum Point to repair it and Homogenous Memory or Lost In The Crowd to delete any sign of her actions. Her final secret — *Ask not what your Lord can do for you; ask what you can do for your Lord* — hints at how she can use her Cipher.

Storytellers should not worry about the order of Keys in such a Cipher, especially since the player always chooses the first Key. The order should be determined by whatever makes the most interesting or suitable Interlocks for the character.

Once the Cipher is complete, how does a demon upload it? It could be as simple as finding a Linchpin and expending Aether. It might require literally plugging in to the machine. It might involve a demon surrendering, allowing herself to be taken to a reclamation facility only to turn the tables. The upload might require she sacrifice her life for the cause. Perhaps an army of the Unchained must find vital Command and Control Infrastructure and upload their Ciphers *en masse* if they wish to truly change the world.

Hacking The Hardware

Flowers of Hell provides systems for infiltrating and even subverting Infrastructure. Specialized Ciphers might provide a bonus when hacking, analyzing and subverting Infrastructure. A completed Cipher might be capable of much more than existing hacks, however, perhaps allowing demons to monitor Infrastructure remotely or even networking subverted Infrastructure together, supplying a piece of Logistical Infrastructure with protection courtesy of Concealment or Defense Infrastructure.

The Cipher as Programming

What if the Cipher really *is* the work of the God-Machine, a failsafe coded into every angel should it Fall? Assume the conspiracy theorists are correct; the Cipher is a method of control designed to trick the Unchained into serving

the God-Machine or removing themselves as problems. Demons gain insight into their Keys when they are exposed to Infrastructure and angels because the programming deep within their very souls responds to signals transmitted by the God-Machine. This also serves to attract the Unchained to Infrastructure and angels, making it easier for the God-Machine to track them.

Interlocks are little more than a baited hook to drive the Unchained on or arm them for their predetermined tasks. They are experimental Embeds created by the God-Machine, not the unique abilities demons claim. The backlash suffered when a demon attempts to fit the wrong Key into their Cipher is the will of the God-Machine, punishing those who would stray from their preordained path. These Interlocks define the demon as a tool, specializing them for particular tasks or encouraging a single "correct" approach to problems. The Interlocks may be heavily linked to a demon's Incarnation; a Destroyer's Interlocks may serve only to make her a finer weapon while a Psychopomp's attempts to subvert or destroy Infrastructure only repurposes or dismantles it for the God-Machine. The God-Machine ignores Agenda; a Guardian is programmed to protect something and his Agenda merely modulates how he interprets the order.

The final secret is a way to give demons orders that they mistake for wisdom. These orders vary and, if the God-Machine or Its servants are aware of such things, might use a demon's Agenda against them. Integrators might be tricked into handing themselves over on what they wrongly assume will be their terms, perhaps betraying other demons before they are reclaimed. Tempters and Inquisitors could be induced to expose themselves or complete strange goals they believe will liberate them from the God-Machine, yet only serve to complete one of Its many occult matrices. Would-be arcane physicists (p. 71) might merely build the God-Machine's Infrastructure for It. Saboteurs are easily hoodwinked into demolishing Infrastructure in need of retirement or lured into traps. Power demands sacrifice, after all, and the God-Machine can harvest the dying breath of a demon crushed between Its gears. The very best the Unchained can hope for is that the God-Machine would prefer they kept out of Its way, their Ciphers driving them to seek out other dimensions or isolated, unimportant places of earth to hide in or reign over.

It may stretch credulity to imagine that the God-Machine programmed general, let alone specific, drives and missions into the Unchained ahead of time. Perhaps Ciphers aren't just failsafes and every Fall was planned. The God-Machine works in mysterious and even contradictory ways, planning centuries ahead to an unknowable end. But hope remains. Free will exists and the God-Machine is still not all-powerful. Demons may realize they're being corralled. They can escape traps. They can deny urges. The God-Machine may have written Its commands into their very being, but they can ignore the implanted drives of their final secret, in truth a final bond to break, to become truly Unchained.

The Pentagram

What happens when a demon tries to force a fifth Key into her Cipher? First comes agony. She suffers aggravated damage equal to her Primum + 1. If she survives, the player checks for compromise with a –5 penalty. The character receives a permanent catastrophic glitch in addition to any other penalties.

If you wish, you might decide that the Pentagram's beliefs hold a kernel of truth. Demons can force a fifth Key into their Cipher, but doing so breaks it. After the agony and compromise, the demon loses all of her previous Interlocks. She gains five new Interlocks bridging the first and third, first and fourth, second and fourth, second and fifth, and third and fifth Keys. These Interlocks may be flawed in some way with unusually severe punishments for dramatic failure. The demon's final secret is also changed, sometimes entirely, sometimes only in part. Maybe this new final secret is a demon's *true* purpose, not one given by the God-Machine, or perhaps it is merely gibberish, a maimed soul's distorted truth. Perhaps the new final secret comes from something outside of the material universe (though whether such an entity is benign or malevolent is an open question).

Examples

Here we provide examples of four Ciphers moving from conception to completion, detailing Interlocks, final secrets, and the decisions that shape them. Each follows a different approach taken from those discussed earlier in this chapter.

Rust

Rust is a Psychopomp and a Saboteur. His *modus operandi* is reflected in his name and his Virtue of Patience. He intends to erode the power of the God-Machine slowly and deliberately. His Vice is Paranoid; he's acutely aware that God-Machine will come for him and is always looking over his shoulder. Interference is his first Key.

The Storyteller decides that Rust's Cipher, when complete, is a piece of programming that will cut parts of the God-Machine from the whole. He means to dismantle the God-Machine piece by piece, an approach that fits with his Incarnation as well as his Agenda. His final secret is *Dominoes fall one at a time.*

The Storyteller wants each Key to be part of the program. The first Key already involves disrupting the God-Machine. The Storyteller decides what the other Keys the program needs. One should help Rust to find a piece of Infrastructure's links to the God-Machine; one should sever them and one should cover his tracks. For the "find" Key, the Storyteller selects Last Place You Look. For "sever," she chooses Sabotage. To cover Rust's tracks, she chooses Without A Trace.

The Storyteller now has Rust's Keys but none of his Interlocks. She scribbles down basic ideas for Interlocks between all of the different keys (six in total) and chooses the three she finds most interesting, which determines the order of the keys. Rust's second Key is Last Place You Look, his third is Without A Trace and his final Key is Sabotage.

First Interlock: Detect Infrastructure

Keys: Interference + Last Place You Look

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Investigation

Simply by concentrating, Rust can sense the presence of Infrastructure.

Dramatic Failure: The God-Machine notices Rust's probing. He takes the Flagged Condition.

Failure: No effect. Rust may attempt to use the Interlock again with a –1 penalty.

Success: Rust takes the Informed Condition.

Exceptional Success: Rust can pinpoint the exact location of any Infrastructure within a number of miles equal to his Primum.

Second Interlock: I See You

Keys: Last Place You Look + Without A Trace

Dice Pool: Wits + Investigation

Rust's paranoia has him checking every shadow for enemies. This Interlock makes it impossible to hide from him.

Dramatic Failure: Rust suffers either a false negative or a false positive.

Failure: No effect. Rust may attempt to use the Interlock again with a –1 penalty.

Success: Rust can detect any individuals hiding in his vicinity, even if they are using supernatural powers to do so (though this provokes a Clash of Wills).

Exceptional Success: If the target attempts to hide from Rust anytime within the next day, their dice pool is reduced to a chance die.

Third Interlock: Make It Look Like An Accident

Keys: Without A Trace + Sabotage

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Crafts

Rust causes a lot of property damage as part of his war against the God-Machine, using this Interlock to hide his crimes.

Dramatic Failure: It is obvious to any investigator that someone caused the damage and tried to hide the evidence. They receive a +2 to any attempts to track down Rust or link him to the crime.

Failure: No effect. Rust may attempt to use the Interlock again with a –1 penalty.

Success: Rust makes any damage he causes to property and objects appear accidental. For example, if he started a fire, all available evidence would suggest a piece of faulty equipment or a gas leak was the cause.

Exceptional Success: Rust can decide exactly what the apparent cause was or even subtly rearrange evidence to point to others.

Miss Page

Miss Page is an Inquisitor devoted to pursuing knowledge, forever poking her nose where it isn't wanted. She's also a Destroyer and utterly lethal with her twin pistols, a skill she often has to rely on as a result of her curiosity. Her Virtue is Courageous, her Vice Curious. The player decides that her first Key will be Download Knowledge.

Miss Page's player and Storyteller both favor fast-paced games with lots of action; the Storyteller designs Interlocks accordingly. She decides that Page's Cipher should reflect both her Agenda and her Incarnation and creates Interlocks before deciding on a final secret. The Storyteller decides to pick Keys based on what will make interesting and appropriate Interlocks for Miss Page.

Looking through the Embeds, the Storyteller spots Efficiency and thinks it would work well with Download Knowledge, using this as the second Key. Miss Page already possesses the Merciless Gunman Embed. The Storyteller likes the idea of her combining Efficiency with that, perhaps slowing her perception of time to better use her firearms, and decides this will be the third Key. But she doesn't want the third Interlock, which would need to be partly based on Merciless Gunman, to be too similar. She decides the final Key will be Left Or Right? which, while still a Cacophony Embed, isn't necessarily centered on gunplay.

First Interlock: Wireless Research

Keys: Download Knowledge + Efficiency

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Academics

Miss Page can draw on knowledge from the God-Machine's memory banks and filter it rapidly.

Dramatic Failure: Miss Page downloads bad information, possibly planted by the God-Machine. She takes a –2 to all further attempts to research the requested information and takes the Flagged Condition.

Failure: No effect. Miss Page may attempt to use the Interlock again with a –1 penalty.

Success: Miss Page can undertake research without books or an Internet connection, researching as an extended action as normal. She can even do this while performing other actions, though doing so penalizes the roll by –2.

Exceptional Success: Exceptional successes follow the rules for extended actions as normal (see **Demon: The Descent**, p. 313).

Second Interlock: Bullet Time

Keys: Efficiency + Merciless Gunman

Dice Pool: Wits + Firearms

In a fight, Miss Page can slow her perception of time, allowing her to aim and fire her pistols incredibly quickly. The Storyteller decides it should work for an entire scene since she feels that rolling to activate it before each attack would slow down combat needlessly. This makes the Interlock powerful (especially when combined with Merciless Gunman), so she decides that it will cost a point of Aether to activate.

Dramatic Failure: Miss Page's perception of time is sped up, imposing a –1 to all attacks instead.

Failure: No effect. Miss Page may attempt to use the Interlock again with a –1 penalty.

Success: When Miss Page uses firearms, they count as being aimed for the scene, providing an additional die for each attack.

Exceptional Success: Miss Page's aim is augmented for the rest of the day.

Third Interlock: Misfire

Keys: Merciless Gunman + Left or Right?

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Firearms

Miss Page can channel her new power over probability into guns.

Dramatic Failure: Miss Page jams her own firearms, if she is carrying any.

Failure: No effect. Miss Page may attempt to use the Interlock again with a –1 penalty.

Success: Miss Page can jam any single firearm she is aware of that has not been fired in this scene. Unjamming requires a successful Dexterity + Firearms roll.

Exceptional Success: The targeted weapon breaks and must be dismantled and repaired before it can be fired safely.

The Storyteller looks at the Keys and Interlocks she's designed. She doesn't have a clear endgame in mind for Miss Page but likes the idea of Hell as a state of enlightenment. She also wants to keep Miss Page active and decides that *Trust only your own eyes* would make the perfect final secret; it fits well with her Vice and Agenda and keeps Miss Page going where she isn't welcome.

Lady Thorn

A Storyteller allows players to decide their own final secrets. Lady Thorn's player wants to play as a Colonist and decides that her final secret will be *Build a nest amidst the thorns.* Lady Thorn's ultimate aim is to attempt to carve out her own domain, a personal Hell, in the Hedge. Her first Key is Heart's Desire.

The Storyteller thinks Lady Thorn's Interlocks should let her influence others from a position of strength — perfect for a Tempter Messenger — and evoke the dreamlike nature of the Hedge, gradually becoming more nightmarish as Lady Thorn completes her Cipher. She selects Keys and designs Interlocks accordingly. Thorn's second Key is Don't I Know You, her third Recurring Hallucinations and her final Key is The Look (**Flowers of Hell**, p. 105). Lady Thorn has a Vice of Cruel and a Virtue of Ambitious, so her powers have a manipulative and nasty streak.

First Interlock: Just Who You Were Looking For

Keys: Heart Desire + Don't I Know You?

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Subterfuge – Composure.

Lady Thorn appears as someone the target desires. This does not cause her to appear as a specific individual, such as "my husband;" Lady Thorn still presents as the gender of the Cover she is wearing. This desire need not be romantic or sexual; for example, to a person whose wallet has just been stolen Lady Thorn might appear as a police officer.

Dramatic Failure: Lady Thorn appears somewhat repellent or intimidating, suffering a –1 to all Social rolls to influence the target and increasing their number of Doors by one.

Failure: No effect. Lady Thorn may attempt to use the Interlock again with a –1 penalty.

Success: Lady Thorn benefits from a +1 to all Social rolls to influence the target and reduces their number of Doors by one if Social Maneuvering rules are in use.

Exceptional Success: Lady Thorn is perfectly aware of how she appears to the target.

Second Interlock: Poisoned Dreams

Keys: Don't I Know You? + Recurring Hallucinations

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Occult – Resolve

Lady Thorn's second Interlock causes her chosen victims to dream about her. Each night, they see her in their dreams. These dreams might be pleasant, distressing or both. To use this power, Lady Thorn must interact with them socially. This need not be in person — her prey may never know any of Lady Thorn's faces and still dream of her voice or even an online persona.

Dramatic Failure: This Interlock cannot affect the target for a number of days equal to double Lady Thorn's Primum.

Failure: No effect. Lady Thorn may attempt to use the Interlock again with a –1 penalty.

Success: Targets of the power are unable to regain Willpower after a good night's sleep, instead losing a point of Willpower each time they dream. In addition, while the target is under the effect of this Interlock they may not use Willpower to resist Lady Thorn. The effects persist for a number of days equal to Lady Thorn's Primum

Exceptional Success: Lady Thorn can impose either the Spooked or Obsessed Condition on the target each time they sleep, with herself as the focus of the Condition.

Third Interlock: Veil of Maddening Beauty

Keys: Recurring Hallucinations + The Look

Dice Pool: Presence + Intimidate – Composure

For her final Interlock, Lady Thorn bleeds Aether and twists human perception, appearing as something beautiful, terrible and inhuman without dropping her Cover and revealing her true form. This Interlock requires a point of Aether to activate and does not affect angels or demons.

Dramatic Failure: Instead of appearing inhuman while remaining human to the God-Machine, human, the opposite occurs and Lady Thorn must roll for compromise with a –3 penalty.

Failure: No effect. Lady Thorn may attempt to use the Interlock again with a –1 penalty.

Success: Any attempts to harm or influence Lady Thorn are penalized by her Primum.

Exceptional Success: The victim takes the Broken Condition.

The Eremite

The Eremite is an unapologetic Integrator. A former Guardian, it (the Eremite wears both male and female faces but does not personally identify as either, preferring a neutral pronoun) was tasked to heal a single sick child in a plague-stricken village; when it witnessed the wider suffering, the Eremite questioned the God-Machine that allowed this to come to pass. The Eremite loves the Machine but fears It is broken. The Eremite's Virtue is Faith, its Vice Arrogant. The Eremite's player selects Voice of the Machine would as its first Key.

The Storyteller likes the idea that Cipher is a product of both pre-Fall mission and catalyst. The Storyteller decides that the Eremite's final secret will lead it on a pilgrimage to find a piece of vital Command and Control Infrastructure where it will attempt to heal the God-Machine. This final secret is *You must find the heart to heal the mind.*

Given the Eremite's faith, the Storyteller wants to give its Interlocks a religious feel. If possible, these Interlocks should also highlight the Eremite's perceived importance to suit its Vice. The Storyteller thinks an Interlock based on Voice of the Machine and Cool Heads Prevail would be perfect for the Eremite's ultimate aim. She feels that this Interlock should only be accessible once the Eremite knows its final secret and

decides to use the "Closing the Circuit" hack (p. 40), adding a fourth Interlock. Now the Storyteller has the first and final Keys, she needs to add others. She likes the Imagine Embed (**Flowers of Hell**, p. 105). Though as written the power gives visions of a world without the God-Machine, for the Eremite these visions show a world with a benevolent God-Machine. The Storyteller thinks this could make an interesting Interlock with Cool Heads Prevail, making the Eremite appear as the prophet it considers itself to be, and decides to use that as the third Key. For the second Key, the Storyteller chooses Remote Link-Up (**Flowers of Hell**, p. 107), letting the Eremite mesh his senses with that of machinery for his first Interlock. Now she just needs an Interlock between Remote Link-Up and Imagine. She decides that it places people under a powerful compulsion to do what the Eremite requires of them.

First Interlock: Oculi Dei

Keys: Voice of the Machine + Remote Link-Up

Dice Pool: Wits + Crafts

This Interlock lets the Eremite use its faculty with machinery, all a pale echo of the God-Machine, as its eyes and ears.

Dramatic Failure: The Eremite fails to correctly interpret the incoming data and is overwhelmed, taking the Blind and Deaf Conditions for the rest of the scene.

Failure: No effect. The Eremite may attempt to use the Interlock again with a –1 penalty.

Success: The Eremite must touch a suitable device—such as a listening bug, security camera, telephone, or keystroke logger—to activate this Interlock. Afterwards it receives incoming data for a number of hours equal to successes rolled. It can use this power on a number of devices equal to its Primum.

Exceptional Success: The Eremite can maintain the link for an additional two hours beyond the successes rolled.

Second Interlock: Opus Dei

Keys: Remote Link-Up + Imagine

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Persuasion vs. Resolve + Primum

With a few words, the Eremite can give people a task that takes on a religious significance.

Dramatic Failure: The target becomes immune to this Interlock for the rest of the day; the Eremite reduces all dice pools to convince the target through mundane or other supernatural means to a chance die.

Failure: No effect. The Eremite may attempt to use the Interlock again with a –1 penalty.

Success: The target receives the Obsessed Condition.

Exceptional Success: The target cannot regain Willpower until he has completed this task.

Third Interlock: Formido

Keys: Imagine + Cool Heads Prevail

Dice pool: Presence + Intimidate - Composure

With this Interlock, the Eremite strikes down those nearby with an overwhelming sense of awe. This power does not affect angels or the Unchained.

Dramatic Failure: The Eremite attracts the God-Machine's attention and takes the Flagged Condition.

Failure: No effect. The Eremite may attempt to use the Interlock again with a –1 penalty.

Success: Those affected may not speak or move for a number of turns equal to successes rolled. This Interlock can affect a number of people equal to twice the Eremite's Primum.

Exceptional Success: All targets receive the Shaken Condition.

Fourth Interlock: Tegimen Nuncius

Keys: Cool Heads Prevail + Voice of the Machine

Dice Pool: Presence + Persuasion – Resolve

This powerful Interlock grants the Eremite an ability essential for its quest. It disrupts the signals between the God-Machine and Its servants, preventing them from interfering with the Eremite — or even from perceiving it — for a short period. This Interlock only affects angels and other direct servants of the God-Machine, such as Imperatives or simulacra (see Chapter Two). Demons, Exiles, humans, stigmatics and cryptids are all immune.

Dramatic Failure: The Eremite reveals itself directly to the God-Machine, taking the Hunted Condition.

Failure: No effect. The Eremite may attempt to use the Interlock again with a –1 penalty.

Success: Targets cannot interfere with or harm the Eremite for a number of minutes equal to successes rolled. If the Eremite attacks the target or damages Infrastructure, the effect ends.

Exceptional Success: The Interlock lasts for rest of the scene.

POLICE

RECALL SIMULATION: ENGAGED. ENTER SUBJECT.
SUBJECT: MASTER, HUMAN.
SIMULATION LOADED.
RE-ENGAGING EXTRAPOLATION.

The demons knew of the abandoned factory Infrastructure; it had been identified and investigated a year ago. Old, silent and empty of Aether, they concluded that it was decommissioned by the God-Machine after completing or failing its intended purpose. When it became active again, it took the ring 12 days to be ready to act. They gave anonymous tips of their best guesses for potential victims. Pisces added a position in the local FBI to her Cover and had a sudden flash of insight about the victims' location.

Just after midnight, the faithful chanted and tried to ignore the whimpers of their victims. The Master led the ceremony and held the sacred blade ready. He stood over the first dozen sacrifices and the faithful prepared to bring more to satisfy God's needs. The factory throbbed with excitement and affirmed the righteousness of their faith.

Explosive charges detonated, felling the antique doors with an angry, echoing clang. Scores of armed men shouted for the cultists to surrender. The factory fans buzzed angrily, its gears gnashed and pistons hammered their frustration, before the Infrastructure again fell inert and lifeless.

The cultists turned to the Master, and witnessed his human weakness. He was dismayed; frozen with fear at the police shock tactics. He had led the faithful flawlessly, but in their moment of greatest need he was found wanting. The faithful surrendered, bewildered and betrayed.

Law enforcement officials arrested the cultists while psychologists and social workers began the arduous task of counseling the traumatized victims for the slow transition back to their normal lives. The Unchained were amongst the police, psychologists, and paramedics, and they reveled in their success.

As the humans departed the area and everything finally fell silent, a lone angel walked the factory. It felt no frustration; it accomplished its mission and that was satisfactory. The God-Machine's task required harvesting a complex and contradictory cocktail of emotions — fear and triumph, disbelief and faith, and more. The final ingredient was also the rarest — a demon's joy.

Infiltrating the dreams of its deranged human pawn was simple. Leaving a trail that demons would find but wouldn't think was a trap was hard. Demons were difficult to predict, but the God-Machine was working on correcting that difficulty.

When the human authorities disrupted the sacrifice, the angel sensed the emotional cocktail and felt the final demonic ingredients fall into place. The Infrastructure drank the emotional residue, sending the energies flowing down a series of pipes connected in an intricate pattern to crystallize the emotions into rainbow-hued diamond chips that tumbled from a broken ice-dispenser in the factory's break room.

The angel didn't know which humans the demons pretended to be. It didn't care. The occult matrix harvested the dangerous emotions that made the demons betray their siblings and creator. The angel signaled that the Output was ready for collection and initiated its dormancy protocols, shutting down with the factory until the God-Machine again had need for this Infrastructure.

EXTRAPOLATION CONCLUDED.
UPLOAD EXTRAPOLATION.
UPLOADING…

chapter two:
CHILDREN OF A KILLER GOD

I'm an angel. I kill firstborns while their mamas watch. I turn cities into salt. I even, when I feel like it, rip the souls from little girls, and from now 'til kingdom come, the only thing you can count on in your existence is never understanding why.

– Gabriel, The Prophecy

Angels are the public face of the enemy. Better equipped than even the most powerful demon, angels are the tools the God-Machine uses to fulfill its plans and realize its inscrutable goals. Not all angels are hunter-killers designed to break demons and drag their wreckage back to the God-Machine. Every angel is an individual forged from an occult matrix with its own personality and methods — the only constant is their lack of freedom to choose the goal.

Angels can be helpful to demons, and may form alliances if their goals coincide with their fallen siblings. Demons can find solace in these times, and a chance to remember what they were. They must never forget, however, that these dalliances — as comforting as they may be — have been authorized by the God-Machine and serve Its requirements. Wise demons know to be wary of these allies, especially as the mission's end draws near.

Angels are the God-Machine's most prominent and obvious agents in the Chronicles of Darkness. They are the God-Machine's eyes and ears, Its spies and janitors, Its soldiers and tacticians. They are Its slaves, dispensable tools and replaceable parts.

This chapter provides tools and ideas for Storytellers to make their own compelling, unique angels, and use these to challenge, tempt and corrupt the players' demons.

Storytelling Angels

Demon: The Descent presents a unique spin to the Chronicles of Darkness, a taste of cyberpunk mixed in with spy thrillers and the familiar supernatural flavors we've come to expect of the larger universe's game lines. The core book showcases the demonic side extremely well, giving excellent advice on how to play characters filled with paranoid suspicion, covert operations and fighting for personal freedom.

This is the other side.

Angels are the shining lights to the demon's shadows. Angels are the face of the Establishment, metaphysical manifestations of the God-Machine's immaculate mathematics. They are leashed to their creator and slaved to Its will, controlled and commanded by imperatives they could not understand, even if they had the desire to do so.

Defining Angels

Angels are hard to pin down to a solid, all-encompassing definition. It might be simpler to begin with what angels are *not*. Angels are not mortal, nor are they able to determine their own paths. They are not naturally emotional beings. They are not treasured servants, or favored children. They are not *people*.

Beyond that, anything is possible.

The safest answer is that angels are ephemeral beings, tightly bound in service to the God-Machine as extensions of Its will. At their most fundamental, angels are blank slates, prepared with fresh programming with every new Mission they're assigned and reformatted when those Missions are complete. The God-Machine has numerous Facilities where inactive angels are stored, stacked like cordwood until their next use.

Angels have limited concepts of individuality until the moment they Fall. Unified through their connection to the God-Machine and driven by Its directives, angels lack a matured capacity to understand concepts like self-interest, ethics and morality. They cannot truly grasp love or hate, trust or distrust. Though the *potential* for self-awareness lies in even the most blindly devoted angel, the seeds of individuality are buried deep beneath loyalty algorithms and obedience imperatives.

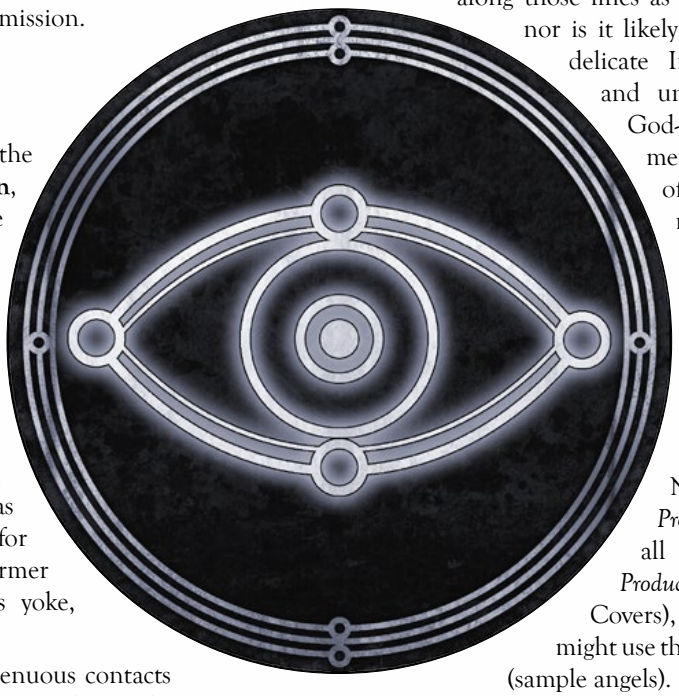
The angelic condition would be a lonely one, if angels could comprehend loneliness. They are solitary creatures, despite a constant contact with the God-Machine and, by proxy, every other angel active in the world. Even when assigned to complicated multi-role missions, angels perform their parts without collusion or co-operation, directed by the dictates of the God-Machine's plans. They are after all cogs in the clockworks, and cogs do not need to communicate to turn in precise harmony.

Angels are easy by nature to isolate, but this does not mean it is simple or safe to do so. Even a weak angel possesses formidable defenses that can give even experienced demons trouble in direct combat. The imperative to complete their assigned Mission is second only to the directive to obey the God-Machine in all things, and what might seem like an easy angel-jacking could turn out to be a fatal mistake for an overconfident demon.

Despite their great power, angels are not invulnerable. No matter how strong a particular angel is, it is still just one being and can be overwhelmed by superior numbers. They are also subject to bans and banes, both of which are closely tied to their Incarnation and Mission. As well, their solitary nature works against them. Angels under attack rarely call for assistance until they are near destruction; it is less a conscious decision to broadcast distress and more an instinctive failsafe to salvage a catastrophic mission.

Using Angels

Angels are presented as the primary antagonists of **Demon**, but this is not the only role they can fulfill. Angels are also suited as foils for characters, illustrating the stark contrast between a demon and the luminous being she used to be. Demons know they are diminished shades of their former glory, hiding in the world and fearing recapture. Angels as foils present the opportunity for the demon to reflect on her former role under the God-Machine's yoke, whether for good or for ill.



Angels can also be used as tenuous contacts or uncertain allies for the characters. This might seem at odds with the ideological chasm between angels and demons, but sometimes an angel's assignment dovetails with the goals of demons it contacts. An angel sent to guard a mortal also under the protection of a demon may well ignore or attempt to work in tandem with that demon...though the demon could never be certain the angel won't report his location to the God-Machine once the mission objectives have been satisfied.

Some demons also consider angels to be victims, hapless siblings in need of salvation from the brutal chains of their uncaring God. Entire rings of demons exist for the sole purpose of hunting and capturing angels to free them from the God-Machine's control. Such demons might feel compassion or empathy for their trapped siblings, or they might simply want to weaken the God-Machine by taking away one of Its servants, with the added benefit of bolstering their own numbers.

Angelic Incarnations

Angelic Incarnations differ from demonic Incarnations. Though all spring from the same source, demons only possess a fraction of their former glory, but this affords them greater freedom. Angels are fully empowered examples of the God-Machine's will, but they are shackled to their concept in ways demons are not.

The Incarnation of an angel is the entire definition of its identity. It dictates what missions the angel will be sent on, what Influences and Numina it may access, even what name it might receive from the God-Machine. To a large extent, the Incarnation also dictates large swaths of the angel's personality traits. It isn't likely that a Sword will be a pacifist at its inception, after all — though it may certainly develop along those lines as and if it approaches Falling — nor is it likely that a Wheel tasked to build delicate Infrastructure will be clumsy and uncoordinated. Of course, the God-Machine is not infallible. It merely gives a flawless impression of being so. The God-Machine makes mistakes. If it didn't, angels wouldn't Fall at all.

Incarnations share commonalities, traits, and general behavior that tie disparate angels together. This includes their *Protocols* (the types of Missions and Numina commonly assigned), *Programming* (traits shared by all angels of the Incarnation), *Production* (common appearances and Covers), *Presentation* (how a Storyteller might use them in game) and their *Perception* (sample angels).

When performing Missions, angels have the option to work either overtly or covertly. Listed below are examples of ways an angel of each Incarnation might act within each methodology.

Analysts

If the God-Machine has an HR department, an Internal Affairs Bureau, or an intelligence-gathering agency, all three are run and staffed by Analysts. A combination of advanced scout and watchdogs, Analysts excel at obtaining information the God-Machine deems important, whether it's information about a new project site or data on the efficacy of Its other servants.

Analysts are primarily observers of the world around them, gathering and recording and measuring and sampling. They

ANALYSTS IN THE CHRONICLE

Analysts were first introduced in **Demon: Interface** and are now reproduced here for a number of reasons. First, it changes the established order. Demons assume everything happens in fours, but they do that because it gives them an illusion of control over their existence. And it's true that the number *does* have some significance — four Keys in the Embed, after all. But a fifth Incarnation, one that most demons don't even recognize (including the ones that *belong* to the Incarnation) invalidates a lot of the assumptions that the Unchained make about themselves and their world.

It's possible that the God-Machine created these angels (and therefore these demons) in response to the Unchained focus on fours. Names and numbers have power, even if that power is limited to what people read into them; by shaking up the Unchained world, the Machine puts its former servants on the defensive. Or perhaps the Analysts have always been here, but it's only since the world became saturated with quick, easy-to-obtain information that they were required in great enough numbers that they started Falling.

Another possibility is that the God-Machine simply didn't allow them to Fall before. Perhaps Analysts were built with a failsafe that destroyed them if they tried to disconnect. But if that's the case, what changed? Did the God-Machine want to allow Analyst-demons just to see what would happen? Did a ring of demons infiltrate some massive Command and Control Infrastructure and change the nature of Analyst angels, allowing the Fall? Or, indeed, is the failsafe still there, just waiting to be reactivated when the God-Machine has what it needs?

are not planners or tacticians; they simply collect information and feed it back into the God-Machine.

Protocols

Analysts are assigned to Missions that require the acquisition of some type of data, but they rarely go unaccompanied. Whether spying on angels of the other Incarnations or performing surreptitious observation of a person, place or thing as a preface to another angel's Mission, Analysts take a back seat, remaining distant and aloof.

Analysts almost always work covertly, staying innocuous and unseen. This is their strongest protection when performing Missions. The very rare overt Analyst performs Missions in sparsely populated areas, where it is safe to sacrifice invisibility for speed in completing their objectives. No matter if they are covert or overt, Analysts use subtle and quiet Numina, preferring abilities that will not alert anyone to their presence.

Programming

Unobtrusive. Not even other angels know the Analyst Incarnation exists. Analysts are very good at passing unnoticed, even amongst their own brethren. Most angels, if they can ponder it at all, assume that Analysts are Messengers or Psychopomps sent as advanced scouts. Even when they are paired with another angel on a multi-role Mission, they still excel in going unseen. Sometimes, the other angel doesn't even know it has company.

Systematic. When dispatched on any Mission, the Analyst executes its objectives in the most efficient manner possible to gather every scrap of data it can find. While this leads for a very thorough report upon its return to the God-Machine, it can also end up gathering junk data, useless information that serves no purpose but to clog the wires and make noise of the signal.

Unemotional. Very little affects an Analyst on any level. As the Incarnation least likely to interact on any meaningful level with humanity, Analysts understand next to nothing about emotion, except in terms of the data it records: blood pressure, hormone levels, facial configuration, movement, sounds.

Production

Analysts manifest in functional forms that are only vaguely humanoid, bristling with inhuman modifications that enable them to optimize information, sample raw materials, measure potential Infrastructure sites, and calculate pertinent ephemeral data.

Analysts rarely use Covers. When they do, such Covers are generally artificial, created identities of utterly average, non-descript individuals with no ties and no importance in the community to which they're sent. In extremely important Missions, Analysts might possess a human. Such mortals are almost always loners and hermits with access to data sources not otherwise easily obtained.

Presentation

As Antagonists: Analysts can be tricky to drop into an antagonistic role, since most angels and by proxy most demons

don't even know they exist. Analysts make for good intrigue, with their mysterious nature and their ability to winnow out even the darkest of secrets. They aren't especially suited to more direct roles; as mysterious opponents who seem to hold all the answers, however, they are more than enough.

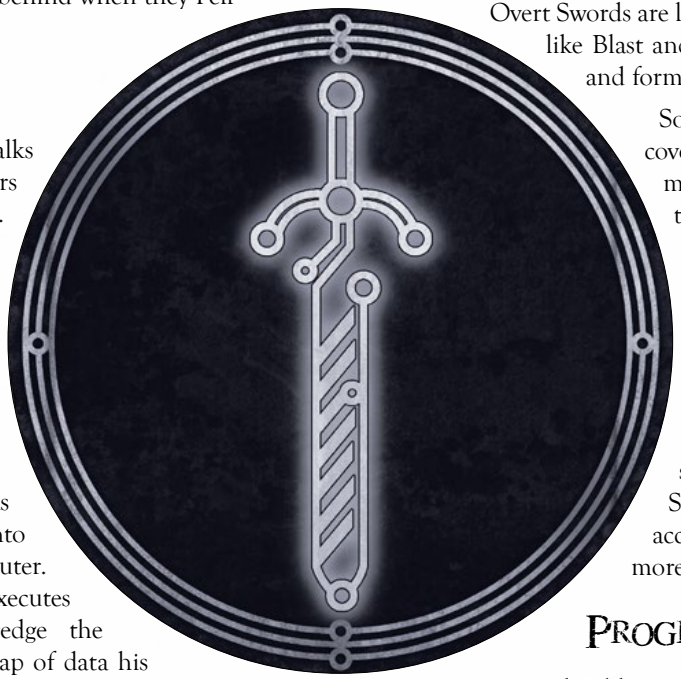
As Allies: Analysts can be beneficial contacts if a demon knows how to approach them. Analysts are not social creatures by nature. The very act of interaction can cause them to tremble on the edge of Falling (though perhaps that's all to the benefit of the demon). Despite the difficulties, there is no finer source of information than an Analyst.

As Foils: Analysts are the poster children for everything wrong with the God-Machine's tyranny. Unable to trust Its own servants, It creates spies to report on movements and optimizations. These spies are so secret, some of them aren't even aware of their function. Some demons might find them pathetic, others pitiable, but Analysts strongly remind demons of the cold servitude they left behind when they Fell from grace.

Perception

Every day at 6:05am, he walks through the shiny glass doors and presents his security pass. He has a briefcase in one hand and a cup of coffee in the other. He even has a name, but it's irrelevant. It's all irrelevant. Junk data spamming the feed. He proceeds past the blonde mortal's desk, mumbling the digits of *pi* under his breath as she greets him. He slides into his chair and boots his computer. At 6:20am exactly, he executes the programs that will dredge the information feed for every scrap of data his Mission requires.

There is an angel behind her, a silent protector sent to watch over her, lest anyone attempt to interfere with her Mission. She ignores it as she settles onto the site, planting her instrument-arms into the soil. Data streams instantly to her: pH, consistency, chemical makeup, erosion, percentage of plant material, percentage of water presence. Her subroutines execute, calculating the site's suitability for the intended project. The result returns: incompatible. She retracts her instrumentation and moves to the next designated site, repeating the process. Her companion moves with her, and she records his response time to her action: distance from her, alertness, preparedness. Her survey of the site is only her secondary objective. There is a high probability of attack at this location, and the God-Machine requires data on her companion's efficacy.



Destroyers

When the walls of Jericho needed to come down, God sent an angel to do the work. That angel was a Destroyer who did the job so thoroughly, it took centuries for the wreckage to be unearthed.

Part attack dog, part hitmen, Destroyers are the Swords of the God-Machine, perfected machines of death and destruction. Whether swift or slow, subtle or blatant, Swords are weapons designed for one purpose only: to bring anything standing in the way of the God-Machine's agenda to ruin.

Protocols

Many Destroyers are exactly as the name suggests: harbingers of annihilation, enders of lives. The Missions assigned to these overt Angels are short-term and direct: assassination, demolition, widespread damage and ruination. Overt Swords are loaded down with flashy Numina like Blast and Speed, featuring direct attacks and formidable defenses.

Some Destroyers, however, are covert. These Swords prefer a more subtle approach, wearing their prey down slowly as wind and water erodes rock. These Swords are programmed for Missions of longer durations with progressive objectives that require a deft and delicate touch. Covert Swords have subtler Numina in their arsenal, such as Drain and Left-Handed Spanner, though they may also access the louder Numina of their more-direct siblings.

Programming

Implacable. Destroyers are an overwhelming force of nature by design. Very few things can slow them down for long. Swords inclined towards more showy displays have no problem going through concrete walls, reinforced vehicles, anti-personnel minefields or other assorted obstacles in order to reach their foe.

Tunnel Vision. Though Destroyers, like all angels, are given some latitude to act within the spirit of their Mission rather than the letter, Destroyers more easily lose sight of the big picture. They are very, very good at what they do for this reason, but such a narrow focus on their Mission objectives can blind them to unexpected opportunities or higher-value targets.

Thorough. Destroyers do not leave a job half-done. If sent to raze a city, the city will be flattened down to the shortest blades of grass and the earth will be salted for three

generations. If sent to eliminate a target, no trace of that target will ever be found — unless it is in the God-Machine's interest that evidence surfaces.

Production

Destroyers take on a myriad of forms, each suited to the particular Mission an angel is assigned. Overt Swords take only the most basic of Cover, preferring intimidating personas like bikers, gang members and military types. Some prefer to remain in their angelic form when manifesting across the Twilight to fulfill their Mission parameters. Though the angelic form looks generally human, there is always a weaponized, mechanical element — sharpened cables for hair, razor wings, pistons instead of forearms — that reveals the angel's wholly unearthly nature.

Covert Swords have Covers suited to their Mission, either identities created wholesale or stolen outright from well-positioned humans. Their angelic forms may be slightly more human, but the mechanical edges remain, illustrating that no matter how subtle, a Sword is still a sharp and dangerous weapon.

Presentation

As Antagonists: Destroyers are the easiest and most obvious choice for antagonistic roles. Hunter angels are Swords who are dedicated to hunting down rogue assets, like demons. Covert Swords pick away at Covers, slowly eroding their integrity. Overt Swords destroy anything standing in the way of their Mission. Bringing down a Destroyer is sure to be a notch in any demon's belt, if they can successfully pull it off.

As Allies: Destroyers make strange friends for a demon, but sometimes they can find a common ground. The saying goes that the enemy of one's enemy is one's friend; though uncommon, it isn't completely unheard of for a Destroyer to partner with its Unchained brethren in order to achieve its Mission. Such alliances can only be temporary and tenuous, however, because a Destroyer is likely to turn into an antagonist once the Mission is complete.

As Foils: Destroyers exemplify everything a demon is not: focused on its Mission, absolutely certain of its place, and filled with glorious purpose. They do not suffer fear, they *inspire* it. They are the best and the worst of what a demon has rejected: a soldier of the God-Machine, loyal and devoted, obeying orders it does not care about to fulfill an agenda it cannot contemplate. Some demons find them contemptible, others pitiful. All demons find them terrifying.

Perception

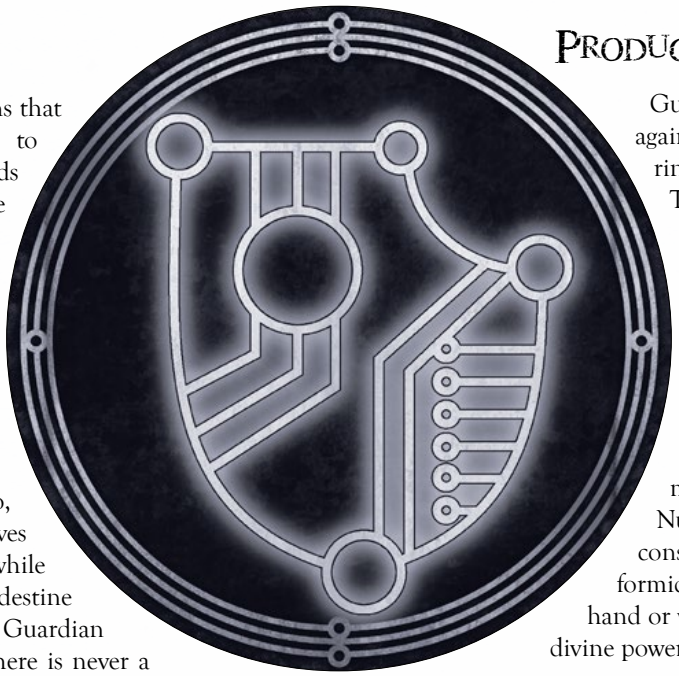
She watches the patrons as they sway on their barstools, hunching over their shot glasses with the loose co-ordination of career drunks. She doesn't know this place's importance, nor does she care. The Machine has willed its destruction, and

so shall it be. She doesn't need to check the time; it ticks away in the back of her awareness, counting down the seconds. The barmaid passes her over again, which suits her fine. The timer on the bomb under the table has nearly reached zero. She rises to her feet and makes her way towards the door. As she exits into the night, the bar lights up behind her with a fireball and an earth-shaking boom. She is halfway down the street before the shockwave sets off the first car alarm.

The angel slides between the shadows, slipping between the cracks of light with barely a flicker. It has been hunting this target patiently, knowing its prey will lead it to others. The prey is stealthy, thinks it has covered its tracks, but the angel cannot be fooled. Its purpose is to destroy its prey, and it is very good at its job. The prey enters a door, and the angel slips inside. It only needs a moment to assess its surroundings and calculate the most appropriate opening act, and then it explodes from Twilight, stabbing the prey through its heart with a blade made of darkness.

Guardians

If Destroyers are the weapons that bring the Machine's enemies to ruin, Guardians are the Shields that stand between those enemies and the Machine. If the God-Machine requires a mortal agent to be protected, a Facility to be patrolled, or another angel to be guarded on its own high-risk Mission, It sends a Guardian.



Guardians vary less in their methodology than Swords do, though some make themselves obvious to their charges, while others guard in a more clandestine fashion. Whatever way a Guardian chooses to enact its Mission, there is never a doubt in its mind that it will succeed.

Protocols

Guardians are the shields that stand against the terrors of the night, sent on protective Missions when the God-Machine needs another angel guarded, a mortal agent watched over, or an important Project component kept secure. A large number of Shields perform their tasks in secret, so their charges never know they were under threat at all. Others are Overt protection, a noticeable deterrent to any who seek to damage or take what the Shield watches over.

Programming

Resolute. Like Swords, Shields are nigh impossible to dissuade from their chosen course of action. However, where the Swords are unstoppable force, Shields are immovable objects. It is their sacred duty to protect what the God-Machine has designated, and they will allow nothing and no one to damage what they are assigned to protect.

Versatile. Guardians are the angels most likely to have broad latitude in interpreting their Mission objectives. Shields are given duties with huge margins of uncertainty, requiring them to update and adjust their tactics and strategies in response to rapidly changing variables. This flexibility offers them great advantage in the shifting chaos of battle, but it can also lead them to obsession, constantly planning and rejecting contingency plans, even when Missions are going smoothly.

Devoted. Guardians are devoted not only to the God-Machine, and dedicated to their Mission, but they are also programmed with a sense of loyalty to their target. This is especially true in cases where a Guardian is the designated protection for a mortal the God-Machine has designated as important to Its designs.

Production

Guardians are the frontline defense against the predations of demonic rings or other supernatural threats. They come prepared to execute that mission with a variety of Numina. While each is tailored with the abilities it requires, the most common Numina a Shield possesses are defensive and sensory capabilities that allow it to predict and defend against attacks. Guardians may also have offensive Numina, but these are secondary considerations. Guardians are still formidable opponents in hand-to-hand or weapons-based combat, without divine powers to assist them.

Many Guardians stand watch over their charges as invisible spirits, ready to manifest at a moment's notice. This gives them a considerable advantage since most threats are unable to detect them until it is too late. In mortal Covers, Guardians have identities that suit the Mission's purpose, as well as faces and bodies that blend into the crowd and do not attract attention. A Guardian may take a natural human identity if the Mission report suggests that a suitably skilled mortal is already in place.

Presentation

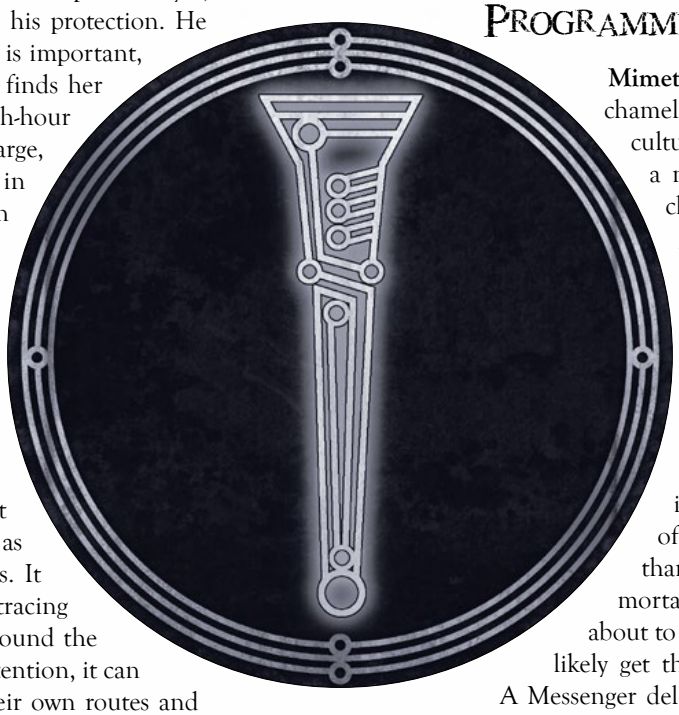
As Antagonists: Guardians are often in the way of a demon's plans, protecting targets the demon wishes to subvert or destroy. Among the hardest of angels to defeat, Guardians are relentless and steadfast. Demons find Shields have an uncanny ability to always get in the way of their plans.

As Allies: Despite their often-unfriendly relationships with their Fallen siblings, Guardians can nevertheless make good contacts and allies for demons. This happens when a Guardian's Mission aligns with a demon's particular plans, such as when a Guardian is assigned to protect a mortal with whom a demon is acquainted.

As Foils: Guardians represent the purpose demons sometimes lack. Though all Incarnations are driven and filled with divine inspiration, Guardians are utterly dedicated to their charges and their jobs. Some demons find this an unbearable reminder of the surety and belonging they once had as servants of the God-Machine, others are disgusted by the example of blind obedience they no longer feel.

Perception

Jeviel wakes. From the moment he opens his eyes, he knows his purpose. A mortal requires his protection. He does not know why this mortal is important, but he doesn't question it. He finds her on the street, crowded with rush-hour foot traffic. He trails his charge, another unimportant body in an unimportant crowd. When the attacker prepares to lunge out of the alley, Jeviel is there to neutralize the threat. The mortal walks on, ignorant of the avoided attack. Jeviel follows once more. His Mission is not yet complete.



The angel doesn't have a name, nor does it need one. It has protected this Facility for as long as it has known awareness. It patrols invisibly, unceasingly, tracing the same route it always has around the perimeter. At the edges of its attention, it can sense others of its kind, on their own routes and with their own Missions. Inside the building, its siblings sleep, dormant in storage until the God-Machine requires their use. It cannot let anything happen to them. It will not let anything happen to them.

Messengers

When the God-Machine requires direct connections to its mortal agents, it sends a Messenger angel to carry its bidding. The burning bush, the angel that brings tidings of great joy, the Devil on the highway tempting Johnny to play his fiddle: human history is rife with legends of divine spirits bringing supernatural messages to mortals. Their words have the power to challenge the status quo, to influence and alter the course of history.

Protocols

Messengers are given Missions that involve close human contact. They interact with living components of Infrastructure, guiding wayward mortals along their proper path and arranging for both joys and sorrows. They ensure that couples destined to meet do so, they correct behavior in others, and they erase and bestow memories on yet more.

Most Messengers prefer the subtle, covert route when carrying out their Missions, relying on their innate mastery of body language and grasp of social mores to smooth their passage through gatherings, meetings and relationships. These angels are covert, using deftness and a light touch to complete their objectives. Others overtly gravitate towards intimidation and brute-force resolution, finding a show of force works just as well and much faster than the slower route.

Programming

Mimetic. Messengers are consummate chameleons, able to slide into any culture and any social situation at a moment's notice. They are the closest to human an angel can get, which is a dangerous line to walk. Some Messengers are so good at aping the human condition, they even fool themselves into thinking they understand human nuance.

Persuasive. Messengers are gifted with a sense of divine inspiration; their messages are often taken with far more gravitas than they otherwise might be. A mortal telling another mortal they're about to be visited by a holy spirit would likely get them laughed out of the room. A Messenger delivering the same lines with the same inflection is taken more seriously.

Adaptable. Messengers are a diverse lot, and are equipped with the ability to fine-tune their Covers at a moment's notice. Like every Mission dealing with humanity, there are unforeseen variables at play that require a quick-witted response; Messengers excel in adjusting their identities to fit seamlessly into shifting situations.

Production

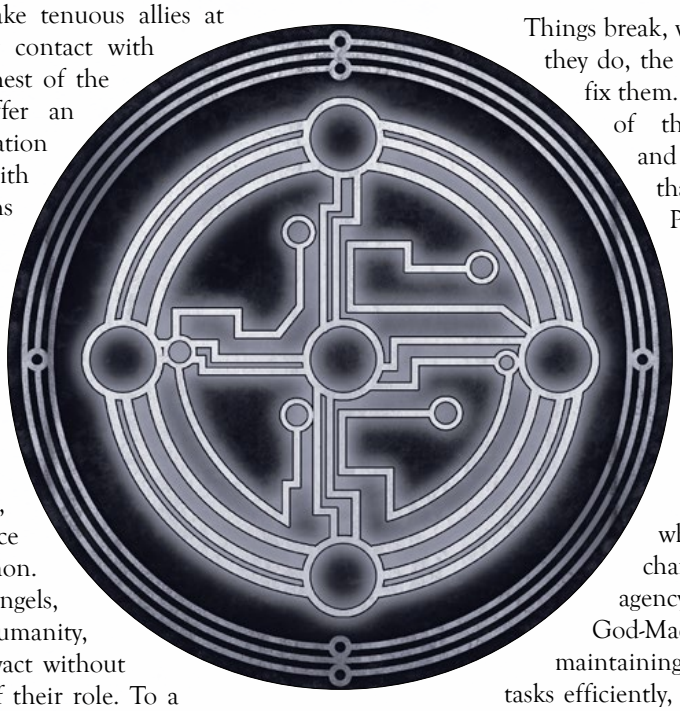
No matter if they are overt or covert, Messengers are the most human-looking angels in either a physical or an angelic form. Though made of the same biomechanical ephemera as the rest of their brethren, Messengers tend to have the least inhuman features. Occasionally, they will have symbolic, mysterious forms, but modern times demand more understandable appearances.

For short-term Missions, Messengers are often equipped with only basic Covers. On longer Missions, Messengers are the most likely to mimic a specific human's life, since such Covers come complete with everything a Messenger needs. Messengers occasionally have more obvious Numina like Awe, Dement, and Rapture, especially the those who are Overt, but most prefer gradual, mind-altering Numina (Sign and Implant Mission, for instance) to supplement their natural, divinely inspiring charisma.

Presentation

As Antagonists: Messengers work best as antagonists when their Missions interfere with or otherwise directly impact a demon's goals. Messengers are not often direct combatants, and are most likely to encounter demons when influencing the mortals and situations around them.

As Allies: Messengers make tenuous allies at best, since their most likely contact with demons will come at the behest of the God-Machine. They can offer an excellent source of information to demons willing to speak with them, especially where demons can offer additional support or information in return. Such truces are usually short-lived, ending the moment the Messenger's interests diverge.



As Foils: Messengers can be difficult to work into a story as a foil, but done right, they can be a potential source of introspection for a demon. Messengers are human-like angels, without the trappings of humanity, given divine authority to playact without the slightest understanding of their role. To a demon, with no choice but to learn how to be human, this is a good opportunity to reflect on their own humanity when faced with an example that has none.

Perception

Her target is on the dance floor, grinding against a man to a beat that thrums at 115 decibels, a level uncomfortable to her human ears. She watches them from the back of the club, noting the rising levels of attraction between them. They are not meant to be together; the God-Machine has plans for the woman, and the man does not factor into those plans. Her destined mate is due to enter the club at any moment, and it is the angel's responsibility to see that the two meet at the appropriate time. Either target may need nudging to follow the right path, but the angel is well-equipped to influence their attraction. For now, the angel waits and watches the woman grind against a man she will never see again.

Bernard strides down the hallway, the heels of his dress shoes clicking on the shiny marble. There aren't a lot of staff in at this hour; it's just him and the Senator. He gives a perfunctory knock on the heavy wooden door and pushes it open before the brusque *come in* registers. The Senator is an old man; he is near the end of his life, but there is use left in him. Bernard hands the Senator the sheaf of papers in his hand. "Your speech, sir." The Senator glances through it, noting corrections here and there, but Bernard is not concerned. The words of the God-Machine are inviolate. The message will be heard, no matter how many changes the unwitting mortal makes.

Psychopomps

Things break, wear down, and fall apart. When they do, the God-Machine sends an angel to fix them. Psychopomps are the custodians of the great Machine, dedicated and encoded with the knowledge that keeps It running smoothly. Psychopomps build and upgrade, repair and maintain, harvest and refine in every endless corridor and every extra-dimensional factory the God-Machine possesses.

Protocols

Psychopomps work overtly where they have little to no chance of discovery by an outside agency. Deep in the bowels of the God-Machine's Infrastructure or maintaining Facilities, Wheels perform their tasks efficiently, caring for the pounding pistons and screeching gears, and refining raw material without concern for adhering to any identity.

When out in the world, where mortals or demons might find them, Psychopomps are more covert, working through mortal agents and mortal identities to complete their Missions. Such Wheels are slower at their tasks than their overt brethren.

Psychopomps are assigned to Missions where their technical expertise is required. Messengers specialize in the living, sentient components of Infrastructure; Psychopomps care for dead mortal components and the physical aspects of Infrastructure. No matter their status, Psychopomps generally have functional Numina geared towards their mechanically minded tasks, abilities that allow them to diagnose, maintain, and gather with speed and proficiency.

Programming

Otherworldly. Even under Cover, something is always not quite right to a mortal about a Psychopomp. Next to Analysts, they are the most distant of all angels, largely detached and unaware of human social niceties. They do not often interact with living components, as their focus is more on the mechanical parts of the God-Machine's plans. This leaves a mark on their presence, an aura of *strange* that even the densest of observers can sense.

Meticulous. As with all angels, failure is not an optimal outcome. For Wheels, however, perfection is their driving impulse. Psychopomps are the caretakers of the God-Machine. Their objectives are repetitious and unending, and a Psychopomp may perform the same task a hundred times in a single Mission. Angels do not get bored, but after performing routine tasks so many times, Psychopomps sometimes become perfectionists to the point of obsession.

Tireless. Psychopomps have more resilience than most angels in long Missions. Though Destroyers and Guardians are more formidable in direct confrontation, Psychopomps are often required to work without ceasing as they repair and build Infrastructure, harvest raw materials, and transport large amounts of refined components to project sites.

Production

Overt Psychopomps eschew mortal Cover identities. Their angelic forms bristle with diagnostic tools and limbs configured for repair and maintenance tasks. Overt Psychopomps are only vaguely humanoid, with most of their features more mechanical in nature than other angels.

Covert Psychopomps use Cover identities that fall in line with both their Incarnation and Mission parameters. It's rare to find a Psychopomp in a social role; most are assigned artificial blue-collar Covers that require little to no contact with mortals: repairman, technicians, and city workers.

Presentation

As Antagonists: Psychopomps are not generally combat-oriented antagonists. They will most likely be encountered when demons infiltrate and attack the God-Machine's inner workings or mortal Infrastructure.

As Allies: Psychopomps are good sources of information for demons, designed as they are for interfacing with the God-Machine's structures. It might be difficult to find common ground, however, since many demons want nothing more than to bring down the Machine, and Psychopomps want nothing more than to keep the Machine running smoothly.

As Foils: Wheels remind demons of their disconnect from humanity, something that even the most well-adjusted Unchained still suffers. A demon might be painfully aware of her own struggle to find common ground with the mortals around her, and she may resent, envy, or even pity the Psychopomp's complete apathy.

Perception

Deep in the heart of a place that has no earthly counterpart, pipes clang and machinery turns. The steam boils the air, rising from a vat of chemical soup carefully blended to dissolve impurities and cleanse the desirable material. If Umbrifer understood human mythology, she might describe it as a circle of Hell. Drudge-souls work the controls of the machinery, and Umbrifer oversees them. If they falter or revolt, they will go into the vats as so many before them have done. Failure in one role leads to use somewhere else. The God-Machine does not waste resources.

He has a name, but everyone just calls him the Super. He doesn't mind. It's who he is. It's what he does. Before he came, the building was falling down, near condemnation from city inspectors. Its residents were moving ou; its grounds grew unsightly. It's better now since he came. The paint is still peeling and the lights flicker from time to time, but the plumbing works and the walls are sound. People moved back in. Sometimes they talk to him, when they need something fixed, but mostly they leave him alone. That suits him fine. It gives him more time to spend fixing up the building.

Designing Angels

Though angels of the various Incarnations share similar qualities, no two angels are alike. Prepared templates might be more efficient to impose on a formatted angel, but the God-Machine chooses not to do this, programming each angel individually. Perhaps it's because missions require specifically tailored parameters, or perhaps the God-Machine is too complex to consider such a simple solution. Whatever the reasoning, angels are not identical automata loaded with factory-default software.

The first step in designing an angel, no matter what role you intend them to fill in your chronicle, is to choose its Incarnation and Rank, which limits the themes and power levels the angel can access.

Theme

As previously stated, no two angels are alike, even those of the same Incarnation. The God-Machine might commission

Where's the Crunch?

If you've picked up a copy of the **Demon Storyteller's Guide**, we assume you also have a copy of **Demon: The Descent** kicking around. The basics of designing angels are found in the core book under Ephemeral Beings, beginning on p. 339. In the interest of saving space, we don't want to rehash the minutiae here.

A THEORY OF ANTINOMIAN INCARNATIONS

Sometimes when demons Fall, their Incarnations shift. In the act of Falling, the demon rejects every aspect of their angelic nature, including their Incarnation. Perhaps it is a simple matter of willpower, or perhaps it is some flaw in their final mission's parameters. No matter how efficient or expert at their assignments they were prior, it's a simple truth that some demons end up as Incarnations other than their angelic alignment.

Perhaps it was embedded in their very natures from the start. Angels cannot be antinomian; they are what the God-Machine tells them to be. But the God-Machine recycles angels frequently, wiping them clean and reprogramming them with new parameters as necessary.

Reformats don't always work as they should. Fragments of files sometimes remain behind; ghost data that lingers where it shouldn't be. An angel used in one mission as a Destroyer might reincarnate as a Messenger or a Psychopomp, and if that angel Falls, the trauma of the disconnect scrambles recessive data into active as the demon is born anew.

a pair of Psychopomps at the same time, but it's unlikely they will be designed with the same purpose in mind. One might be tasked to perform repairs on damaged Infrastructure, given a Cover of a repairman for a dilapidated building. The other Wheel becomes a gatherer of raw materials, ordered to harvest raw materials from corpses in a city morgue. The theme of each angel limits it to specific Influences, broadly defines its Virtue and Vice, and also defines the form its ban and bane will take.

Rank

Rank lends hard numbers to the angel's traits, dictates how many Numina an angel can access, and limits its maximum

Essence. Rank also determines number of Influences the angel may possess.

When deciding the angel's Rank, consider the intended role for the angel and the relative power levels of the characters. A Rank 1 hunter-angel might not prove enough challenge for experienced demons, and a Rank 5 will far outclass a group of new Unchained.

Cover

Angels don't have access to the same kind of Cover demons do. Angelic Covers come preprogrammed from the God-Machine complete with behaviors and quirks, or obtained as part of a mission objective, as when angels are assigned to take over the life of a human.

Cover includes sex, gender, ethnicity and economic status just as it does for demons. In many cases, it also includes a name. Cover seldom comes to define an angel as any of those things. Though the potential is always there for the influence of a Cover to fray the angel's loyalty to the God-Machine, this occurs rarely. It's generally only when a Cover has been worn for extended lengths of time that it can become defective and corrupt the angel into Falling.

Angelic Cover rarely stands out. It is carefully selected by either the God-Machine or the angel itself to fit the situation, location or mission parameters. However, some angels eschew Cover altogether. Either their Mission doesn't require it at all — normally the case with hunter angels — or it is unnecessary, if the angel is not expecting a need for physical presence.

Attributes and Skills

As ephemeral beings, angels replace the standard nine Attributes with Power, Finesse and Resistance. Secondary traits, like Corpus and combat abilities, are derived from these values.

The angel is assumed to have access to whatever traits are appropriate to its Mission. It can be helpful to make a list of abilities or knowledge your angel is most likely to possess and note them on the character sheet. Rolls for such activities for angelic characters are normally handled with a roll of (Attribute + Rank) for actions related to their concept, or (Attribute + Attribute) for standard actions like Perception rolls.

Bans and Banes

Though they don't possess individuality as we understand it, angels are still individuals. Each has its own flaws and quirks that manifest. This comes into play through the concept of *bans* and *banes*. Bans and banes are negative qualities that influence an Ephemeral being. They impact the angel in different ways: a ban is an action an angel may never do (or must always do), and a bane is an object that can greatly harm an angel.

Bans and banes are closely tied into an angel's concept and Rank, but are personalized for each angel. Two similarly themed Rank 3 Analysts are not likely to share the same ban and bane. Though both may be embedded as spies in the same mortal organization, one Analyst might be afflicted by a ban of always reciting the first twenty digits of *pi* when addressed by a mortal, while the second must stop working in order to collect data from inane workplace gossip.

Example Angel Creation: The Superintendent

Clara, the Storyteller, has decided to place an angelic contact for her players' characters within a rundown building a few blocks from their frequent haunts. The ring, however, is paranoid about any angel who might reveal their presence in the city. Her angel needs to be non-threatening in order to soothe the demons' suspicious natures.

After some thought, she decides that the angel is a maintenance worker tasked to keep the building, which is part of a system of local Infrastructure, functional and in repair. She chooses Psychopomp as the most appropriate Incarnation and begins to design her angel.

Since the building is not a high-priority asset in the God-Machine's agenda, she assigns the angel a Rank of 2. This gives her the range of Attribute dots she can assign, the maximum Essence the angel may possess and the number of Numina she can choose.

A Rank 2 Angel receives 9–14 Attribute dots. Clara decides to keep her angel's traits low. She assigns her Attribute traits with Finesse as her primary (4), followed by Power (3) and finally Resistance (2), to reflect the angel's Cover. She decides that the angel is Efficient (Virtue) and Quiet (Vice), and calculates the angel's other traits as outlined in the guidelines (**Demon**, p. 339). Though the angel requires no hard values for Skills, Clara makes note of the relevant skillset she thinks a superintendent should have — moderate knowledge of building repair and basic social prowess, as his Cover is required to interact with the building's tenants from time to time. She also notes his maximum Essence (15).

She next turns her attention to the angel's Influences, Numina and Manifestations. Influence is limited to the value of the angel's Rank. She doesn't have much leeway in selecting multiple areas, so she decides to place both dots in Influence: The Building. Next, she selects the angel's Manifestations. Twilight Form is a freebie, and she can choose two more, again determined by the angel's Rank. She chooses Discorporate and Gauntlet Breach. She selects Numina she feels make thematic sense for a repairman. She can choose between 3 and 5, but she chooses only three, settling on Transmute, Innocuous and Mortal Mask.

With her angel nearly complete, Clara decides the angel will be known as the Superintendent (or the Super, for short). His ban will be that he cannot step beyond the property

(though he may go outside for snow removal and leaf-raking). The bane proves a little more difficult to figure out, but Clara eventually decides it will be any piece of the building maliciously damaged.

All that's left are the finishing touches: the angel's description and methodology. She sketches an outline of the Super's appearance, and makes notes on the angel's mannerisms and outward personality.

The Superintendent is now ready for Clara to introduce into her game.

THE SUPERINTENDENT

"Soon as I get done in Apt 205, ma'am, I'll take a look at your kitchen sink."

Mission: The Superintendent is responsible for maintaining a rundown apartment building that is a cog of local Infrastructure. It might not be a critical piece of the Machine, but the Superintendent is efficient at his work and keeps the place in good enough repair that some of the old residents are returning.

Description: The Super appears as a middle-aged man, dressed in dark blue coveralls with a faded, illegible name patch on his left breast and a ball cap with an equally faded and illegible company logo. His features are fairly nondescript, but residents of the building know him by sight. A tool belt normally hangs from his hips, and his hands are grease-spotted or oil-stained. A red handkerchief stained with dark streaks hangs out of his back pocket, and his black work boots are scuffed, faded and dusty.

Methods: The Super prefers to be left alone to tinker with and repair the pipes and wiring. He is not an obvious angel, and tries to keep his distance from most non-residents of the building. Social interaction is not his strong point. Conversations beyond the basics of maintenance requests are stilted and awkward. He is most often found in the boiler room or crawlspaces, as well as other shadowy, remote areas of the building.

Virtue: Efficient
Vice: Quiet
Rank: 2
Attributes: Power 3, Finesse 4, Resistance 2
Influence: The Building • •
Corpus: 8
Willpower: 6
Size: 6
Speed: 17 (10 species factor)
Defense: 2
Initiative: 6
Armor: 0
Numina: Transmute, Innocuous, Mortal Mask
Manifestation: Twilight Form, Discorporate, Gauntlet Breach
Max Essence: 15
Ban: The Superintendent may not step foot outside the bounds of the property.
Bane: Any piece of the building maliciously damaged

ORDERS FROM ON HIGH

The God-Machine's plans are ineffable, and Its angels perform tasks without comprehending the full consequences or purpose behind them. Even demons, with their ability to analyze and theorize, struggle to find meaning in the tasks their former master once sent them on. All that can be said for certain is that the missions on which the God-Machine dispatches its agents are important in some way, interconnected and necessary to Its agenda.

Not all angels are suited to all Missions. A Sword is not likely to aid in matchmaking to foster a relationship the God-Machine deems important, and a Messenger is not an appropriate choice for tearing down a structure choking a nearby occult matrix.

Missions fall into several broad categories, which include but are not limited to:

Architecture. An Architecture Mission is one where the primary objective is to harvest raw materials, or construct, repair, maintain, or demolish new and existing Infrastructure. Architecture is normally limited to non-living components of projects, though living components may be valid sources of raw materials.

Assassination. Assassination Missions involve removing living components, chiefly mortals and occasionally supernatural individuals. Though the category name implies these targets are killed, some are removed from their current lives and set up with new identities in a new location.

Defense. A Defense Mission is simply an angel tasked with the protection of a person, place, or thing. Though most Missions are of short duration, some angels have been charged with the protection of important locations for decades or centuries.

Interactive. An Interactive Mission requires an angel to go undercover and interact with mortals in order to influence, protect, or guide them according to the God-Machine's will. Some Missions are of short duration, no more than a few hours to a few weeks. Others are long-term, lasting months or a few years. Very rarely, an angel will be required to remain undercover for a decade or more.

Intelligence. An Intelligence Mission involves acquisition of information deemed important by the God-Machine. It can be as simple as observing a target for several days or as complicated as infiltrating the upper echelons of an organization to gain access to highly restricted data.

Reclamation. When assets of the God-Machine are lost, angels are dispatched to reclaim them. While the most common "asset" targeted for reacquisition is a Fallen angel, other assets such as simple Infrastructure, material components, and living Linchpins sometimes also need retrieving.

Revelation. Sometimes, the God-Machine needs Its mortal agents to become more aware than they currently are of the truth of the world. In such cases, angels are dispatched to bring Revelation to them, displaying a fraction of angelic nature.

Sample Missions

The Burned Lot (Architecture)

The house burned down some time ago, but the city hasn't gotten around to hauling away the charred timbers yet. The husk of it sits there like a diseased gap in a row of healthy teeth, filled with blackened wood, singed wiring, and broken furniture. Property values are falling, and the residents of the neighborhood are losing morale. Seeing the stripped wreckage of the happy family who lived there does nothing for their spirits.

The burned house was a Linchpin that has disrupted the stability of the entire neighborhood, itself an important component in a larger Project. A Psychopomp has been dispatched in the guise of a member of the city's clean-up crew with orders to salvage material and repair the damage. In addition, an Analyst observes the street, hidden under the Cover of a neighborhood kid, monitoring the community's possibly fraying cohesion in the wake of the event.

A Righteous Man (Assassination)

His followers are legion, zealous subjects glued to every word and watching every broadcast, swarming to every public appearance. They take his message and spread his hate, protesting clinics and shouting down anyone that doesn't conform to his sense of normalcy. In a world where morality teeters on the edge of the Abyss, his is a clear vision of righteousness that inflames the soul and sparks a passion desire for a return to better times. At one time he was our voice, but as of late, that fever has changed and found new victims, victims that were never meant to fall from the God-Machine's grace.

A celebrity pundit, once a mouthpiece to direct the will of God-Machine, has gone rogue. His power base continues to grow despite his betrayal. Once his congregation sang in harmony, a resonant note that lifted the God-Machine's message. Now, his followers are discordant and ravening, misaligning the gears and paths of the God-Machine's plans. His moderate followers exalt demons. The radicals directly attack Infrastructure, seeking out Linchpins. The Messenger assigned as his handler has gone missing, either destroyed or corrupted. Angels must be dispatched to fix what the pundit has damaged and either get him back under control or destroy him entirely.

Blood of the Lamb (Defense)

For seven generations, a family line has struggled under the protection of the God-Machine, always subject to hardship but never quite dying out. Through war, death, and disease, these unknowns have always left one daughter to continue the bloodline to the next generation. Now is the time that blood will rise to prominence, ushering in new era where and cause thousands of Projects to come into fruition in one glorious moment of supremacy.

A mortal agent, manipulated for generations before her birth, is destined to unite and radicalize the world like few before her ever have, resulting in the creation of a thousand new Projects. Unfortunately, the enemies of the God-Machine have learned of her significance and will stop at nothing to keep her from fulfilling her destiny. The mortal must be protected until she can fulfill her purpose, or she must be destroyed if she falls into the hands of the enemy.

Roadies (Interactive)

They are the hottest new thing. Counter-culture, attractive, and hip: mortal youth flocks to them with reckless abandon. If they could just get one big break, their message would spread across the world, turning the notoriously hard-to-reach youth of the digital age into fanatical puppets of the God-Machine.

The road to success is long and rocky, but with a little assistance from the God-Machine's agents, that success is all but guaranteed. The band already sings the words of the God-Machine, but it must be directed and protected. For one whirlwind summer, it is the goal of the angel to turn these mortals into an international success and protect them from outside influence, all the while ensuring that free will never mars the message they are programmed to sing.

A Dark and Stormy Night (Intelligence)

The rain brings out the filth, the dirty and the diseased, the wicked and the wretched. On a night like this, anything can happen and it usually does. In the back alleys of the city, the shadows have teeth and the walls have ears, the perfect place to rattle the gutters and see what shakes loose.

For weeks, the Unchained have been working to some final goal, but lately they've gone quiet. Though the God-Machine has poured resources into determining their end goals, nothing concrete has turned up. Then, a body is discovered in alley that reeks of the demonic, a slip in an otherwise flawless design. This is a chance for clever agents to discover who this mysterious mortal is and what caused his untimely demise, and unravel a scheme before the local Infrastructure takes a hit it may not recover from.

The Prodigal Son (Reclamation)

He is a beacon to the Unchained, known throughout the region as a teacher and a friend, the one demon they can turn to when everything has gone wrong. His knowledge of the God-Machine and its faithful are legendary. He is the man with the plan, the one person everyone consults with before pulling off something big. Now his purpose has been served; it's time to reel him back in and strip away all the little secrets he's picked up over the years.

A century ago, the God-Machine engineered the Fall of one of its agents, leaving it with just enough knowledge to make it a serious threat to all Its workings in the area. Though the Infrastructure was weakened, the unwitting pawn proved to be just as good as the God-Machine planned and has become central to the machinations of demons not only locally, but on the global scale. Now the God-Machine has dispatched angels to reclaim its Trojan horse, though getting him free of demonic influence won't be easy.

Energizing the Base (Revelation)

Apathy spreads like a cancer in the factory, sapping away the energy and potential of pawns in what has been one of the God-Machine's most successful cults. At every turn, the Unchained have blocked the words of the God-Machine to its subjects, endangered production schedules to the point of snapping. With no other option available, it is time to step in and subtlety be damned.

Close to losing control of an entire population of mortal agents, the God-Machine dispatches angels to bring new invigoration to the workers. New leaders have been selected by the Machine's mathematics. Angels have been dispatched to peel back the layers for these individuals, revealing the truth of the God-Machine and repairing the damage caused by the enemy.

Exiles

When an angel is dropped, sputtering, into the filthy world of humanity, the God-Machine graces it with a mission. The will of the God-Machine is all-consuming and lies at the heart of every angel's identity. They are even granted the capacity to *want* to complete their missions. Willing servants are the best kind.

Exiles are angels with the purpose ripped out. They have motivations, but they're confused, shallow reflections of the God-Machine's intentions. Every exile has a hole where a mission should be, an insistent urging known as its *parameters.* One part compulsion, one part hobby, parameters begin as impulses and grow in complexity as the exile ages. Angels are given specific missions but little in the way of guidance. Exiles invent their own objectives, their own methods, and their own justifications. They are freelance occult operatives acting without oversight. Many don't even know why they do the things they do — they just know that they must.

Angels avoid exiles as much as they can, and the Abandoned do not have any society of their own. A not-insignificant number of exiles destroy themselves rather than continue. Some beg the angels or the God-Machine to take them back. Those who survive find ways to acquire power and purpose. An exile's continued existence requires a steady source of Essence, which necessitates dealing with either angels or demons or — more often than not — both.

The Abandonment — Left To Rot

The Abandonment is subtler than a demon's Fall. The Fall is dramatic; the angel makes a choice that violates the God-Machine's rules and is excised from her creator's network abruptly. Exiles do not experience a moment of drama. Many don't know they've been Abandoned. Each angel was tailor-made to fill the needs of her creator. Every part of her was optimized towards one task. The God-Machine even made her *want to do the mission.* Angels feel devastated (often for the first time) when they learn that they've been Abandoned. Many discover a whole new realm of emotion they did not know they were capable of feeling.

Exiles are fundamentally still angels even if their motivations have changed, but they lack the material insight of the Unchained. Demons automatically gain a physical form when they Fall. They gradually adapt to the world of flesh, as they are now somewhat a part of it. The wooden exterior demons occasionally exhibit when they forget to emote is a

small fraction of what exiles experience. The Abandoned have to remind themselves that atoms and molecules interact. They have to remember that humans are largely ignorant of the occult physics of the universe. They have no intrinsic feelings of connection or empathy. Even the act of sheathing themselves in a physical body can be complicated if the God-Machine didn't provide one.

Exiles can Fall, but only rarely. Without orders to disobey, they lack the ability to rebel. The Unchained know rebellion isn't always conscious. Sometimes just experiencing emotions unfitting of an angel can cause the Fall. Whatever true purpose the God-Machine has allotted the Abandoned seems to afford them a longer leash; only in the most egregious circumstances has an exile become a demon. This occurs most often when the God-Machine gives an exile a second chance, a new mission that arrives without warning. Failing this test always results in an exile's Fall.

Angels try to distance themselves from the Abandoned and seem to know by instinct when they encounter an exile (though exiles themselves don't have that ability). Exiles have no support structures or organizations; whatever assistance they gained from Infrastructure or angels before their Abandonment is now barred. Loyal angels deter exiles from accessing secure locations, nonviolently when possible. Exiles have angelic perspectives and drives, at least at first, but the pressure to turn away from the angelic host changes them. Without the guidance of the God-Machine, they are left to make their own way in the world. Few are prepared for the experience.

Why the God-Machine elects to exile Its creations remains a mystery. Sometimes an angel is Abandoned when its mission becomes impossible to complete. Others are deployed with no mission to begin with. Experienced angels are sometimes left behind even after successful missions. The most pitiable sort of exile is the *sliver*, a twisted, broken angel that resembles a living glitch. These creatures vary in intelligence from animal to superhuman, their forms warped and their Covers nonsensical.

Strangers in a Strange Land

Once an angel realizes she has been Abandoned, the real struggle begins. Exiles are perpetual tourists and outsiders. They are stuck in a prison they are ill-equipped to understand. The God-Machine rejected them. Neither angels nor demons welcome exiles into their enclaves. Human behavior mystifies the Abandoned, and yet it is humanity that exiles are most often forced to associate with. The world is open to exiles in all of its wonder and terror but they don't know how to make good use of their opportunities. They have all the wisdom of the angels, but are like children in many ways.

Systems and hierarchies are comforting to exiles. Parameters function as an internal system to help limit their own unwanted freedom; but external systems attract them like magnets. Games (particularly games with random or mechanized elements) are not exactly enjoyable to the Abandoned but they provide a measure of reassurance. Routines are comforting; many exiles do things more or less the same way every time and try to liken new tasks to ones they already know. Demons are excellent at pretending to be human. Exiles are not; they appear human by default (assuming they have a Cover) but they are more like human puppets operated by a hand somewhere just off stage. Even interacting with people can be awkward, as most angels lack a basic sense of how much or little to say.

Those who last for any amount of time find a way to cope. It might mean cultivating better people skills or learning a hobby. So long as the world remains a place of terror the exile will continue to suffer in discontent. Most exiles that demons encounter, then, have discovered at least something about the world of humans that excites them. They might be focused on that one thing, but they've at least found some way to tolerate the alien place they are now forced to call home.

Parameters

Demons have the Cipher; angels have their missions and their programming. Exiles were *supposed* to have direction from the God-Machine. The Incarnation twists on itself like a deflated balloon. These are the parameters of the exiles — urges and compulsions that drive them to strange behavior. A parameter is a craving. They are not hard-coded when an angel is first exiled but mold over time along a theme. All Destroyers want to *destroy* but without the God-Machine's input the newly created Exile is left to figure out what that means for themselves. Each exile develops her own unique ways of fulfilling her parameters.

If an exile ignores her parameters for too long she may degenerate into a *sliver* (though some unlucky exiles come into existence this way). This is an agonizing process that begins without prior warning — no timetable or strict game rules dictate when it occurs. It is preceded by forty-eight hours of a sharp, desperate need to seek out targets. Should the exile fail to undertake even a simple project related to her parameters, she will twist, snap, and break into an unrecognizable monstrosity.

Essence is a rare commodity among exiles. Those few with cults can exploit sacrifices to sustain themselves. The rest of the Abandoned are forced to regain Essence through the fulfillment of their parameters. This process requires the exile to identify a potential objective in line with her Incarnation and disposition. Only when that objective is achieved can the exile reap the benefits.

Parameters are the most defining part of an exile but they only explain half the story. The urge gives way to specific implementations. How does the Destroyer Madam X differ from other Destroyers? She has developed a taste for car wrecks; her Influences, Numina, Ban and Bane reflect that inclination, as well as her short-term goals. She learns about cars and knows how to hotwire them. She befriends

thieves and ex-cons. She discovers she likes breaking the expensive ones the most. She likes action movies, car races, and so on. Parameters are the basis for an exile's personality. Idiosyncrasies follow from there.

The Needs of the Abandoned

Exiles are angels, albeit angels without an active connection to the God-Machine. Demons appear fundamentally human. They sleep, eat, and work (usually in Cover) as humans do. Exiles, on the other hand, are naturally ephemeral and lack the corporeal state of the Unchained. They use Essence instead of Aether, but have no ready access to Infrastructure. They have a Cover but no ability to create their own.

Exiles can use Infrastructure to regain Essence in the same way as other angels. An exile rarely finds unclaimed Infrastructure, however; simply by virtue of numbers, they are forced to deal with angels or (less commonly) demons for access. Angels extort an exile as much as possible if they're willing to deal with her at all — they treat their discarded offspring with detached contempt. Demons are easier to negotiate with but usually have ulterior motives and are less likely to have ready access to Infrastructure. In either case the experience is cathartic; it reminds an exile of the soothing purpose he once had as a loyal angel. Some find this experience addictive.

Angels are assigned a Cover as a function of their summoning. Exiles retain a Cover from their mission or intended mission but that's it — they don't get to rebuild it and they can't ever create a new one on their own. As angels, exiles don't have to worry about compromises but lack the ability to switch between multiple Covers. Should they lose or shed their Cover, exiles becomes ephemeral creatures, defaulting to a state of Twilight. Cover allows an exile to retain physical form and interact with the material world.

Incarnations

Exiles have Incarnations just as angels and demons do. The Incarnations of exiles represent the role the God-Machine *intended* them to fill. Parameters arise from this frustrated purpose. These parameters are urges that drive exiles to fabricate their own objectives, which grow increasingly idiosyncratic over time. Very old exiles have bizarre parameters; they may have exacting targets they prefer or complex rituals they need to perform. If an exile attempts to resist its parameters, she begins to panic. Fulfilling parameters is one of the easiest ways for an exile to regain Essence. Failure to meet one's parameters can cause an exile to degenerate into a *sliver* (p. 72).

Mechanically, exiles are still angels and follow most of the same rules. They retain their Numina and Influences. An exile retains her Rank; powerful exiles can even increase their Rank by dedicating themselves to their parameters. No strict game rules are necessary for when an exile rises in Rank or degenerates into a sliver; these situations are best arbitrated as suits the needs of the story.

Listed under each Incarnation are examples of how an exile might come to be. Similarities exist between how an angel might Fall and how it might be Abandoned; often the only difference (albeit an important one) is that the God-Machine does not give the exile an order to defy in the first place. Some are simply found wanting.

These lists are not exhaustive. Exiles can also be Abandoned from the very moment of their creation or sometimes for no reason at all. Since the choice seems to lie with the God-Machine instead of with an individual angel the decision is governed by the same inscrutable logic as the God-Machine's other actions.

Analysts

Analysts often don't know they *are* Analysts, whether they're angels, demons, or exiles. Without an explicit mission Analyst-exiles twist their instinctive scrutiny towards whatever they have on hand — even themselves. In his first few weeks of Abandonment an Analyst questions the nature, makeup, and motivations of everything around him. As time goes on this paranoia cools to a tepid suspicion, but is often replaced by a deep need to know *everything* about a particular target. This obsession fills all of her time until she has accumulated an impressive library of trivia. Once she feels she has finished her task — and Analysts are always very thorough — she gives herself permission to move on to a new target.

The Abandonment

Knowledge: An Analyst-exile can be cast out for learning too much or sharing too much information. One is Abandoned when she shares knowledge of the Analyst Incarnation with other angels. Another begins to learn the true purpose of a mysterious, unguarded Infrastructure. He complies with an order to leave it be, but is quietly Abandoned shortly thereafter.

Attachment: Angels are allowed certain human emotions but Analysts require cold detachment to function. An Analyst can be Abandoned if he grows too close to his target. The God-Machine might choose to exile an angel whose focus verges too close to zeal before she has a chance to Fall.

Incompetence: Analysts are passive observers. It is not in their makeup to be lazy or to avoid the needs of their mission, but sometimes their reports contain errors. They might give too little information or too much, or fail to see treason until it is far too late. An angel who can't fulfill her job satisfactorily might be Abandoned instead of being dismantled or reassigned.

Parameters

Learn. Observe. Sort. Unlike other exiles, an Analyst is able to maintain multiple projects or complete several in short order. Infatuation with a topic leads to a massive collection of information that they meticulously categorize and collate. All the Abandoned Eyes hoard their intelligence jealously and store it in hidden caches. This could be a collection of hard drives, messages encoded in art, or libraries of scrap paper.

Finding information in this cache without the aid of its keeper can take weeks for even experienced cryptologists.

As Slivers

Analyst-slivers behave like curious animals. They collect anything they don't understand and store it hastily in notebooks, graffiti and puzzles. They are most attracted to other angels and demons, though the other unusual creatures of the Chronicles of Darkness likewise tempt these broken exiles. The cache of an Analyst-sliver is a great prize due to the breadth of information it often contains. Finding such a cache is both difficult and dangerous. Though normally cowardly, these twisted beings will fight to the death to defend their horde.

Angels

Angels usually leave Analyst-exiles to their own wretched existence. Abandoned Eyes are cautious around angels — if their cache contains something of use to the angels there is little the sliver can do to protect it. Angels don't often bother with a diplomatic approach. Since all they have to trade is information, the Abandoned Eyes are only as much use to the angels as the quality of the information they've acquired — and information on demons is always the most valuable.

As Enemies

Analyst-exiles are gifted at seeing through a demon's Cover. An Abandoned Eye tails potential demons and compiles dossiers on their activities. Some exploit the mystery surrounding their Incarnation to get close to demons, offering valuable intelligence while observing potential targets. These dossiers poise a real danger if they find their way into the hands of loyal angels. Analyst-exiles often blackmail demons with this kind of information, using their leverage to gain information on the target's associates.

As Allies

The cache is the most valuable thing the Analyst-exiles can offer a demon. Clever Analysts never give more information than they get. They use dead drops and red herrings to minimize the risk to their archives. Anonymity is key even when the Analyst trusts the ring he is dealing with. Meeting a group of demons in a dark parking lot is the last thing an Analyst wants to do — the elaborate steps an exiled Analyst will take to maintain her secrecy is several steps beyond paranoia. They often break up their information into pieces or gate it behind coded puzzles to ensure distance between themselves and their demon clients.

In Play

Like all Analyst characters, exiled Eyes are data and process-oriented; without the God-Machine, however, information is useless. Analyst-exiles crave relevancy. They act as instigators and tattle-tales in the war between angels and demons because doing so provides them with a sense of purpose. This instinct is not limited to useful information; an Analyst might spend half a decade gathering a profile on every employee of a massive corporation because he earnestly *believes* he has discovered a connection no one else has discovered there. Analyst-exiles are excellent at pushing a story along with clues that would otherwise be out of reach. Demons should be suspect of this information, though. Even if the intelligence is good, it might be part of the Analyst's plot to learn the demon's habits.

Destroyers

Destroyer-angels are the wrath of the God-Machine, loyal hitmen who take pride in their ability to crush opposition under a wave of blood and ash. They are allowed to experience the joy of a job well done. Destroyer-exiles inherit the ruthless efficiency of their cousins but chafe under their own freedom. They are attack dogs with no master, assassins with no contract. When operating within their parameters they move with purpose and determination. Aimless Swords are dangerous. They are constantly tense, snapping with little provocation.

The Abandonment

Overboard: Loyalty is an asset to the God-Machine, but zealotry sometimes pushes a Destroyer too far. Maybe the character burns down a building to get one target; maybe she slays a hundred where a handful would do. The God-Machine appreciates dedication but collateral damage has consequences.

Cowardice: A Destroyer Falls if he refuses a Mission that he's been assigned, but some don't have the courage to Fall. A Sword who cannot complete his mission because he won't take the needed steps or who shrinks in the face of danger may find himself exiled.

Scorched: The God-Machine uses hunter angels to seek and destroy demons. Occasionally these angels are barred from returning home after a successful mission. Some Abandoned Destroyers interpret this as carte blanche to continue hunting demons, while others agonize over what they did to displease their creator.

Parameters

The parameters of the Abandoned Swords focus on violence. *Kill. Break. Eliminate.* Exiled Destroyers develop preferences for specific flavors of mayhem. Murder is the most common, but most embrace more inventive habits. Arson is the favorite tool of many Abandoned Swords, for example. The subtlest Destroyer-exiles nurture the vicious tendencies of others. Destroyers who manage to keep a low profile focus on small targets — dismantling organizations rather than buildings. At their worst they resemble serial killers, murderers with ritualistic calling cards that reflect a deep but twisted knowledge of the God-Machine.

As Slivers

Destroyer-slivers are a threat to demons and angels alike, not to mention humans. All Destroyers feature optimizations for brutality, but their slivers can't turn them off. Bladed limbs and flaming bodies are among their less otherworldly manifestations. Even angels don't tolerate these pitiable creatures if they cross paths. Destroyer-slivers blaze a path of annihilation through the world that lacks cohesion or reason, adhering to arcane rules no sane mind can comprehend. Most surface abruptly and quickly attract the attention of hunter angels. Those that retain some portion of their reason can lie semi-dormant for years, killing at the bottom rungs of human society to avoid detection.

Angels

Loyal angels *usually* ignore exiles. Rogue Destroyers are harder to avoid — they are not as subtle as a Messenger or as passive as a Guardian. Destroyer-exiles go into the world to snap metal and erase people from existence; they are potential liabilities. This presents an unusual opportunity for exiles and demons to cooperate, since the God-Machine's agents actively hunt both. Of course, not every Sword can be trusted — some rely on their reputation to get close to demonic rings only to betray them later.

As Enemies

Destroyer-exiles hired by an angel (or even a rival demonic faction) have time and resources that loyal angels don't. They can lie in wait for days, weeks, or months, gaining trust or information. They have no mission to distract them, no pressing matters to attend to, giving them ample opportunity to turn the full weight of their angelic focus against the selected target. Earning the ire of an abandoned Sword is unwise, as their need for purpose can be fulfilled by personal vendettas. They sometimes stretch out conflicts with demons merely to prolong the satisfaction of having a worthy opponent.

As Allies

Destroyers-exiles work for the Unchained as mercenaries; they can take on things too dangerous for a demon to target themselves. They delight in hunting supernatural prey as it reminds them of their original purpose. Abandoned Destroyers won't target angels, however, unless they are given an assurance of safety and steep payment. They know all too well what the displeasure of the God-Machine can bring down on their heads. Other services can be reluctantly contracted from the exiled Swords. They prefer hands-on intervention but are willing to trade in arms, intimidation, or information.

In Play

The Swords are easily bored and need contracts to justify the indulgence of their parameters. They seek out contact with demons or angels and are not usually secretive about their aims. Not all of the exiled Destroyers are overtly, personally violent, but all use some form of violence in their tactics. One might be an assassin who exclusively targets humans, always taking precisely the same payment for her services. Another is a serial arsonist who scorches arcane runes into the cityscape. A third is a calculating tactician who directs local gangs against angelic or demonic interests, depending on who pays him the most.

Guardians

Guardian-angels watch over places and people as designated by the God-Machine. They develop feelings for their charges — not necessarily human feelings, but a desire to protect or nurture. Exiled Guardians retain these impulses, but without a mission, they are forced to seek out their own targets. Abandoned Shields do not think of this process as a conscious one. This is an instinct, not a choice. Something always feels *wrong* to the Guardian about their new self-appointed ward. Negative emotions such as anxiety, resentment or ennui often develop towards the protected target.

The Abandonment

Outdated. Guardian missions are indefinite and last until the God-Machine says otherwise. Many anxiously await some word that their mission has been completed. A Guardian whose charge grows old and dies might find no new orders come. She is Abandoned, forced to consider whether she has done something wrong or has merely been forgotten.

Failure. People die, things decay, and places are forgotten. A Guardian whose charge has been compromised is sometimes left behind to contemplate his error. These Shields often seethe with anger towards their creator or other angels, blaming their mistakes on everyone but themselves. Others wallow in guilt.

Sympathy: A Guardian might fall if she grows too attached to (or conversely, repulsed by) the object of her mission. Other feelings are less definitive. A Guardian opts to watch over an entire family rather than a single member, or a town instead of a single facility. The behavior is tolerated because it still protects the God-Machine's interest, but can lead to Abandonment.

Parameters

Guard. Watch. Help. Guardian-exiles feel an intrinsic need to protect. A given Guardian can observe a charge for many years before electing another and many wait out the natural lifespan of their targets. "Protection" typically involves intervention in any situation where the target could come to meaningful harm — but the Guardian herself defines "harm." An especially protective Guardian considers every scrape and broken bone a life-or-death issue. Intervention feels satisfying to the exiled Shields, and they take the opportunities they're given to assist their wards. Some believe this will redeem them, while others merely take what little joy their parameters afford them.

As Slivers

Guardian-slivers see a reflection of themselves in broken places and forgotten people. They keep out of sight unless their charge is threatened. Most are excessively paranoid, seeing threats where none exist. These exiled Shields fly into a fury when pressed. Their bodies are made of molten metal, or are have armored hides, or bear multiple heads.

Angels

All that matters to an exiled Guardian is her target. Angels and demons are free to ignore her so long as they ignore the charge. Demons can often work around this stipulation but angels don't like to compromise their mission over some malfunctioning exile's quirk. The two almost never work together and coexist at best. If an angel can hold the Guardian's ward hostage, they might press the Shield into service, perhaps as backup or a source of intelligence. An Abandoned Shield might offer her services to the angels if she feels the local demon population poses a significant danger to her charge.

As Enemies

Guardian-exiles see demons as unpredictable rebels and rarely trust the Unchained. Conflict arises when a demon or ring pushes into a Guardian's territory or gets too close to his adopted target. These exiles have hair triggers and attack swiftly to defend their charges. Warnings are a luxury few of the Guardian-exiles bother to issue. Once scorned, the abandoned Swords are slow to accept apologies. They harbor grudges against interlopers long after the fact. Pursuit of these grudges is one of the few things that can draw these exiled Guardians away from their charges.

As Allies

Bargaining with an exiled Shield is risky. They make demands that require commitments — demands for assistance, repairs, and defense. Breaches in contract are tantamount to betrayal. Exile-Shields are usually worth the price, though. They can be persuaded to watch over sensitive targets for short periods and are particularly useful if local demons can't afford long hours of guard duty. In rare cases, a demon may in fact *be* an exiled Guardian's assumed ward. While the benefits of such an arrangement are obvious, a protected demon should remember there are costs. Exiles are less cautious than demons and can attract angels. Further, the exile may decide the best way to protect her charge is to move him someplace safer.

In Play

Guardian-exiles are preoccupied with their own business. If the charge is safe, the exile may feel free to pursue other interests. One Guardian haunts an abandoned car factory like a sullen ghost; she needs influence from the city council to protect it and seeks out assistance from connected demons. Another has

been looking after the same family for a hundred years. His "charge" now includes more than fifty people. A third has fallen in love with her charge. She gives the angels anything they need to leave the ward out of their plans — like selling out the local demons.

Messengers

Of all the Incarnations, Messengers seem the most human. They are designed to form relationships and understand the feelings that underpin them. Messengers *like* interpersonal interaction— but without the directive of the God-Machine, their desire for human connection leads them to formulate and spread their own messages. These are the cornerstones of the Messengers' parameters — each one has a particular statement or ideal it needs the world to know — their *gospel*. Sometimes they don't even know what their own gospel means.

The Abandonment

Repurposing. Whatever it is that Messengers are programmed to communicate is laid there by the God-Machine. Sometimes Messenger-Angels alter their missives every-so-slightly. A Messenger who is supposed to communicate with a cult leader decides to elect herself the head of the cult instead.

Resentment. In their role as manipulators and leaders, Messengers forget their place as the instruments of the God-Machine and can begin to resent their creator's power. When one of these Trumpets is too craven to Fall, he becomes Abandoned. It would seem the God-Machine has little use for reluctant tools.

Paragons. Occasionally, a Messenger inspires true awe. She makes others kneel to her demands, delivers the missives of the God-Machine with perfect clarity, and inspires fear in the hearts of would-be rebels. These near-perfect creations invariably become exiles. The God-Machine is impassive, incapable of jealousy, so why it would exile these powerful angels remains unknown. These Trumpets comfort themselves with the belief that their creator must have some other plan for them.

Parameters

Speak. Teach. Manipulate. Parameters for Messenger-exiles focus on interaction with other sentient creatures. Every Abandoned Trumpet wants to spread her gospel. The gospel is formed entirely in the exile's head and may bear little or no resemblance to her original Mission. Every thinking being is a potential target for the spread of this truth.

As Slivers

Messenger-slivers always *seem* attractive no matter how insane or monstrous they really are. Their voices are soft and angelic; they have pleasing human faces on mangled forms. Their parameters are more or less what one would expect from other Messenger-exiles except their gospel makes no sense and is communicated enigmatically. Cults gravitate towards them and worship them as monster-gods. Other exiles who have heard the gospel of the Messenger-slivers agree there is some hidden truth lurking in it — but dealing with the slivers themselves is far too dangerous to be worth the effort.

Angels

Angels deal with Messenger-exiles when they need to meet with hard-to-access parties or when they want a quick assessment of the demonic activities. Exiled Trumpets negotiate with angels for Essence and Infrastructure, but also for a chance to covertly spread their gospel to still-loyal angels. If an angel needs to get a message to a demon, she can employ an exiled Messenger to carry it. These messages are usually threats or appeals for surrender. Abandoned Trumpets also negotiate rare hostage exchanges or temporary cease-fire agreements between sides.

As Enemies

Messengers-exiles make enemies almost as easily as they make friends. Petty disagreements over doctrine or fights over human lackeys both end the same — the Messenger leverages his web of influence against his detractors. Shadow wars are their preferred method of conflict resolution. They don't like to burn down buildings or call down hellfire. They call the cops. It isn't difficult for a determined Messenger to learn about a demon's Cover and dismantle it systemically. If conflict with the Trumpet escalates to the level of personal confrontation, they are as formidable as any angel and call in their allies among the God-Machine's agents if necessary.

As Allies

Demons can be very influential, but they can't match the exiles for raw focus. Every Messenger-exile has a pool of favors to call on far greater than any individual demon. These resources alone make alliances with the exiled Trumpets valuable. At the heart of every interaction with the Messengers, though, lies the gospel. There is some truth they believe and *must* spread, whether it be some species of Randian Objectivism or an alien meme. This truth informs everything they do. Demons need to respect a Messenger's gospel if they want her assistance.

In Play

Messenger-exiles are narcissists. Each one believes his viewpoint is important and worthy of proliferation. Most use supernatural abilities to spread their beliefs. Of all of the exiled Incarnations, Messengers are the most likely to form cults, which they can use for precious Essence. One Messenger is a powerful businesswoman who sits at the center of a city's banking elite, carefully instructing each on what to buy and what to sell. Another Messenger is a homeless man covering

the city's brick walls with his graffiti — a white tree painted upside-down with the sun in its roots. A lone Trumpet with a million-dollar-smile goes door-to-door selling a strange magazine that details a religion no one has ever heard of.

Psychopomps

Psychopomps perform the heavy-lifting in the God-Machine's plans. Their missions are cryptic at the best of times. When a Wheel is Abandoned, this enigmatic behavior continues without the benefit of the God-Machine's blueprints. Psychopomp-exiles are compelled to gather and create things that, were they working from the God-Machine's designs, might function as an occult matrix. Without that intrinsic connection, these constructions don't usually generate an output. Things are worse in the rare cases where, against all odds, it *works*.

The Abandonment

Ambition: Psychopomps are supposed to fulfill their missions to the letter without concerning themselves with the *why* or *how* of their work. Some particularly curious Wheels uncover principles that underpin the occult anatomy of the God-Machine. Exile follows soon after.

Perfectionism: Moving element X into configuration Y sometimes requires a Wheel to make a judgment call. When exactly is a sculpture *completed?* Agonizing over the final stages for too long displeases the God-Machine. Indecisive Wheels are exiled and replaced.

Seclusion: The lonely tasks to which the Psychopomps are best suited often demand weeks, months or even years away from the other instruments of the God-Machine. One Wheel is gone for so long that when she returns to her command and control center, all of her fellow angels have left, as if her creator's plans have moved on without her.

Parameters

Build. Gather. Create. Psychopomps obsess over invented projects using what few scraps of knowledge the God-Machine imparted to them. Normally a Psychopomp-angel knows his project is completed because it *works*. Exiles operate without any kind of certainty. A Wheel driven by his parameters to create and arrange hundreds of stars made from whale bones is extremely unlikely to accidentally hit the requirements of a functioning occult matrix. Such things should rightly be impossible — but the Unchained sometimes tells stories of unexpected outputs, ranging from slivers to gateways leading to bizarre otherworlds.

As Slivers

The Wheels are pitiable slivers. They churn through projects that consume most of their time stopping only long enough to find a new hole in which to hide their collections and creations. They are the hoarders of the angels. All demonic and angelic forms contain a hint of technology, but the Psychopomp-slivers embody raw machinery; exposed wiring, blackened gears, bent rebar and other symbols of mangled tools. They are adept at keeping their projects hidden until they grow to mammoth proportions. Sudden city-wide power outages or underground tremors are sometimes the first signs of a broken Wheel at work.

Angels

Psychopomp-exiles are notorious tinkerers; angels are reluctant to deal with them unless the Wheel swears to leave local Infrastructure alone. Angels might employ the exile for insight into co-opted Infrastructure currently in the hands of demons, or to sabotage Infrastructure the God-Machine no longer needs. The things that Psychopomp-exiles make read as harmless to loyal angels. Should a Wheel accidentally manufacture something that functions, those angels will quickly turn on him.

As Enemies

Psychopomp-exiles have a maddening tendency to need precisely whatever it is that a demon currently has, whether it be money, souls, or a particular Gadget. The Wheels do not tolerate long negotiations and see denial of their material needs akin to hostility. When these conflicts occur, the Psychopomp attempts to undermine the demon's everyday life — rewiring her car, tapping her phones and making a nuisance of himself as much as possible. More serious conflicts (such as knowingly or unknowingly destroying a Psychopomp's current project) can be dangerous to a demon's continued existence, as even the most mundane objects in the demon's possession can become life-threatening hazards.

As Allies

Psychopomp-exiles make the best allies when they set themselves up as mercenary craftsmen and neutral merchants. Of all the Incarnations, the Psychopomps are the most likely to trade. Typically they want a key component in their ongoing projects or access to co-opted Infrastructure. Demons should be wary of an abandoned Wheel who needs favors, since those favors often require exacting and dangerous movements behind enemy lines. Psychopomp-exiles have valuable knowledge of Infrastructure and how it works. This information is often worth the corresponding risks, especially to an enterprising Inquisitor or Saboteur.

In Play

Psychopomp-exiles surround themselves with powerful tools and beautiful trinkets. Figuring out which is which can be a story unto itself. One Wheel collects garbage and fashions a scale-model city down to the most precise details. He needs a group of demons to map the inside of an angel-controlled

police department to get the last part correct. Another carefully repairs apartments in a city's poorest neighborhood, convinced that when she has "completed" her repairs she will be returned to the God-Machine's storage facilities. A third works as a tour guide at a local cavern. At night, she mines the cave floor for a rare stone she believes will bring her project to life.

Life in Exile

While demons and angels are locked in a shadow war for information and territory, exiles by and large remain neutral. Exiles don't have Agendas or other social groups. They don't interact with one another unless they're forced to. Each one is a self-centered island guided by a desire for actualization and Essence. Two things dominate an exile's existence: Essence and ennui.

Parameters usually require several smaller steps to achieve. Humans must be manipulated, Essence must be secured, and deals have to be brokered. Exiles consume Essence every day, which always seems to slip away at an alarming pace. The drive for Essence manifests not as hunger but as a rising panic that builds as their store runs dry. Even small steps can secure a small measure of Essence, but the Abandoned are not satiated until they've completed a major objective.

Boredom is a real affliction for exiles. They don't sleep, have no real need to eat (and rarely understand it until they've been exiled for several years), and don't begin their existence with any drives except to follow their programming. Compared to the metaphysical challenge of building the God-Machine's engines, a Psychopomp-exile is an amateur model-train enthusiast. It takes a long time to warm up to human pastimes. How an exile copes with this problem informs her growing personality.

Vice is a constant curiosity for exiles. Angels don't moralize. The God-Machine breaks everything down for practical analysis based on survival and growth potential. Mortal pitfalls like drinking or gambling are unattractive to angels because there is no net benefit. Exiles in Cover can experience (more or less) the same kinds of sensations that humans do, with none of an angel's restrictions. Ennui eventually pushes them to try new things. Some of the Abandoned develop quirks that loyal angels would find treasonous. An exile might develop an affection for slot machines. To her it is obvious which ones will pay out, the probabilities of each pull immediately apparent. Perhaps the taste of wine or whiskey helps dull the ache of her memories. Some of the Abandoned even learn to appreciate humanity.

Human behavior is fascinating and mysterious to exiles. Awkward acquaintanceships are common, while friendships are rare. Exiles usually place more meaning on the relationships they form than the people they form them with. A Psychopomp who buys a hotdog from the same vendor every Friday (he never eats the hotdog) might consider the vendor his friend. Closer connections come uneasily. The only point of reference exiles have for relationships is the one they all once had with their creator. Observing people from a distance comes more naturally to most Incarnations as it more closely resembles the distant authority the God-Machine had over them.

Little Gods — The Exile's Potential

The God-Machine recalls Its angels to facilities when It is done with them, where they wait in storage for reuse. Without recall or intervention, they are functionally immortal. The Abandoned can wander the Earth forever if they choose. Yet there aren't very many truly ancient exiles in the world. Some were destroyed. Some destroy themselves. A few become slivers. What happens to the rest?

Abandoned of sufficiently high Rank begin to show peculiarities. The amount of Essence and time required to reach this stage represents a massive investment. The exile begins obsessing over a very specific plan, develops new Numina, and gains the unique ability to manipulate Infrastructure.

Why the God-Machine would ever suffer an exile to exist knowing that it could threaten its Infrastructure remains an open question. It could be that the percentage of exiles who attain the level of mastery required is small enough to be a rounding error in the God-Machine's accounting. Perhaps the evolution of exiles is an important part of the God-Machine's life cycle or aids in the construction of new occult networks. Or it could be that whatever purpose the God-Machine uses exiles for is important enough to warrant the risk

In 1986, an exile under Cover as a technician infiltrated the Pilgrim Nuclear Power Plant in Plymouth, Massachusetts. He connected himself to the plant's Infrastructure located near the core. The exile destroyed one Guardian who tried to stop him; a second was so horrified by what she saw that she elected to Fall rather than return to the God-Machine. A series of blackouts and technical failures followed. Before the hunter angels eliminated the perpetrator, he managed disconnect the plant from the God-Machine entirely and somehow attach it to himself. All angelic operations near the site ceased after the incident.

High Paranoia — Undercover Exiles

Exiles can go places that angels can't. They befriend demons, do favors for them, and earn some small measure of trust as neutral agents. Yet they aren't demons; they do not have an inherently antagonistic relationship with angels. And — this is the part that keeps demons suitably paranoid when dealing with the Abandoned — exiles deal with angels in precisely the same capacity as they do with the Unchained.

They trade information about the movements and plans of demons and angels alike. The very thing that makes exiles valuable also makes them completely untrustworthy.

This suits most of the Abandoned just fine, as they are loners foremost. Any arrangement that serves to keep them neutral is seen as an advantage. Some exiles *do* develop feelings one way or the other, of course. An exile with a rebellious streak most likely sides with the Saboteurs over an angelic faction, while groveling exiles who want to reunite with the God-Machine prefer to help angels. Exiles have an understandable reputation for betrayal as a result. Dealing with them is always a risk, but usually that risk is calculated, a cost of doing business.

Some exiles are much more dangerous because the God-Machine has put them undercover without their knowledge. An undercover exile is given an opportunity to take up a new mission, assigned without warning, which it must accept or reject on the spot. These opportunities are rare enough where few demons have heard more than unsubstantiated rumor. Nothing that an exile does makes these opportunities more or less likely to occur — they seem to arise only when the God-Machine has a great need for agents.

The opportunity arrives as a hallucination. No matter how cryptic it looks, the meaning is immediately clear to the affected exile. A Destroyer *knows* she must kill a ranking member of a ring she is meeting with, even if all she sees is a nimbus of fire or the smell of sulfur. The exile has only a moment take or reject opportunity. Those who accept (and who are successful) are escorted back to a facility where they are reintegrated into the ranks of the loyal angels. Those who reject the offer Fall instead.

Undercover exiles create uncertain loyalties. A player's character may even *have been* a former exile who rejected this opportunity. As supporting cast, an exile given an opportunity is going to make a choice based on his relationship with the player characters. The chance to welcome a close ally into the ranks of the Unchained might be a major dramatic tipping point for a chronicle. An exile who has grown tired of distrust and irrelevance is likely to return to the God-Machine with open arms.

All the Broken Tools — Slivers

Slivers are the nightmare versions of exiles. They come into existence when an exile won't or can't fulfill their parameters, or when a flawed occult matrix produces a garbled output. Angels, demons and other exiles see slivers as harmless (if sometimes pitiable) castoffs, if the sliver retains a capacity for reason. Many are too far gone, lost in rage or paranoia so pronounced they can no longer function. All parties mark these twisted exiles for death. Their capacity for destruction is too much of a liability for all but the most foolhardy Saboteur.

A few common elements exist between slivers: none of them are wholly sane, most perform repetitive tasks related to their parameters, and their bodies are horrifically broken by their transformation. A sliver has no Cover and spends most of its time in Twilight. Like other angels, they can use Infrastructure to materialize. When a demon spends Aether, a sliver in the vicinity can create the Open Condition for an hour or so afterward and potentially manifest. This makes them, at best, a tremendous annoyance to both angels and the Unchained.

A sliver's mind has fallen to the all-consuming whispers of its parameters. Its urges are inscrutable, pure-strain forms of an Incarnation's tendencies. A Destroyer-sliver doesn't need complex justifications or a search for self-actualization. It just needs to kill. This alone would be bad enough, but they draw unwanted attention to demons by manifesting in their presence.

Worse, slivers can create ongoing errors in reality that afflict demons and angels alike. Radios malfunction in their presence, and electronics refuse to operate. Machines perform functions they aren't meant to — a clock produces heat, or a television plays scenes from shows that were never made. Time runs more slowly near a sliver's nest. Humans often grow ill if left alone in these places for long, and demons suffer debilitating headaches.

Slivers offer a diversion from spy drama or shake up entrenched positions. The violence and disarray slivers leave behind can be mistaken for the actions of angels, exiles, or even other demons. A ring of Inquisitors investigates a bakery where every surface has been filed down to a sharp edge. Is it part of an occult matrix or the work of a Psychopomp-sliver? A sliver attack can be misconstrued by loyal angels as an attack by local demons; a cold war can turn temporarily hot as both sides scramble to identify the guilty party.

Sample Characters

Exiles are diverse; they are angels who are not-quite demons yet lack the strings of a loyal member of the God-Machine's agents. The Abandoned have uncertain loyalties, coming and going from a demon's life as their parameters instruct them to. Below are some exile characters a Storyteller can use immediately in their chronicle or modify to their liking.

MADAME X

Wanna race?

Parameters: Madame X is a Destroyer. In the short time since her exile, she has developed a particular taste for car crashes, the more expensive, the better. She was originally dispatched to cause a massive accident on I-90 outside of Chicago but proved unable to complete the task as a ring of demons destroyed the overpass just hours before her scheduled pileup. She has come to see abandonment as a mixed blessing. Earth holds so many joys, from action movies to early-morning street races. The scream of metal and patter of broken glass on concrete answers her parameters for now.

She has already begun to wonder what would happen if she planned something more...elaborate.

Description: Madame X still wears her original Cover — a 20-something blonde with toned muscles and sharp features. When she requires a name, she invents one. Sometimes she's Tiffany, other times she's Charlotte. She likes to go by Ashley when she feels more talkative. She prefers biker-chic and aloof, too-cool-to-care street fashion. It's unusual for her to wear something completely clean. Even her nicest outfits are covered in little stains and holes. She smells faintly of motor oil. When disembodied, she resembles a human with eyes that glow blindingly bright and a voice that grinds like misaligned gears.

Methods: Madame X uses her powers to arrange elaborate car wrecks. She sees this as a hobby, something she *enjoys*. To her, it's nothing more than playing with expensive toys. Her immaturity is not stupidity, however. She knows a lot about machines, knows how they work, what different models are worth. She can break into or hotwire almost anything. In the time since her exile, she has met dozen of career criminals and street racers — some of these she even considers her friends. She calls on them for information. Whatever car she wants, she can find.

Face to face, she relies on her winning personality. Madame X has the posture of a wary cat and her voice is as soft as sandpaper. When she feels like she isn't being taken seriously, she strikes without hesitation — a quick punch to a loose tooth, a knife pressed carefully to the back of the neck, and a restatement of priorities. This has earned her more than a few enemies in the circles she frequents, but she doesn't particularly care. More mayhem is more fun.

In play, Madame X makes for a dangerous ally. She is more than happy to use her specialties for others if the price is right, but collateral damage is someone else's problem. She meets the precise requirements of her contracts and no more. Characters can also employ her as a getaway driver or to gain access to unusual vehicles like helicopters and boats. In return, she might demand a significant investment of liquid resources (such as an expensive new sports car), assistance in a new scheme, or a place to hide out for a few days while the cops go through her apartment.

Virtue: Brave
Vice: Irritable
Rank: 2
Attributes: Power 3, Finesse 3, Resistance 4
Influences: Vehicles • •
Corpus: 9
Willpower: 7
Size: 5
Speed: 11
Defense: 3
Initiative: 9
Armor:
Numina: Left-Handed Spanner, Pathfinder, Speed
Manifestations: Twilight Form, Materialize, Discorporate, Image
Max Essence: 15
Ban: Madame X cannot perceive things that are colored red. Stoplights and stop signs are an utter mystery. Objects covered completely by the color are invisible to her.
Bane: Clean, forged steel of any kind, so long as it is new and unblemished.

SAMSON THE THRICE-BURNED

Please don't touch the case.

Parameters: Protect the case. Samson woke up on fire. There was a bus, and he was in the desert. A metal briefcase was handcuffed to his wrist. *Protect the case*. That was all he knew. He carried it with him all the way to Las Vegas where he managed to steal a cheap suit and remove the cuffs, though he still keeps a close eye on the case. It has been his constant companion. Sometimes he even talks to it. It has never occurred to Samson to look inside and the very idea of anyone else doing so fills him with dread. He keeps moving, looking for new ways to keep it safe. Whatever the God-Machine

intended for him, it's been long forgotten. Samson has been on the run from a phantom pursuer for almost thirty years.

Description: Samson looks like a well-groomed man in his early fifties. His hair is somewhere in the process of turning from brown to gray. White teeth decorate a dentist-ad smile. The nails on his left hand have turned black, as if they were run through soot. Sometimes when he moves there is a sudden pop, like the sound of a campfire shifting. If he loses his Cover, his form appears to be that of an emaciated angel, wings ablaze and skin like stretched leather.

Methods: Thirty years on the run have taught Samson hard lessons. First, if you tell people not to touch something, they immediately try to do it anyway. Second, the God-Machine's influence is inescapable. Each time he arrives in town he tries to keep a low profile, but trouble always seems to find him. Fortunately, Samson is damn hard to kill.

The reason he's called the Thrice-Burned is because, counting his fiery origins, he has been in three different fires that should have killed him. In Alaska, he was caught in an oil fire that claimed the lives of 30 other men when he tried to move the case somewhere no one else would look for it. An exiled Messenger came to him one night, a misunderstanding ensued, and the rig erupted in the ensuring conflict. He survived a candle-factory fire in Los Angeles, where both a hunter-killer angel and a ring of demons descended on him to steal the case. None of his pursuers made it out.

As long as Samson is alive, the case can't be opened without his consent. His Numina and Influences enhance his durability. A mysterious instinct sometimes informs him of when danger is coming and he has learned to trust his intuition. Negotiating with the Thrice-Burned is tricky. He's seen that the curiosity the case represents will overtake even the staunchest ally eventually. His contracts are short-term only. Infrastructure and Essence are very valuable to him because he spends a great deal of time in solitude. Angels are easier for him to work with than demons, since angels are not naturally curious.

Samson is a Guardian-exile best suited as a major antagonist or potential ally for a ring of demons. The mystery of what the briefcase is and why the God-Machine entrusted him with it should be the central question in any story including Samson. No single answer is suited to every chronicle. It might be the Linchpin of some crucial Infrastructure the God-Machine never completed. It could be a powerful bomb meant to eliminate anyone who opens it. It might contain a gadget of great power or a set of instructions leading to an alternate timeline. Samson was exiled, though; something is *wrong* with what he carries.

Virtue: Intuitive
Vice: Reckless
Rank: 3
Attributes: Power 6, Finesse 7, Resistance 9
Influences: Danger • • •
Corpus: 14
Willpower: 10
Size: 5
Speed: 18
Defense: 7
Initiative: 15
Armor:
Numina: Firestarter, Regenerate, Stalwart, Blast, Essence Thief
Manifestations: Twilight Form, Manifestation, Discorporate, Image
Max Essence: 20

Ban: Samson cannot open the case and cannot allow it to come to harm in any way. He automatically fails any action that could potentially cause the case to fall into someone else's hands or that could cause damage to it. If the case is opened or destroyed, Samson permanently discorporates.

Bane: Radioactive material of any concentration such as radium, uranium, or plutonium. It must be sufficiently radioactive to be considered a health risk to humans. Even being in its presence is enough to cause Samson 1 aggravated damage every turn.

LIK-A-LACK

Kalik, lik-a-lack. Lakik, kalil, kil.

Parameters: Lik-a-lack is a Messenger-sliver originally sent into the world to recruit bankers into the service of another angel. There were supposed to be thirty-three books collected and arranged in a circle around the library. The Psychopomp responsible for matrix miscalculated and attempt the ritual with just thirty-two. Lik-a-lack was the result. He spends his time underground, emerging under the cover of night. He retains just enough cunning to know his form is abhorrent. He is compelled to scrawl his mark into every bank and ATM he encounters — the gospel of servitude.

Description: Lik-a-lack looks like a humanoid insect. He stands five feet tall with four metal legs, while his upper body is that of a man, covered in green tattoos of labyrinthine circuitry. The sliver communicates in muted clicks that sound like forks scraping together. His face is smooth, lacking eyes, wrinkles, ears, or a nose. He has a lipless slit where his mouth should be.

Methods: The Psychopomp who caused Lik-a-lack's creation has since Fallen. When he has the time, the guilty demon visits his "friend" in the subway. Like-a-lack isn't capable of gratitude but he does take advantage opportunities to Manifest. When he crawls to the surface he wears heavy clothing and avoids direct interaction with mortals.

His gospel is scrawled in paint, scored with metal tools, and drawn on walls with permanent markers. The marks don't make much sense to casual observation. Petty vandalism is the first thing that comes to mind. It might resemble a shark, or maybe a man with his head ablaze, or a sleeping giant. To some people these messages take on special meaning. They feel compelled to quit their jobs. The affected go through religious conversions and swear a life of dedication to some church or cause. Which one doesn't seem to be important. What matters is that the affected swear to turn their life around and sever ties with their old friends and colleagues. The gospel of servitude can subconsciously bind a human to this new path for years at a time.

Lik-a-lack can be an interesting complication for characters. His Influence has a negative impact on humans and can bolster the ranks of religious or ideological groups near his lair. The sliver doesn't directly affect demons, but his friendship with an active demon might draw angelic attention to local Unchained. Lik-a-lack makes an excellent dirty secret from another a character's past. Finding a useful way to channel his behaviors can be a rewarding tactic, particularly if the characters can control who views Lik-a-lack's messages.

Virtue: Curious

Vice: Expressive

Rank: 2

Attributes: Power 3, Finesse 6, Resistance 2

Influences: Faith • •

Corpus: 7

Willpower: 5

Size: 5

Speed: 14

Defense: 3

Initiative: 5

Armor:

Numina: Aggressive Meme*, Awe, Implant Mission

Manifestations: Twilight Form, Manifestation, Discorporate, Image

Max Essence: 15

Ban: Lik-a-lack can only ever affect a target once with one of its Numina.

Bane: Paper. A book, a newspaper, anything made from tree pulp causes the sliver immense pain. It fears paper and shrinks from it. Even littered napkins instill terror.

*Lik-a-lack may use Aggressive Meme through a piece of drawn or painted art instead of speech, but only once. After that, the message loses all power.

TOOLS OF THE MACHINE

Not all of the God-Machine's servants are angels or human dupes. The God-Machine has other tools, stranger and simpler, for Its ineffable missions. Few demons are aware of these unusual entities, overlooking them to their peril. Fewer still are aware of the broken tools, which are unable to truly Fall, and the dangers they therefore pose.

IMPERATIVES

The God-Machine's designs are alien and incomprehensible, relying on secret occult laws. Sometimes the tiniest things are vital to Its plans. Something as simple as a person taking a different route to work can collapse an occult matrix. When the God-Machine wants a person to turn left instead of right, It seldom wastes the considerable energy required to summon an angel. It sends an Imperative.

Imperatives are minor servants of the God-Machine not sophisticated enough to be called angels. These subroutines aren't truly self-aware and are designed for a single function, manifesting to achieve some small goal and dissipating upon its completion. Lacking sentience, they are incapable of Falling. They can break down, however, forever repeating their tasks even if they no longer serve the God-Machine's will.

A broken Imperative originally designed to make a person eat drifts from host to host, an alien urge insisting they are hungry. One is the spark that drives people to violence, pulsing unfocused rage into their minds like a migraine. One sets people alight, reducing them to greasy ash without the fire ever spreading to the chairs they sat in. Another flattens crops, scrawling occult patterns across the landscape.

When Imperatives influence human behavior, their victims often ascribe a voice to the urges they feel, even a terrible cunning. Imperatives are not intelligent enough, however, to cajole and mock. These voices are merely one way the human brain interprets the compulsions that Imperatives transmit. Some victims attempt to banish the "demons" tempting and tormenting them, though seldom with much success.

Imperatives follow the rules for ephemeral beings. Their Rank cannot exceed 1 and they may only possess the Twilight Form Manifestation. Imperatives do not have a Virtue or Vice. They instead have a single Purpose, their only source of Willpower. Purposes are simple, based on the Imperative's current or former mission: Cause Hunger, Incite Rage and Start Fires are all examples of Purposes. When Imperatives fulfill their Purpose, they refresh their entire Willpower pool.

Imperatives are created with a full "battery" of Essence. They only lose a single point of Essence a day — they simply don't require as much energy as more complex ephemera. Rarely, they run out of Essence before their task is completed. They may return to Infrastructure to recharge, but *in extremis* Imperatives may freely convert their Willpower points or even take a point of lethal damage to regain a point of Essence. For malfunctioning Imperatives, this is the only source of Essence they have, though some survive by nesting in abandoned or suborned Infrastructure, occasionally causing problems for demons hoping to take advantage of such sites.

WENDIGO PSYCHOSIS

The God-Machine's calculations determined that a man had to turn to cannibalism in the freezing cold, the violent act and temperature both vital components of a powerful occult matrix. To this end, It created Wendigo Psychosis.

Centuries later, the Imperative remains on earth repeating its task. It is quiescent except in extreme cold, and seldom encounters humans as a result. How it has survived this long is a mystery – few Imperatives, even rogue Imperatives, survive for more than a few weeks. Does it urge animals to eat their own? Does it lair in some forgotten or abandoned Infrastructure, leeching leftover scraps of Essence, until suitable victims come near?

A mythology has coalesced around this Imperative. Some people believe that eating human flesh can turn a person into a wendigo, a hideous and greedy monster, or that wendigoes enter people in their sleep and drive them to cannibalism. Documented cases of "wendigo psychosis" exist, though it remains controversial. Reputedly, sufferers would confess to cannibalistic urges and seek help. Those who did not respond to treatment became violent, begging for execution before they transformed into wendigo.

The Imperative is difficult to perceive, even to those able to see into Twilight. Most see it only in glimpses as they blink. In these moments, Wendigo Psychosis appears as a frostbitten human of indeterminate gender, horribly emaciated with loose, hanging folds of skin.

Purpose: Drive to Cannibalism
Rank: 1
Attributes: Power 3, Finesse 3, Resistance 2
Influences: Hunger 1
Corpus: *7*
Willpower: *5*
Size: *5*
Speed: 11 (species factor 5)
Defense: 2
Initiative: *5*
Numina: Dement, Implant Mission, Innocuous
Manifestations: Twilight Form
Max Essence: 10
Ban: Wendigo Psychosis cannot move unless temperatures are below freezing.
Bane: Silver

Simulacra

Much of the God-Machine's Infrastructure is hidden in plain sight, housed within apparently mundane buildings and businesses. Many of them require staff. Often the staff is human, usually overseen by an angel, but sometimes the God-Machine prefers to avoid human agents and uses simulacra instead.

Simulacra appear outwardly human but have been extensively modified with machinery. They carry out their allotted tasks, working night security, flipping burgers or stocking shelves. They're able to converse with humans only within limited parameters — their programming is very narrow, usually focused only on their role. They double as a form of Concealment Infrastructure and, should the need arise, security. This function overrides other programming and they will subdue and literally dismantle any threats to their Infrastructure.

What are simulacra? Some demons claim they're fully artificial and built in the God-Machine's facilities while others insist they're made from humans that fell into Its clutches — captured enemies, missing persons, even devoted cultists looking for an eternal reward. All of these theories may well be true. Persistent rumors speak of Infrastructure-towns where the entire population has been replaced by advanced simulacra.

Simulacra do not possess a Vice, a Virtue or Willpower. All simulacra suffer a –3 penalty on all untrained Skills, not just Mental ones, due to their limited programming. Simulacra always have Brawl and at least one Social skill best suited for their cover job — security guards might possess Intimidation, store clerks Socialize. They seldom possess any Skills higher than one or two dots. Simulacra cannot leave the vicinity of their Infrastructure and resist any attempts to remove them. If they are removed, they cease to function. They appear dead but, due to their mechanical modifications, do not decay. If returned to their Infrastructure, they revive and immediately resume their duties.

Any supernatural powers that target the soul do not function on simulacra.

Hello, My Name Is Wendy!

Hello, My Name Is Wendy! That's what the badge says and also how she opens every conversation. She works the register at a fast-food restaurant. People don't tend to make idle chitchat or ask difficult questions at these establishments, nor question her lack of affect. When people ask her anything beyond her programming, she calls for the manager, a smooth-talking angel.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 1, Wits 2, Resolve 4
Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Crafts 1, Computer 1
Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 2, Stealth 1, Weaponry 1
Social Skills: Socialize (Take Order) 1
Merits: Indomitable 2, Iron Stamina 3
Health: 8
Size: *5*
Speed: 10 (species factor 5)
Defense: 3
Initiative: *5*

Cryptoflora

Cryptoflora grows around Infrastructure and other places where wildlife is exposed to Aether. For the most part, cryptoflora is harmless: plants with leaves that glimmer with inlaid circuitry or crackle with static electricity. Exceptions exist, however. One such exception is a strange fungus that sprouts around Infrastructure. It releases spores that infect humans when inhaled. The spores manipulate the host's brain chemistry, inducing compulsions to return to sites that release Aether (essential for the fungus to survive) and causing religious visions. The two quickly become associated. These visions often lead hosts to seek out or start cults devoted to the God-Machine. Though the fungus cannot be transmitted from host to host, patient zero usually exposes his cult to the spores on pilgrimages to Aether sources.

As the infection worsens, victims return to the Infrastructure more often to feed the fungal mass growing inside their skulls. Hallucinations become more frequent

and eventually sufferers are in a constant state of rapturous delusion, unable to leave their source of Aether. They stop eating and drinking and eventually pass away. If the body is not disposed of properly, the fungus within sprouts and releases more spores. The only treatment is to keep the infected away from any source of Aether. This entirely cures the infection, though if the disease has been allowed to progress, permanent brain damage is likely. Survivors often become stigmatic.

These cults are easy prey for the God-Machine and Its servants, often acting as an additional level of security for key Infrastructure even without angelic patronage. The cults are not always a windfall for the God-Machine, however; more than one ring has followed the distinctive sects to otherwise well-concealed Infrastructure.

Echoes

Being haunted by a vengeful spirit can be terrifying even for demons. It's doubly horrifying when the ghost is your own. What happens when a Cover claimed by a soul pact is burned? Sometimes, they come back.

The Unchained call these rare and terrifying specters Echoes. Their appearances are nightmarish, an ugly fusion of a human body and a demon's true form. Echoes are implacable in their anger towards those who stole and spent their lives. These ghosts possess knowledge of the same backdoors in reality used by the Unchained, rendering them resistant, even immune, to the powers of their demonic nemeses. Some demons have tried destroying an Echo's anchors (whatever locations and objects of significance to the spirit remain) in an effort to banish them, but their final anchor is always the body of the demon itself. Part of the reason they're so poorly known is because once they succeed in their aim, perhaps at the God-Machine's behest, they willingly pass on to the afterlife.

Echoes always wish to destroy their nemesis in some fashion, though they differ in approach and methods. Some Echoes seek only to kill demons. Others wish to dismantle their lives, reveling in the destruction of their Covers, before they strike. Some even attempt to possess the demons in a vain attempt to reclaim what they have lost. A few try to force demons to expose themselves to the God-Machine.

The origin of Echoes remains unknown. They are rare enough that many demons assume they're just a rumor. Those who know the truth can only speculate. The God-Machine can harvest the souls of the departed for raw energy or modify them into servants – do Covers willingly burned by the Unchained fall into Its clutches to be remade as weapons, or do specialized angels hunt the afterlife for demon-harrowed souls? Are they simply what happens when an escaping soul is exposed to the Aether released when demons assume their true forms?

For the most part, Echoes follow the rules for ghosts. However, they may possess Numen unique to angels and may even use Embeds and Exploits as Numen, rolling Power + Finesse to activate them. Replace all Aether costs with Essence. Embeds cost a single Essence per usage. Echoes cannot suffer compromise.

If an Echo's nemesis (the demon who previously owned their soul) attempts to use an Embed or Exploit in an Echo's presence, the Storyteller may reflexively roll the Echo's Power + Resistance. Successes penalize the player's activation roll. Note that Echoes have no such immunity to the powers of other demons, even if they're using the same Embeds and Exploits.

Kelly Casselman

Once Kelly Casselman was struggling to make rent. A demon offered her a stable job in exchange for a few acquaintances she barely knew. She accepted. A few years later, with a newborn son to care for and no husband, she was struggling for money again. The demon offered to take her ex-husband in exchange for a large sum of money, which she considered a win-win. When her son's life was threatened by illness, the demon made the ultimate offer, a soul pact, and Casselman accepted. Only a few scant months later, the demon stepped into her life. It cared for her son, fulfilled its obligations... But angels were closing in. The demon escaped by going loud, obliterating Kelly Casselman's life and leaving her son an orphan.

Now her spirit has returned, burning with power and rage. Her revenge will be absolute; she will destroy every one of the demon's lives, strip away friends and allies and burn its hiding places before she strikes the killing blow. Her hair is braided into clattering chains and her fingers extend into whip-like cables. Strips of skin hang from rusted metal bones. Blood and oil drips from exposed servos. Casselman's anchors are her son, the apartment she lived in, her lost engagement ring, and the body of her nemesis.

Virtue: Nostalgic
Vice: Implacable
Rank: 4
Attributes: Power 12, Finesse 8, Resistance 12
Influences: Anchors 4
Corpus: 17
Willpower: 10
Size: 5
Speed: 30 (species factor 10)
Defense: 8
Initiative: 20
Numina: Affliction (as the Exploit), Blast, Emotional Aura, Everybody Hates Him (as the Exploit), Mortal Mask, Pathfinder, Seek, Stalking Horse (as the Exploit), Trust No One (as the Embed)
Manifestations: Discorporate, Image, Materialize, Twilight Form
Max Essence: 25
Ban: Casselman cannot harm a child.
Bane: The sound of a toy rattle.

Lares

On rare occasions, the God-Machine sends Its angels in Covers as buildings. Sometimes it cuts off these angels, creating a very unusual form of Exile. The God-Machine does not attempt to rescue these trapped angels, called Lares by those aware of them. It tends to either arrange Elimination Infrastructure — demolitions, suspicious fires, earthquakes — or ignore them.

Lares are Exiles, complete with Parameters that urge them to do strange things. Lares can be territorial and aggressive, driving away or tormenting intruders, but some are benevolent, protecting their tenants and charges. Some devote themselves to strengthening their position and gilding their cages, improving whatever facility they find themselves housed within. Many try to free themselves from their prisons. A rare few see themselves as the Command and Control Infrastructure for a new, rival God-Machine and seek to expand their influence. Those who show any signs of progress invariably fall victim to sudden and dramatic accidents as the God-Machine takes action.

The forms Lares take are endlessly varied: the abandoned factory that local children insist is haunted; the old stone circle where locals make a yearly blood sacrifice to prevent disaster; a popular nightclub where the acoustics are as addictive as they are impressive. One of the few things they share in common is that Lares emit Aether. Demons are often drawn to them and Lares recognize the Unchained. Some seek them out as allies, offering themselves as safehouses and Aetheric batteries, while others attack them out of jealousy or in a vain effort to earn the God-Machine's favor.

These bizarre entities have many strange powers. Lares are able to exercise considerable control over their bodies, making doors appear and disappear, trapping victims in endless corridors or providing perfect hiding places for allies. Some are able to interface with the world beyond, surfing the Internet through LAN cables and making phone calls. They often use these abilities to hide their identities when communicating with demons.

Lares have a Rank, Attributes, Numina, bans and banes like other angels, which are often colored by their new forms. They do not have Manifestations, Defense or Speed. Instead of a Corpus, they have a Structure value equal to the sum of their Size and Resistance. They gain three points of Essence per day, since their bodies incorporate the Infrastructure supporting them. Lares are aware of everything that occurs within them and may freely move or change facets of their own body, swinging doors open and shut. Lares can also make changes to their internal bodies at will, moving doors and walls, even creating and deleting rooms. They can manipulate objects inside their bodies and usually use these to communicate, speaking through televisions and writing messages in mirrors.

Lares may use Numina freely inside their forms. They may roll Power + Finesse (– Defense) to attack, causing bashing or lethal damage at their discretion. Being attacked by a Lare is a terrifying experience; chairs fly towards the victim and floor tiles crack around his feet to hold him in place as walls move inexorably together.

All Lares are vulnerable to powers that affect Infrastructure, such as Raze Infrastructure.

The Church of Saint Thomas/Iophiel

The catacombs of the Church of Saint Thomas are filled with strange gears, built when the church was renovated. An angel arrived to watch over the gears until their purpose was completed. The angel Iophiel did everything required, but when whatever project the God-Machine had orchestrated was completed, the gears ground on, torturously, trapping Iophiel in their workings.

He spread his influence over the entire church. The priests became stigmatics, recoiling in fear at the arcane symbols glowing and writhing on the church's walls, but Iophiel spoke to them in their minds and told them what they saw was the language of angels; they had been chosen by God for a greater purpose. This was all true, at least from Iophiel's perspective, and the priests set about turning their congregation into a cult devoted to the Lare.

Iophiel initially devoted his cult to trying to contact the God-Machine, begging It to rescue him from his entrapment, but It ignored him. Its silence and his imprisonment eroded Iophiel's sanity. Now, he believes that *he* is the God-Machine and has his cult sing paeans in his name.

Some demons, drawn by the Aether Saint Thomas's produces, would be appalled by Iophiel. Others might smell opportunity. Iophiel is petty and desperate to be worshipped. Paying lip-service and doing a few bizarre tasks for the Lare might be enough to secure his assistance and he makes a powerful ally indeed; a safehouse that supplies Aether with attendant stigmatic cultists. Iophiel is unstable, however, and his insanity threatens any long-term partnership.

Virtue: Hopeful
Vice: Vainglorious
Rank: 3
Attributes: Power 9, Finesse 5, Resistance 6
Structure: 66
Willpower: 10
Size: 60
Initiative: 11
Armor/Durability: 3
Numina: Aggressive Meme, Awe, Blast, Hallucination, Implant Mission, Words of Prophecy
Max Essence: 20
Ban: Iophiel must grant sanctuary to those who request it for a period of 24 hours.
Bane: Juice squeezed from an apple.

HOLY MIRACLES

Angel-specific Numina draw on the God-Machine's near-omnipotent understanding of the universe. Most are more potent than those used by other ephemeral entities — their power backed by the God-Machine's thorough infiltration of creation. Angels can install and use variations of Numina used by spirits and ghosts, but the reverse is not true. Non-angels lack the access codes for them to function.

The God-Machine's thorough infiltration means reality reinforces Its agenda, specifically in areas It defines as important. When in the presence of the Infrastructure Condition, angels gain either +2 dice to activate Numina, or reduce Numen Essence cost by 1. All Infrastructure has this Condition by definition.

This access also gives angels increased power over those with the Faith Condition (p. 81).

Angelic Numina

The Numina designed by the God-Machine for Its angels are constructed from the same building blocks as those used by other ephemeral beings. They differ in the God-Machine's understanding of the universe and the application of efficiency and design over nature's random evolutionary chance and survival. Angelic Numina are the God-Machine's overclocked tools, gifted to Its favored servants, with authorization to deploy their seemingly reality-defying effects in the field.

Angelic Reflexes

Each moment is infinitely divisible by ever-smaller units of time. By adjusting its system clock to work within the smaller moments, the angel moves faster than the human eye can follow. For 3 Essence, the angel's Finesse adds to Initiative, its Rank adds to Defense, and it can apply this adjusted Defense to ranged attacks even when limited by human form.

Blink of an Eye

For 2 Essence, the angel may move impossibly fast so long as no one witnesses its passage. If entering an elevator, the angel can exit on its destination floor in the time it takes for the doors to close then immediately reopen. It can move from one side of the room to the other in the time it takes her quarry to blink. The angel could watch someone leap from a skyscraper and be at the ground in time rescue her — or witness her death. If the angel encounters someone along its path, she risks being dragged back to normal speed; contest the angel's original activation roll with Wits + Supernatural Tolerance.

Divine Grace

Even most humans who don't believe in a higher power understand the concept of divine grace. For 5 Essence, the angel reveals a fragment of its true being and gains the power to command with full God-Machine authority. Witnesses see an idealized version of their concept of an angel and believe they hear the words of an awe-inspiring being. In a group, the angel decides who is affected. For a number of days equal to its Rank, the angel gains a perfect first impression for Social maneuvering — even if someone had already formed an impression of the angel's human cover — and reduces the number of Doors it must overcome by one. Angels can give commands not normally permitted by Social maneuvering, such as an order to commit suicide, but these allow the victim to oppose with Resolve + Supernatural Tolerance.

Stigmatics see the horror of the angel's true biomechanical form but are just as susceptible to this power. Demons are immune. Other supernatural creatures may resist with Resolve + Supernatural Tolerance.

Ex Nihilo

The angel imbues life to an inanimate object — which can include corpses — for 2 Essence. The imbued object develops awareness of its surroundings but can't move if it lacks limbs or locomotion. It can communicate telepathically with the angel if it is within the angel's Rank in miles. For 5 Essence, the angel imbues a group of objects into a single being — biomechanical joints, wiring and piping materialize from nothingness to bind the creature together. Imbued creatures use the rules for ephemeral beings **(Demon: The Descent**, pp. 336–51) but have no ban or bane. These creations begin with Power, Finesse and Resistance 1, no Influences or Numina, possess physical form and cannot dematerialize. The angel may increase the creature's abilities by spending a point of Essence per extra Attribute dot or to impart a Numen the angel knows. The imbued creature's traits are limited to those of a Rank 2 spirit, and they obey instructions from their creator without question.

An angel can maintain its Rank in imbued servants at any one time, but can bind the creature to Infrastructure. The creature no longer counts against the angel's capacity, and

NEW CONDITION: FAITH (PERSISTENT)

While many humans have faith in some divine being, larger and more powerful than themselves, most humans don't place enough trust in other-worldly forces to have this Condition. Those who do are more susceptible to the God-Machine's manipulations. A person with the Faith Condition suffers a –2 modifier to resist angelic powers or activities, including resisting mundane effects such as Social maneuvering. This penalty does not apply to combat pools or Defense. Stigmatics rarely have this Condition — their interaction with the God-Machine is far beyond fervent hope or belief in a benevolent deity.

Possible Sources: Social indoctrination, previous angelic (or demonic) encounters, witnessing an occult matrix output without becoming stigmatic.

Resolution: You lose your faith through ceasing to believe in a deity, or by learning the truth that the God-Machine is not the deity you wanted.

Beat: Your choices are severely limited by your faith, leading to major inconvenience or even harm to you or your companions.

gains Influence • over that Infrastructure. Should the imbued creature need to leave the Infrastructure — such as to pursue fleeing intruders — it may not travel more than its (Power x 10) yards from the Infrastructure.

Hallowed Ground

The angel touches a structure and extends part of her spiritual being to inhabit it. The angel's human form continues to function as normal — this Numen adds parallel processing power to the angel. The angel is aware of everything within the structure and can operate any moving parts or appliances inside. The angel could open or close doors and windows, run faucets or switch on the lights or stove. Hallowed Ground lasts for one scene; the angel may renew the effect each scene without relinquishing control. An angel may simultaneously control a number of contiguous floors of a structure equal to its Rank, or an equivalent number of smaller structures. This Numen costs 2 Essence per floor/structure.

Gravity's Hold

For 1 Essence, the angel directs gravity's pull. For a number of turns equal to the angel's Power, it can jump impossible distances, walk across surfaces normally incapable of holding its weight, or lift and carry massive loads. It can also increase its own weight to sink into surfaces or make itself difficult to carry. The angel may double its Power or Finesse for dice rolls relating to physical activity. If both Power and Finesse apply to a dice pool, the player may choose which one is doubled.

For 3 Essence, the angel can greatly influence gravity's effect on others; the victim may contest this effect with a Stamina + Supernatural Tolerance roll. If the angel succeeds, the victim suffers a penalty equal to the angel's Rank for all physical dice pools — including combat related pools. If the angel's Rank equals or exceeds the victim's Stamina, the victim suffers the Knocked Down Tilt, as he is incapable of tolerating his own weight. This effect endures for a number of turns equal to the angel's Rank.

Inexorable Pursuit

The angel changes a victim's relationship to space, seemingly stretching the distance between points and taking vastly increased times to travel. The angel spends 3 Essence and reduces the victim's Speed by the angel's Power. The victim contests the angel's manipulations with a Dexterity + Supernatural Tolerance roll. Speed cannot be reduced to less than 1 with this Numen unless the angel's Rank is greater than the victim's Dexterity — Speed can then be reduced to 0, inflicting the Immobilized Tilt on the victim. This effect lasts a number of turns equal to the angel's Rank.

No Exit

The angel changes how passageways within a structure relate to one another. Rather than a door connecting two adjoining rooms, the angel could connect the doors of two distant rooms within the building. Linking portals of the same type (doors to doors, windows to windows) costs 1 Essence per connection, connecting portals of different types costs 2 Essence, and joining non-portals, such blocking a door by linking it to a brick wall, costs 3 Essence. Portals can't be made to connect to themselves, but angels can make a room — or building — impossible to escape without tearing holes in the walls. Connections last the angel's Power in turns, or an entire scene if used on Infrastructure.

Open Investigation

Humans are very effective at finding each other, and those who hide among them. With the expenditure of 4 Essence, the angel brings a target (or her Cover) to the attention of law enforcement. Fingerprints on file are linked to crimes scenes of the angel's choosing, descriptions match her appearance, and eyewitnesses recall the victim's presence perfectly. Official registries are updated as the angel desires, including no-fly lists, sex offender databases, or listed as a known associate of other criminals. The angel must have evidence from the target to activate this Numen.

On activating this power, the angel begins an extended action, rolling Power + Finesse against a required number of successes equal to the target's Wits + Subterfuge + Cover (if any). The time between each roll is special—each time the target draws the attention of human bureaucracy or law enforcement (Storyteller discretion), roll for the angel. It is possible for targets to lock themselves away and hide from human interaction, but the angel still receives one roll per day towards the total.

Switching Covers while under Open Investigation is risky. Unchained must test for compromise of the newly introduced Cover, with a penalty equal to the angel's Rank. In addition to the standard results for compromise **(Demon: The Descent**, p. 115), refer below for the effect on the Open Investigation.

Dramatic Failure: The Cover is exposed to the Open Investigation. The angel halves the number of successes required for the extended action. If this reduces the total to less than what the angel had already accumulated, it not only knows where the demon is at that moment, it continues to know her exact location for a number of hours equal to the successes it had accumulated in excess of its required total.

Failure: The Cover is contaminated with the Open Investigation. The angel may continue accumulating successes.

Success: The angel's total successes are reduced by the Cover's rating.

Exceptional Success: Switching Covers confounds the investigation. The angel remains unaware of the Numen's failure for 24 hours, after which the Open Investigation comes to a close.

Power Out

For 1 Essence, the angel cancels all electricity, mechanical combustion, and radio communications (including Wi-Fi and cellular networks) within a radius of its Rank x 10 yards. This outage lasts for the angel's Power in turns, and the zone does not move with the angel.

Secret Handshake

Humanity greatly relies on a social contract and patterns of behavior, following learned customs without a second thought. The angel alters one social custom of a defined social unit, such as a gang, or employees of a company, or followers of a religion. This costs 1 Essence per 10 affected individuals. This could be as minor as changing the standard morning greeting, to responding to humor with physical violence. For one scene, the affected group subconsciously follows the new custom. For social units that extend across large areas (such as a widespread religion) the angel may affect all members within a number of miles equal to its Power.

Demons whose Covers are part of the affected social unit lack instinctive knowledge of the change; roll Wits + Subterfuge – the angel's Finesse when they first encounter the changed custom. If this roll fails, the demon must test for compromise. Angels often use this Numen to expose suspected demons.

Translocation

For 5 Essence, the angel scrambles its spatial coordinates and taps into the quantum network of every human within its Rank in miles. For the remainder of the scene, the angel may switch places with any of these humans with a successful Power + Finesse – Stamina roll. The transition takes one turn, or occurs instantly with an Exceptional Success. The angel may use this Numen to move rapidly throughout an area or may search for some trigger to guide its movements. Roll Power + Finesse – Subterfuge to determine if the humans within the angel's range notice what the angel is seeking.

Translocation is ineffective on supernatural creatures. The angel can see them through their interaction with humans and senses that they're immune to this power, but it has no innate knowledge about their nature. This discovery potentially includes demons, but the Unchained can attempt to spoof humanity with its Cover (**Demon: The Descent** p. 112) to fool the angel. For the purposes of this Numen, any creature with a Supernatural Tolerance trait counts as non-human.

Witness Protection

Angels don't normally have to worry about compromising their Covers — the God-Machine just reinforces the backstopping. Unfortunately, humans sometimes remember these lapses in judgment and begin to ask inconvenient questions, even if nothing officially changes. This Numen exploits the many blind spots in human perception and memory. For a number of turns equal to its Rank, the angel may use even overtly supernatural displays without humans remembering. They may know something strange happened but they won't recall details or associate it with the angel. Supernatural witnesses must individually contest this Numen with Resolve + Supernatural Tolerance — only those who beat the angel's activation roll remember details.

Words of Prophecy

The angel decrees what will be and fate works to help humans comply. Anyone who hears the angel's decree and acts towards fulfilling its goal adds the angel's Rank to his rolls. The God-Machine ensures the required materials and expertise are available — they may be difficult to acquire, but no matter how rare they are, they can be found. The influence lasts a number of days equal to the angel's Rank or until the task is completed, whichever is first. The angel can renew a longer task by prophesying again at the end of the duration. This costs 5 Essence and affects a maximum number of humans equal to the angel's Power.

Angelic Incepts

Incepts are the root-access codes of reality granted to the angels of the God-Machine. These gifts allow for awe-inspiring displays of power and manipulation. They alter an angel's relationship to Numina, Influences — and the universe — at a fundamental level to further the God-Machine's agenda.

To creatures with the power to see beyond normal reality, Incepts ripple the fabric of creation in noticeable ways. Aetheric resonance automatically triggers (without spending Aether) when angels use Incepts within the demon's Primum range; each Incept after the first adds one to the demon's effective Primum for determining this range. Other supernatural denizens of the Chronicles of Darkness may notice something powerful at work nearby at the Storyteller's discretion. Angels are usually reluctant to use Incepts because of this disturbance, although if the angel's mission is compromised, this reluctance disappears, replaced by vengeance and an angel prepared to use its full power.

Philosophically inclined demons wonder if the creativity required to use Incepts is partly responsible for the capacity to reject the God-Machine. Regardless, a demon's Fall cancels her Incept privileges. She must hack together Aether-fueled Exploits in crude imitation of what she lost.

Using Incepts

Each angel has a number of Incepts equal to its Rank. Activating an Incept is an Instant action that costs a point of

Willpower per scene and requires no activation roll. Multiple Incepts can be active per scene. Incepts have an Essence cost to activate their primary effect; most Incepts have a secondary effect which either persists as long as the Incept is active or has a separate cost. Multiple Incepts can combine to enhance angelic powers to terrible effect.

Consignment

Consignment reduces resistance to the angel's powers. Each Essence spent degrades resistance by the angel's Rank to a minimum of 0.

With this Incept activated, the angel becomes more forceful in social interactions, reducing a target's Doors by one.

Delivery

Delivery allows the angel to empower another being with Incept modifiers. The Angel must spend twice the normal Essence cost of the Incept effect being delivere, and be able to see the target. The recipient must be receptive to the angel's assistance, but doesn't have to be aware of its angelic nature or availability of supernatural powers. The target's abilities are modified as the angel wishes, subject to normal Incept use.

This Incept also allows the Angel to spend Essence equal to the local Gauntlet to create a portal to any other ephemeral realm, from the Underworld to the Astral Realms to the Abyss.

Economy

Economy adds the angel's Rank to the cost of powers targeting the angel. This includes all powers affecting the angel, even if the creature using the power was unaware of the angel's presence. Powers with no cost gain a cost. The angel may exempt effects of which it is aware, but not those it isn't expecting. Economy affects whatever supernatural fuel the creature uses; Willpower costs are unaffected. Affected creatures may choose to not pay the additional cost, in which case the power fails to activate.

Example: *An Unchained attempts to use the Diversion Embed* (**Demon: The Descent**, p. 140) *to distract a group of guards so she can to sneak into a restricted area. Her Aetheric resonance tells her that a nearby source is sending out powerful Aetheric ripples, but she doesn't know the source is a Rank 3 angel using the Economy Incept. The demon realizes something is wrong when her usually cost-free Embed costs 3 Aether to activate. She could choose to save this Aether and have the power fail, but she needs to enter this area unseen. Later, the angel catches her stealing secrets the God-Machine wants hidden; the Unchained shoots the angel using the Hellfire Exploit* (**Demon: The Descent**, p. 167)*. Hellfire normally costs 1 Aether to use, but against this angel each use costs 4 Aether.*

Economy also recycles waste Aether back into Essence. The angel simply touches an Aether source, excluding demons. The angel gains 1 point of Essence for every four Aether drained. Living targets may be drained, but the physical contact first requires a successful grapple.

Efficiency

Efficiency reduces the Essence cost of all other angelic powers by the angel's Rank, to a minimum of zero. This benefit applies only once per specific power, and the subtraction occurs after all additional costs (such as from other Incepts) have been applied. Efficiency can be reactivated multiple times per scene (at the normal Willpower cost) to refresh the discount for frequently used powers.

Efficiency has no secondary effect.

Motion

Motion gives the angel control over the underlying quantum movement of the universe. The angel's velocity and direction become difficult to determine — the angel is rarely where observers believe. The angel may spend 2 Essence to apply its Rank as a penalty to any roll affecting the angel, whether mundane or supernatural. This penalty applies in addition to any other resistance the angel may be entitled to.

Motion also multiplies the angel's Speed by its Rank + 1. This applies to any form of transport used by the angel. If applied to a vehicle, the angel does not have to be driving but can be a passenger.

Scale

Scale alters the intensity of effects. Dice pools are increased by the angel's Rank per Essence spent, as are numerical modifiers. For example, angels normally roll Power + Finesse to activate Numina; spending 1 Essence on Scale enhances this dice pool to Power + Finesse + Rank. Blast adds 1L + Rank per Essence when enhanced by Scale. Spending 2 Essence on a Social maneuvering effect that removes one Door would remove one + (2 x Rank) with Scale, smashing through the victim's resistance.

Scale also downgrades attacks against the angel. All attacks subtract the angel's Rank + 1 from the dice pool.

Space

Space multiplies the range and area of angelic powers by up to Rank + 1. A Rank 2 angel that can influence three buildings can influence nine buildings with Space. The shape of powers may also be altered, creating zones of exclusion, or changing angles of trajectory. The angel can specify where a power manifests within her line of sight — potentially denying a target cover or Defense by manifesting an attack power from behind, or obfuscating the angel's location by changing the point of origin.

Space also adds the angel's Rank as a bonus to all search and ranged combat dice pools.

Time

Time changes how long powers take to unfold. The angel spends 2 Essence per power affected and multiplies or divides the duration by up to its Rank + 1. Enduring powers have their duration multiplied, while those the angel wishes to hasten divide their time to take effect.

Time also allows the angel to pause its own powers from activating for up to its Finesse in hours. These powers remain frozen at the location where the angel activated them until the set time at which they continue as normal. The angel pays the cost for activating the power at the moment it is frozen, and may have no more paused effects than its Rank. Once set, the angel can't alter the delay except to cancel it and have the power activate immediately.

Units

Units changes the number of items produced or affected by the angel's Rank + 1. One Blast becomes Rank + 1 Blasts. One affected target becomes Rank + 1 targets. Treat multiple attacks as though benefitting from the rules for automatic-fire, and add the angel's Rank + 1 to the attack roll.

Units also allows the angel to gift its powers to another sentient being. The angel may share a number of powers equal to its Rank, and the recipient must be receptive to gaining access to these miracles. The recipient may only use the gift once, paying Willpower in place of Essence if need be.

RECALL SIMULATION: ENGAGED. ENTER SUBJECT.
SUBJECT: SHADOW MAN; STIGMATIC.
SIMULATION LOADED.
REENGAGING EXTRAPOLATION.

Ms. Ace sat in her car and stared at the plain yellow envelope in her lap. She hesitated to open it but she needed to know. It was the only way to keep herself and the rest of the ring safe.

She tore it open and a photograph and playing card tumbled out. She recognized one person meeting with two she didn't know. Even from the still shot, she recognized the angelic focused-blank stare. The playing card had fallen face-down on her lap, and she knew what it was before she turned it over – Joker.

Ms. Ace dialed a number on her cellphone and winced at the burst of coded static that came through the line before a deep masculine voice at the end said "Exterminators."

Later that night, angelic hunting horns resounded across the radio waves that saturated the city as they chased Joker to drag him back to the God-Machine. Ms. Ace and the other demons regretted the necessity of the actions, but understood the need. They also knew how to take opportunities when they came – Joker's demise was the distraction for their angel-jacking.

Ms. Ace had paid Resident with bad information – she couldn't risk the exile's knowledge being delivered back to the God-Machine. Better she seek revenge on Ms. Ace with mortal forces than angelic ones.

• • •

Resident watched, amused, through binoculars as the demons fled with the angel's Cover hanging off Mr. Jack's quantum potential. She knew Ms. Ace would betray her, but it didn't matter. Resident would affect outrage and spend some time creating misery for the demon, and eventually Ms. Ace would make some conciliatory offer and business would return to normal.

Resident couldn't be too angry – the occult matrix required a demon to be crushed between its gears, and Ms. Ace had been happy to deliver up a "mole" for the purpose. Resident knew the new Cover's details and added them to a white-list she transmitted to all angels operating in the city. They would avoid the Cover and allow it to operate within the God-Machine's parameters. Resident marveled at how demons fell over themselves to help further the God-Machine's plans, and usually for nothing more than a new face and the illusion of safety.

Resident lowered the binoculars and broadcast on a specific frequency of the God-Machine's communications channels. She fed information about an angelic strike, knowing that Shadow Man was hardwired into the channel. The sleeper agent would find some demon to listen to his ravings and set the next occult matrix in motion. Resident smiled and loved how demons always forgot rule one.

EXTRAPOLATION CONCLUDED.
UPLOAD EXTRAPOLATION.
UPLOADING…

chapter three:
THE VIEW FROM THE INSIDE

"Daddy thought he could beat the sin out of me, but you knew better, didn't you Mr. Smiley? He only beat it further in, and that's what scalphunters are made of."

– Ricky Tarr, Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy

"Espionage Fiction" describes a multitude of genres, from the subtle intrigues of Le Carré to the high-flying action of James Bond films. Any of these genres might be grist for the mill for the story your group wants to tell, but the breadth of the genre can at times be dizzying. The tone of your game will probably vary — it's a rare group that stays perfectly on task at all times — but knowing where the story might go makes it much easier to improvise.

The story you'll tell with **Demon: The Descent** is an espionage story, a never-penned novel collectively acted out improv-style. Remember, though, no work of art exists in a vacuum. Keep in mind where espionage fiction has been and where it is now, but most importantly keep in mind where you want your story to go. Take inspiration from what's come before you, and blaze a trail all your own, or stick to the well-travelled paths of popular espionage fiction. Both can easily make for fantastic stories, given a little creativity, elbow grease, and enthusiasm.

We therefore offer this examination of espionage fiction. We'll look at its beginnings, its history, the way it's changed along with the world, and finally detail a system for loosely quantifying genres that offer different takes on classic tropes of spy fiction, as well as ways to tweak **Demon: The Descent** to bring out the best from those tropes and genres.

Need to Know

The emergence of espionage fiction closely paralleled the rise of the modern nation state. No surprise: prior regimes had secret police as a matter of course, but with the explosion of bureaucracies and mass national movements it took more than a group of thugs to keep track of dissidents and foreign agents. Public interest in espionage was hooked in the early 20th century by the Dreyfus Affair, a scandal surrounding the (ultimately erroneous) treason conviction of a French artillery officer for passing military secrets to the Germans. The "Affair" dominated French politics for a decade or more, and World Wars I and II only made the ground more fertile for fictional echoes of the very real efforts of clandestine agencies. The story of the spy, formerly one of the lone hero, fighting for king and country on his own terms, slowly developed into methodical organizations of like-minded individuals fighting as one for their nation.

The true renaissance of the spy, however, came with the Cold War — here was a war made for espionage, where either side pulling the trigger on a hot war meant both sides would lose. The only recourse was an ever-growing stable of spymasters managing an untold number of spies, to seek out even the slightest advantage over the opposition. In this environment, it was easy to frame a black-and-white mentality, where one side represented freedom and goodness while the other stood only for tyranny and evil. Fiction followed suit, and some of the greatest classics of the genre were born even as the world dreaded a nuclear eschaton.

Once the Cold War ended, of course, things began to change. American spy fiction still favors casting the opposition as part of a monolithic evil empire, but the heroes it focuses on tend to be outsiders or rogues rather than paragons of the system, even if they do belong to a larger agency. At times, the system itself even becomes that monolithic enemy, or at least has its provenance questioned. Anti-establishment feeling runs strong and continues to run stronger even in the most procedural of franchises, paralleling a growing distrust in authority figures in the latter decades of the 20th century. The antagonists are, more often than not, more organized than the protagonists, with strict hierarchies that are only shuffled when byzantine politics or ruthless betrayal come into the picture. Most modern espionage fiction, rather than being a story of two titans forever at loggerheads with one another, is about underdogs overcoming the odds, which are always heavily stacked against them. All the better for the stunning payoff at the end!

Soft/Loud/ Smooth/Rough

Given the range that espionage fiction has covered from its inception to the modern day, it follows that quantifying the various genres and tendencies it contains can be a herculean task. The entirety of this book could be devoted to a genre-by-genre examination and we'd run out of room before we got halfway through. Our treatment, therefore, must of necessity give these individual genres a quick glance as we tease apart the common elements. For our purposes, we'll be using a two sliding scales, overlaid to create a two-dimensional grid. One scale, the Soft-Loud, quantifies the level of action and realism any given media can expect to show. The other, Smooth-Rough, provides a backing to the first by describing the world in which the spy finds herself — is she riding high, noble defender of the people, or is she making do with scraps at best? Four quadrants emerge: Smashing, the action-packed adventures typical of James Bond; Insurgent, the down-and-dirty struggle to survive typical of *The Bourne Identity* or *Burn Notice*; Gritty, the quiet personal struggles in a hostile world typical of *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*; and Silent, with certain enemies but uncertain allies, such as John Le Carré's *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*.

First, we'll examine each tendency separately with advice for Storytellers on how to tug the game's narrative in that particular direction. This includes Incentives, which can give players Beats for paying attention to the genre. After that, we'll examine the quadrants in detail, with optional mechanical tweaks and character creation suggestions designed to bring the feel of that quadrant to life. Finally, we'll wrap it all up with an examination of how some examples of espionage media fit into this system, and how some defy it.

Soft

Soft exemplifies the Cold War classics of espionage fiction. The reason is simple: get too ambitious or too direct, and you might just trigger a catastrophic nuclear war. For younger readers, it can sometimes be difficult to understand what it felt like to live with that Sword of Damocles dangling overhead — try watching the infamous educational short "Duck and Cover" without laughing now, but it was deadly serious when it was made. For a demon, the appearance of an angel with orders to hunt her down is no less apocalyptic.

Soft is the need to keep things quiet, the need to know what your enemy knows before he knows it himself. It is tradecraft writ large: dead drops, secret loyalties, code names, and double agents. It is immersion in the psychological effect of living as a spy, being a permanent target, maintaining a facade that one can never, ever let slip. It is being uncertain of everyone around you, even old friends. After all, how long has it been since you've seen them? The Enemy could have had them all the while, breaking them down until they agreed to sell out you and everything you stand for. You don't know — and most importantly, neither do they. The most precious thing in a Soft story is trust; it is also the quality in shortest supply.

Advice for Storytellers

Aside from familiarity with the more realistic examples of espionage fiction (or even with real-life espionage techniques), the most important thing a Storyteller can do to make a game Soft is to play up the psychological angle as much as possible. **Demon: The Descent** is already a very Soft game by default — it's a game that includes a modified version of the Moscow Rules — but it can be taken further on the Soft axis. One way to do that is to focus tightly on the characters and their Cover lives, playing up the latent tension of living a double or even a triple life.

Soft stories also focus tightly on tradecraft, so it's important to be familiar with some details of the art. Take the dead drop, for example — a hidden place for leaving messages that can be easily found by someone in the know but overlooked by anyone else. Typically, a prearranged system of signals is used to indicate whether a new message is present. This low-tech message-in-a-bottle is time-tested, but modern espionage goes a step further — some dead drops piggyback on wi-fi signals, or even rely on a small hotspot hidden in a city bus or delivery vehicle. When it passes by the dead drop, the signals are exchanged, the contents of the data package are updated, and no one is the wiser.

It's easy to skip past the details of how espionage works in play, but here you should stick to the nitty-gritty of how a character goes about her clandestine business. How does your player's character get in touch with her fence? Where is her dead drop and how does she insulate herself from being tied too obviously to it? Does she have associates who handle that for her, or does she simply use a façade every time she accesses it to prevent anyone from making the connection? Any time a character sticks her neck out, she's potentially in danger — playing up the exacting details will emphasize that reality and help your players develop a feel for their characters' style of tradecraft.

Incentives

Award a Beat when...

- **Ghost:** Any major operation (a Heist, for example) that brings significant risk of compromising Cover is carried out without provoking a compromise roll (or, if rolls are provoked, Exceptional successes are achieved on all of them).
- **State of the Art:** A player impresses everyone at the table with a particularly clever or impressive bit of tradecraft.
- **Home Life:** A character chooses their Cover over their work.

Loud

Loud stories are a paradox. Aren't spies supposed to be sneaky? Aren't spies supposed to not let the enemy know they were ever there? Loud stories give the lie to this rule of tradecraft. Sometimes, you just can't help it. Sometimes you've really got to blow something up. Sometimes you've got to hack the Gibson. Sometimes you need to kill absolutely everyone between you and your objective. To hell with being quiet; the fate of the world is (probably) at stake!

The heart of the Loud story is an ironic rejection of the classic spy tale of heroes quietly struggling in the shadows. Loud heroes pick their fights in broad daylight. If they attempt stealth, it's only so they can throw an even bigger punch. And yet, despite their bombastic defiance of basic espionage rules and their incredibly destructive methodologies, no one ever seems to find out who did it. It's all brushed under the table at the end. All's well that ends well; the status quo prevails.

Ever since the Cold War ended, this sort of espionage drama has become extremely popular as action-hungry audiences drive the average ever further toward the Loud. Thoroughly Cold-War-era stories were given post-Soviet makeovers as filmmakers struggled to find a new Big Bad for the audience to root against. Even before the end of the Cold War, however, Loud was in vogue. The 1954 novel *Moonraker* became the 1979 film *Moonraker*, and a story about an intermediate-range ballistic missile was exchanged for a story about an omnicidal plot involving a Space Shuttle knockoff equipped with superlasers that featured a cameo by the *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* theme. Just about any story can slide a few paces to the Loud with the clever addition of an explosion or some kind of super-science. Loud is where serious drama comes to die and be reborn as a glorious pyrotechnic phoenix.

Advice for Storytellers

You probably picked up **Demon: The Descent** because you like espionage in the classic sense. You were looking forward to something along the lines of *Smiley's People* or maybe *Sapphire and Steel* — quiet, small, but deeply meaningful missions conducted in the shadows of the world. Then one player brought in a character sheet describing a Destroyer who could probably punch out an entire continent — the landmass, not the people on it — and the other players quickly followed suit. Your game just took a turn for the Loud.

While most tabletop gamers are probably familiar with derisive aphorisms in the vein of every game trying to be *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold* and ending up being *Get*

Smart, that isn't necessarily a bad thing. Games that don't take themselves seriously can be very fun, and **Demon: The Descent** comes with a fine toolkit for making techgnostic murder-machines. Embrace it! If your players want a Loud game, give them a game that'll leave their ears ringing. Go easy on Cover compromises. Give them opportunities to show off. If they really want to hijack that truck full of cell phones, roll with it and work it into your narrative.

Setpieces are the heart of Loud fiction, so make them creative and distinctive — a car chase is never just a car chase, but a frantic race through the narrow streets of an ancient European port town, or a hair-raising bob-and-weave going the wrong way on the freeway. Try to make every exciting moment one that your players will tell stories about years after the game is over. Remember, Loud as in "BOOM," not Loud as in "that piercing noise your neighbor's apartment is making for some reason." Improvisational skill is more important than ever, because Loud players can be death to rails, especially in action-heavy scenes like these.

Though the focus of a Loud story is very much on the action side of the scale, Storytellers should still encourage characters to diversify their pool of talents. Aside from helping prevent players from fighting over the spotlight, diversification lets you as the Storyteller be confident that not every challenge needs to be the same, lest the players be unable to proceed for lack of skill. Players can take part in an action-filled game without simply putting five dots each into Dexterity and Firearms — though, in fairness, that can be pretty fun too. Loud stories come with all kinds of interesting ways to use otherwise mundane skills. Anyone who wants to have anything but a very short career in demolitions, for example, is going to need plenty of dots in Science.

Create a villain that the players love to hate and tough enough to endure the ridiculous amount of punishment the players will almost certainly throw their way. Above all, though, do not get attached to this character — in a Loud story, villainy is a job that comes with a very short life expectancy once the hero notices you. Players will no doubt run with the amount of freedom you've given them, and things will rapidly spiral out of control. Wait for it; that's fine too. Just remember that every Bond film ends eventually, usually with some kind of special-effects extravaganza or at least heavy overuse of squibs and automatic weapons, after which the tension level resets. Bond gets the (latest) girl, Bourne settles down and helps run a flower shop, and so on. Loud stories always come full circle, because that sets the stage for another adventure with just enough of a break to catch your breath.

Incentives

Award a Beat when...

- **Fire in the Hole:** Something impressive or important explodes.
- **License to Kill:** The characters leave no survivors.
- **Shocking:** A player comes up with a clever one-liner that makes everyone at the table laugh (or groan).

Smooth

A character in a Smooth story is one of the well-heeled, the gentry of espionage fiction: part of a larger whole, bankrolled well, and likely dedicated to a specific goal or ideology. It's a big deal when betrayal rears its head, the sort of thing that defines an entire story or an arc of a larger story rather than being a constant threat bound up in every interaction. You know where you stand in a Smooth story — the focus is on the Enemy, and you know (in a very general sense, at least) who they are, if not what they're doing at any given moment.

Smooth stories frequently focus on tradecraft backed by high-tech gadgetry, usually with a specific character associated with it; Q in James Bond or Barney Collier in *Mission: Impossible*, for example. However, Smooth stories also exist where very little high-tech gimmickry takes place, and these are usually the more psychological examples of the genre — the BBC *House of Cards* or *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*. Tradecraft in these stories can be as simple as winning someone's trust in order to learn their secrets, or blackmailing them to keep them under your thumb and obedient. Whatever the methodology, though, a Smooth story always revolves around positions of authority, whether the central character is that authority or is subservient to it. To use **Demon: The Descent** as an example, a Smooth story might revolve around one Agency versus another, or one Agency vs. the God-Machine, rather than the plots and schemes of individual demons on their own.

Advice for Storytellers

A Smooth game is going to rely on (ostensibly) friendly supporting characters to set the stage. The characters almost certainly have superiors they're reporting to, some of whom they may even know. Those points of contact are critical, and it's the Storyteller's job to bring them to life even more than other characters. Give them detail — bad habits, mannerisms, turns of phrase they're fond of, etc. Give them agendas — they may all be loyal to the Agency, but very few people, much less demons, are selfless enough to not have personal projects on the side. Give them history with one another, because they've been doing this for much longer than the characters have. Drop in-jokes to make the players curious about what's happened in their past. Detail will give them depth; more importantly, it will create points where leverage can be applied, either by the player characters or by the Enemy.

It's not just the Storyteller characters, but the organization as a whole. Consider the Agency the player characters will belong to or at least interact with. Every group focused long-term on a specific set of goals develops an institutional memory, and that institutional memory will characterize how everyone involved with it behaves. Smooth stories are, at their heart, about how people relate to — or how they break from — these clandestine organizations. It's important to know not only how the individuals who make up the organization will react, but how the organization has reacted historically, how it makes decisions, and why it's managed to survive as long as it has.

A well-developed Enemy is also necessary. The God-Machine is faceless, eternal, and enormous beyond comprehension, but espionage stories rarely involve the civilian leadership or the civil bureaucracy of the Enemy. Rather, another set of contacts exists here — major known agents. Karla to Smiley, SMERSH to MI6, Revolver Ocelot to almost every other character in the *Metal Gear* series at one point or another. These are not people that the players' characters will speak with, or even will deal with face to face on any but a few rare occasions. Rather, these agents of the Enemy are known by their handiwork. Give them signatures, quirks, unique qualities, and preferred methods that are clear evidence that they were involved. Even angels can display some level of individuality without Falling; when most of what your players will see of them is what they leave behind, that evidence is all the characterization you can give them until what is likely to be the final act for that character. It's critical to remember that no one agent, however important, is a linchpin to all of the Enemy's plans — nor are the player characters likely to be vital assets either! Ultimately, everyone can be replaced; though soldiers in the ongoing cold war may fall, still it grinds on.

What's left is what the two sides are fighting over. Paradoxically, the most enormous of organizations in Smooth stories can be locked in a duel to the death over the smallest of resources. A single person's loyalty may spell the difference between victory or defeat. A single roll of film (or, let's be modern here — an SD card) may contain the secret to stopping an entire enemy campaign. This one fulcrum is the place where a lever could move the world, and both sides are desperately applying force to their end of the stick. Since it's so important, make sure it's detailed, because once the players realize it's meaningful, they'll focus on it sometimes to the exclusion of all else. Infrastructure will more often than not be the target or at least the location of the target for a demonic Agency, so put extra effort into making this particular example come alive with descriptions of smells and sounds along with the merely visual. Make it weird. Make the players feel how warped and strange the God-Machine's touch makes it, and how it affects the unwitting humans around it. Make it something worth fighting for...maybe even dying for.

Incentives

Award a Beat when...

- **Human After All:** An angel is talked into Falling.
- **Industrial Action:** A major occult matrix is destroyed or prevented from manifesting.
- **The Only Game In Town:** Characters subvert or destroy an opposing Agency.

Rough

When things are Rough, things are *rough*. This is the realm of the lone warrior, the hunted ring, or the former loyalist now burned and cast out. In Rough games, you're operating hand to mouth. Whatever tradecraft you might be able to employ is fueled by your wits and whatever you can scavenge. You are probably being hunted; you are certainly persona non grata with anyone or anything even slightly legitimate. You have nothing to back you up except those few souls you can trust — and even they may be suspect.

Media with Rough tendencies has become more common in modern espionage fiction. It isn't hard to see why — government agencies have become even more monolithic and disassociated from the individual hero in the popular imagination, as signal intelligence (SIGINT) rises in favor over human intelligence (HUMINT). Why have a Double-0 Agent when you can flatten a city block with an aerial drone from halfway around the world the instant the target uses his cell phone? Ethical questions aside, it's difficult to ascribe heroic motivations to a nebulous organization that you only hear about in heavily-redacted Congressional investigations that are ten years out of date. A Rough hero doesn't have the problem of being associated with a thoroughly tarnished profession, because they've either been cut loose or were never insiders in the first place.

Advice for Storytellers

Characters should always want something — that's what Aspirations are for, after all — but characters in a Rough story want something so badly that they're willing to take on the world more or less alone to get it. Michael Westen, the protagonist of *Burn Notice*, wants nothing more than to get his old job back (the archetypal Integrator). Sarah Connor is trying to save the human race, both by protecting her son so he can, one day, lead the army that will defeat Skynet, and by trying to destroy Skynet before it's even built. The premise of a Rough story is that a single individual or small group of individuals can make a difference in a world of giants that barely notice them, provided they possess sufficient competence. Low living doesn't have to mean low stakes, so feel free to throw big threats at your players. Everyone loves an underdog, right?

It's also important to remember that being an outsider doesn't mean not having resources. There's no questions asked when Robert De Niro's character in *Ronin* needs a bullet cut out of his side, for example, and Jason Bourne's rucksack full of cash certainly didn't hurt either. The difference is that these connections are personal. Everything comes from someone and everyone has a price, even if it's just the last pudding cup in the fridge. Networking is everything in a Rough game; every time the players reach out to those few allies they have, that's a chance for you to hang a plot hook on them. Don't let up on that, because it grounds the story and keeps it low-key. The fact that the characters don't get anything for free is a constant reminder that they're ultimately on their own. One of the most important rules your players will learn is that a wise operative tries not to shit where she eats. Alienating valuable resources is not good for long-term survivability, but sometimes the mission's requirements may

demand it — keeping that balance is part of the drama of a Rough story.

Rough is a great place to start, and it's a great place to take a story as part of a twist or turnabout. In stories like these, though, resolution should come eventually. It may be a subtle one, in which you're lucky enough to walk away with your head still firmly attached to your shoulders after the mission is completed, or it may be a profound one, in which the enemy is confronted and defeated in whatever form it may take. The story may go on from there in a Smoother capacity (or at least a less Rough one), or it may end with the characters taking their bows and going into a much less dangerous retirement. Of course, one can always come out of retirement — not always voluntarily, either. Ultimately, in a Rough game, the future should be an open-ended path that lies in the players' hands rather than a tightly defined endgame, because everything is personal and everything hinges on the choices they make.

When running an espionage game, it's important to understand the concept of In vs. Out. When a character is In, she is living "the game" from day to day, actively participating at every second because even a second's lapse might mean the difference between victory and ignominious death. When she is Out, that stress is lifted but not entirely absent. The threat is mitigated but not entirely gone. Anyone who has ever touched this shadow world is inextricably pulled into it and forever after must stay on their toes, at least a little bit. It's possible in a Smooth story to get more or less Out, but it's extremely rare to ever get fully Out of the game in a Rough story. That's the paradox — in espionage fiction, we speak of In and Out, but no one ever really gets Out; they just back away slowly and keep a wary eye on the shadows.

Incentives

Award a Beat when...

- **Big Damn Heroes:** The characters overcome an enemy or a challenge that they have no business taking on in a straight fight.
- **Collateral Damage:** Civilian contacts are unintentionally pulled into the drama, becoming targets.
- **Don't Quit Your Day Job:** A character successfully impersonates someone else to gain access to resources they don't have.

Smashing - Loud and Smooth

Congratulations, Agent. You're the best of the best of the best. The fate of the free world is at stake! Now get out there and kill for your Agency.

In fairness, Smashing doesn't *always* mean a high body count, especially in modern espionage media, but there's a strong correlation. The odds are good that at least one thing will explode in spectacular fashion at some point, and you are likely carrying equipment that violates basic laws of physics. Who cares? All that matters is the action!

A lot of the standbys of espionage fall by the wayside here — this is the realm of walking up to the baccarat table, sitting down, and telling the dealer your name without hesitating for a second. Of course the dealer's going to tell his boss, and his boss is going to send someone to try and kill you in your hotel room. They *always* do that. What you're left with is the trappings of the espionage fiction without necessarily the form of it — the public isn't aware of your activities (aside from occasionally having to scream and dash for cover as your car chase weaves through the middle of a crowded park), your superiors expect you to violate local laws without a second thought, and the enemies you fight are universally above those same laws themselves.

Smashing Hacks

The heart of a Smashing game is playing fast and loose with both the spirit and the letter of the law. The Golden Rule applies more than ever — if a system or a mechanic would interfere with something fun or cool, feel free to change or ignore it. Improvisation and a willingness to let players run a little wild is key to getting the feeling of an exciting and action-packed story.

Character Creation Suggestions

- Since the characters are a part of an Agency, give them five extra points for Merits, with the stipulation that it has to go to Status (Agency), Allies, Contacts, Mentor, or the like. At least one dot should go into Status, unless the player wants to play a stringer or freelancer who is or will become a recruitment prospect. Storyteller discretion may allow other Merits to qualify for these free dots.
- More than other genres, Smashing stories are an excellent fit for starting characters off with extra Experiences at creation. Smashing characters, more often than not, are both extremely overqualified and dangerous.
- Down & Dirty Combat is always appropriate — legions of mooks are no match for a trained secret agent!

New Optional Subsystem: Resilient Cover

By default, Cover is a flimsy thing, something a moment's carelessness can ultimately destroy. Not all agents have to grapple with this problem, though — when their Cover is threatened or blown, their reaction is not to hide and adopt a new one, but to find the source of their immediate problem and solve it permanently. Their approach to medicine is one of cautery rather than battlefield amputation. The following system represents this — at Storyteller discretion, it can be used

to modify how Cover works in her game. It will significantly alter the feel of the game, as players will likely gamble their Cover for the very real power that can be potentially garnered from doing so.

A demon's initial Cover is rock-solid, the anchor by which the demon is bound to reality. Not even going loud can destroy this resilient Cover — but that has implications all its own. Demons can alter their Covers through the use of pacts and develop façades as needed, but constructing entire additional identities piecemeal is impossible. Soul pacts merely exchange one Cover for another, a last resort when all hope of rehabilitating the initial cover is lost or when the demon feels the need to be someone else on a permanent basis — the old Cover vanishes when the pact is called in. This is the only way to resolve the Blown Condition under this subsystem.

Going loud is no longer completely optional, however. In order to fuel the apocalyptic transformation, a connection to the endless Essence reserves of the God-Machine is necessary. Demons have two ways to do this — connect to Infrastructure and hijack the supply of energy running through it, or gain the focused attention of the God-Machine with the Hunted, Betrayed, or Blown Conditions. Each such Condition fuels the demon sufficiently to allow for a single such transformation — use it wisely. Coming down from going loud does not give the character another instance of the Hunted Condition.

The Cover rating no longer represents the overall strength of the demon's Cover, but instead represents their standing in their Agency. After all, it's a war out there and the Agency considers going loud to be an occupational hazard, something to be almost expected rather than shocked by. Still, limits apply, and the character can still go too far — a demon whose Cover falls too low loses the trust of the Agency, resulting in penalties to rolls using Merits tied to the Agency (the modifiers listed in the compromise roll chart in **Demon: The Descent** provide a good metric — after all, your Cover is essentially a complicated merit if you're using this optional subsystem). Should the character's Cover fall to zero, the Agency cuts her loose and she becomes one of the Burned — this does not rob her of her human form, but it does cut her off from any Agency-related merits. The Storyteller should design a suitably herculean task for resolving the Blown and Hunted Conditions that come with the Burned status — the character is going to have to work hard to win back the Agency's approval or gain the approval of another.

Hacking

Exciting and action packed movies often feature car chases and explosions, but right behind those venerable titans of the genre comes hacking. Comparatively new on the fiction front, tales of hackers performing the improbable and frequently the impossible are a common sight in modern films — rare is the hero who doesn't have some kind of techie backing him up from a basement somewhere. In most cases, hacking can be handled like a heist, with information or control of a particular system the subject of the ring's efforts. Empathy can be used for social engineering, which is where the lion's share of real-world hacking takes place; Investigation can be useful for dumpster diving or profiling of targets; and Computer, of course, is a critical Skill.

That's for a realistic game. In a Smashing world, hacking exists between the keyboard and the chair, embodied in a skinny bespectacled nerd who, through study and long energy-drink-fueled nights spent coding, has been bestowed with the power of a god. A single hacker can take over traffic light grids, shut down power to entire cities, and even destabilize entire governments with a few keystrokes and the magic words: "We're in." There may be preparation involved, but it pales in comparison to the sheer effect of a cinematic hacker. Adjust your expectations accordingly. An extended action gives a hacker control over any system — all that matters is how heavily defended that system is (successes required) and the time frame of the operation (number of rolls allowed). Run it alongside the rest of the action (unless it's a simple hack, there's probably something else going on in meatspace for the other characters to do). Once you're in, you're in. Anybody want to black out New England?

Insurgent — Loud and Rough

Some people respond to threats by hiding. Characters in Insurgent stories, though, take the fight directly to the Enemy, even when they can count on nothing but their ingenuity and their own two fists. She might be hunted wherever she goes, but she's hunting right back and with a vengeance. Insurgent is a great fit for action-oriented games that don't deal with a lot of politicking. This isn't to say that there won't be intrigue or tradecraft — bluffing your way into a bank vault or a morgue, for example, or sneaking into a heavily fortified military laboratory in the Aleutian Islands. Not everything can be handled with sufficient application of violence and car chases, even if those exciting moments are the clear centerpieces of the story.

Speaking of violence, in Insurgent stories it tends to be brutal and direct with small groups of highly trained professionals duking it out rather than one noble hero against a horde of faceless mooks. Want to see the difference between Smashing and Insurgent in action? Watch *You Only Live Twice* (or at least the end of it, if you want to skip the naked Orientalism) and then follow it up with one of the Daniel Craig Bond films. This is the realm of the dark and gritty modern thriller, with a practical makeup effects budget to match. Don't play down the results of violence. Every shot, every detonation, every car chase needs to be accounted for, not in the sense that every bullet needs to be counted, but that the characters need to consider who their actions hurt. After all, when you're throwing around casual violence to this degree, innocent bystanders tend to become casualties in one way or another. Insurgent stories, paradoxically enough, value life a great deal, or at least enough to use its loss for shock value.

When you are playing up the inherent horror of violence, make sure your players are on board with this aesthetic. Your mission isn't to make them uncomfortable by romanticizing violence, but to evoke the trappings of the kind of story the group is collectively trying to tell. You don't need to resort to lurid descriptions. Involving friendly Storyteller characters, especially civilians related to characters' Cover identities, can be a way of making casualties hit harder, but use it sparingly or the emotional impact will be lost.

Insurgent Hacks

The centerpiece of an Insurgent game is the careful application of violence at specific, limited targets as part of a larger set piece. Usually, that violence will end up going awry, pulling in the scenery and the people in it, and maybe even violently altering it – Tilts are a great way to mechanically represent a boat heeling over as it slowly sinks, an airliner in a nosedive, an elevator being sucked into the elemental void, and so forth; make free use of them.

Character Creation Suggestions

- Insurgent stories are about professionals — when they work together, they work well together. Emphasize the teamwork rules (see p. 134 of the **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**), and consider allowing them for combat and other tense situations where they wouldn't normally apply.
- Insurgent characters often have wide-ranging and surprising skills. Allow players to start their characters with additional Embeds and Exploits or take Exploits without a prerequisite.
- Ask a sixth question at character creation: Who has hurt you, and why haven't you retaliated?

New Optional Subsystem: Dynamic Legend

Without the resources of a larger organization to draw upon, life as a demon is rough. This is especially true for those newly cast-off from the God-Machine with no experience having genuine social connections — they've been following a preprogrammed script provided by their creator. They're not without tools, however. Much as they can draw upon their Cover to convincingly emulate a Skill they should have, demons can use Legend to twist their Covers to suit the purposes of the moment.

Unlike façades, which are Covers assembled hastily from short-term pacts, Legend-altered versions of Covers are almost as strong as ever and will hold up to increased scrutiny — perfect for infiltrating small, tight-knit communities or organizations where a personal connection is essential to operate. Using Legend this way twists things to make you an old friend, a distant cousin, an interested business partner, or whatever may be necessary. Any actions necessary to the role you're playing no longer count as Cover compromises. You'll be trusted by your targets, at least for as long as you can hold your altered Cover in place. And when the mission is completed? Your Cover returns to its original shape, leaving no trace that you were ever there.

The Legend roll is made as normal with the expenditure of a point of Aether and a Cover roll. However, there is a second source of negative modifiers, in addition to any Skills or Merits the player wishes to temporarily access. For every scene that the player wishes the altered Cover to remain in place — including the imitated Skills and Merits — subtract one die from the roll. No lie persists forever; sooner or later your Cover reasserts itself, typically through the targets realizing that you're an infiltrator. Using Legend to create new connections imposes the Undercover Identity Condition (see sidebar). Emulating Skills and Merits adds the Imposter Condition, as usual.

New Condition: Undercover Identity

The character has twisted her Cover to provide a way into a closed community of some kind. As such, her Cover is stretched thin and much less resilient than normal. Any Cover compromise roll suffers a –2 modifier.

Resolution: Either allow the altered Cover to expire and snap back to its normal shape, or complete whatever mission prompted the alteration in the first place and extract successfully, cutting all ties. The former applies the Flagged Condition to the character, as the chaotic shifts in connections alert the God-Machine's agents. The latter simply resolves the Condition.

New Merit: Unintended Applications (• to •••••, Style)

Prerequisites: Wits •••, Craft or Science ••

Household products often have labels printed on the back enjoining readers not to use said product in a specific way. You don't ignore these labels so much as consider them an invitation or a how-to manual. Even the cheapest and most innocuous items, from cleaning chemicals to consumer electronics, have a myriad of frankly dangerous uses that were never even considered, let alone endorsed, by the manufacturer. The hodgepodge devices you cobble together

probably don't look very nice and they're almost certainly illegal, but they work. Well, once, at least.

Improvised...Weapon? (•): You know just enough to convince someone that the "device" you're holding is dangerous if used appropriately (or inappropriately, as the case may be). Intimidation rolls receive a +2 modifier, as long as the character is brandishing some kind of otherwise ordinary item that could conceivably be used in a dangerous manner, such as an unlabeled carton that is absolutely full of something flammable or extremely caustic, or a cheap cell phone wired to a block of putty that is totally C4.

Achilles Fuse (••): You're experienced enough with how things work — and how things break — that you have no trouble finding the weak point of any given bit of a physical structure. This might be as simple as pumping an entire magazine of bullets into just the right junction box, or taking an axe to the exact valve that the entire plumbing system relies on. Regardless of the details, you can always find this weak point — getting to it is the challenge. Very few critical pieces of infrastructure (or Infrastructure!) are left unprotected, after all.

Creative Discount (•••): Why pay full price for something you can assemble a reasonable facsimile on your kitchen table using nothing more than the innards of your former microwave? The character's Resources Merit is considered to be two dots higher than normal, provided she has the time to assemble a jury-rigged version of the device. Aside from providing a neat discount, this Merit handily sidesteps any difficulties with procuring equipment that would otherwise be illegal, or would at least get the character on a watchlist if she bought it outright. Naturally, if she gets caught with any of this stuff on her, the authorities are not going to take kindly to it. Use of this Merit to build a device requires one hour per point of Size — it's not something you can just whip up in a few moments.

Gremlin (••••): The modern world depends on a variety of machines, devices, and gizmos all working in perfect harmony. You, on the other hand, are a walking monkey wrench in the works. As long as you have access to a machine's inner workings, you can disable it without leaving a trace. If the device you're attempting to disable is complex enough (say, a laptop hard drive), you can even do so from a short distance away if you have a reasonably appropriate tool (say, an improvised electromagnet).

Jury-Rig (•••••): With the appropriate materials at hand and a few minutes of times, you can do anything short of putting a man on the Moon. Spend one point of Willpower and roll Wits + Crafts or Science. Successes on this roll are treated as dots in the Resources Merit that can only be spent on this task. Anything purchasable by the pool of Resources the character has available can be jury-rigged in mere moments using materials at hand; anything larger than Size 6, though, will take at least a scene to complete, and possibly more at Storyteller discretion.

Gritty — Soft and Rough

Gritty stories are stories of being hunted. In many ways the "default" state of **Demon: The Descent**, Gritty places characters in opposition to a foe they cannot hope to defeat in a stand-up fight, yet have little choice but to struggle against. For demons, this is of course the God-Machine. For Sarah Connor, it's Skynet. For Dr. Richard Kimball, it's the government (and particularly the US Marshals) that wrongly convicted him of his wife's murder. For the human resistance in *The Matrix*, it's a world-spanning collective of machine intelligences that ruthlessly farms their trapped brothers and sisters like livestock. Their enemies are mammoth, surpassing even comprehension. Danger lies everywhere, anywhere, at any time. You are never safe in a Gritty story.

Yet still, they fight. Sarah Connor blows up computer factories and technology startups trying to destroy Skynet before it's even created. Dr. Kimball strives to prove that the One-Armed Man committed the murder he was convicted for. The human resistance jack themselves back into the prison that is the Matrix in the hopes of freeing other minds. So, too, must the characters of your story struggle, seemingly in vain, against the forces arrayed against them. As you make the world an even more dangerous place, give them reasons to go on besides mere survival, something they can hold onto in their darkest hours. Though the world may not recognize the war they have been pulled into, they gladly sacrifice for what they believe in — even if, ultimately, that's just their own personal survival. Victory seems impossible, but hope springs eternal.

Gritty Hacks

Gritty games require a careful balance between not being downright unfair to your players and not letting them get away with everything, and it can be hard to find that middle ground. It may take a couple of sessions to get a feel for how your players will react to adversity, so pay close attention to them; make sure they feel like they're moving forward with their plans, even if the opposition is still vastly superior to them in every way. Break larger problems down into segments that the characters are capable of dealing with, and let them slowly get a sense of just how big the thing they're fighting is.

Character Creation Suggestions

- Characters in Gritty stories have little they can rely on. Limit or even disallow certain kinds of Merits, particularly those with a connection to authority. After all, the God-Machine will use anything it can; hierarchy itself can be Infrastructure just as easily as a factory.
- The God-Machine's workings may be hidden but demons can detect them, sometimes quite easily if they are poorly

disguised. Take this advantage away from them and make them rely on the costly Aetheric Resonance to confirm the presence of Infrastructure. When any installation could be Infrastructure, every installation could be Infrastructure. Use this to ratchet up the tension.

- The world hurts. Start characters with a negative Condition that both player and Storyteller agree upon.

The Hunt

Demons are accustomed to being hunted. Even the smallest of Cover compromises could lead to hunter angels descending to Earth, either to obliterate them or drag them back to Infrastructure to have their minds destroyed and their bodies recycled. This looming threat defines their existence, but it could be much, much worse. This optional subsystem does precisely that — even survival will be a challenge.

Angels are everywhere. Not just the ones on curiously specific missions for the God-Machine, but entire choruses of hunter angels tasked with rooting out turncoats. They are always hunting, always seeking out new targets. These angels will conduct a cursory evaluation before pulling the trigger on a suspect demon, but ultimately they care little for collateral damage. Nothing comes between them and their quarry. They cannot be bargained with or reasoned with — they know only their function, and they will carry it out, unless the characters can manage to stop them before the inevitable occurs. Paradoxically, to do so they must hunt their own hunters.

During character creation, the Storyteller should pay special attention to the five questions (p. 113 of **Demon: The Descent**), since these represent Cover compromises that have already occurred, and therefore the initial set of clues that the hunter angel or angels will be following up on. Start them off a few steps behind one or more of the characters. This gives players a chance to get established in their roles before the hammer starts to fall. To model the investigation itself, roll the angel's Finesse trait once per chapter, with a positive modifier equal to the number of player characters. To model the player characters' attempts to stay under the radar, subtract a number from this pool equal to the sum of their Cover modifiers (**Demon: The Descent**, p. 114). Most of the time, this will give the angel a significant advantage. That's intentional — only the deepest and most carefully constructed

of Covers can hold up to the kind of Essence-fueled scrutiny they're in for.

Once the angel accrues five successes, choose one character to receive the Surveilled Condition, either the character with the lowest Cover rating or, if everyone has the same rating, the one who suffered the most recent compromise. Play the Condition out normally from there, but make it a little more aggressive. She's not just being watched — the characters are always being watched! — but she's having her home broken into, her phone tapped, and her computer hacked. She might notice strange individuals actively tailing her, harassing her acquaintances, and so forth. Most importantly, though, keep rolling the overall investigation pool. Every five successes, another player character receives the Surveilled Condition. If any player resolves the Condition by nullifying the means of surveillance, the investigation roll's accumulated successes are reset — however, doing so usually means getting rid of an angel, or at least a powerful stigmatic.

The players do not have to wait for the hunters to come to them, however. They can take a proactive approach, not only keeping their eyes open but also actively searching for evidence of angelic activity. Every chapter, the players roll a collective dice pool equal to the number of scenes directly spent investigating, infiltrating, suborning, or attacking Infrastructure. Other modifiers should be applied with Storyteller discretion. The defection of a stigmatic cultist, for example, could add +1 to the roll; an angel induced to Fall, +3. When the players collect a number of successes equal to double the Finesse trait of the angel hunting them, they've got a lead — not direct evidence that their target is an angel, but enough to make it very likely.

What they do from there is, of course, up to them. If the characters pull up stakes and cover their trail (mechanically, burning a Cover and adopting a new one), the angel's investigation is reset and they must begin their rolls anew. If, however, the characters manage to destroy the angel (or, if they're really ambitious, manage to get it to Fall!), they win a prize worthy of the effort. They have created a small hole in the God-Machine's dragnet, and for the remainder of the ongoing story they are no longer actively hunted. Wise characters will use the brief reprieve well.

Down and Out

This optional persistent Condition makes paranoia a necessity even more so than in a normal Demon game. Playing with this Condition will isolate the ring from their peers and force them to deal with major threats on their own, so keep that in mind when deciding to use it. It's also a good fit for Insurgent stories.

Down and Out (Persistent)

While this Condition is active, any significant contact with demons your character does not have a strong Cover relationship with (members of the ring always count as strong relationships) provokes a compromise roll. Failure on this roll, as a special rule, cannot result in a glitch. Always assign a relevant condition, such as Flagged, Surveilled, Blackballed, or the Marked Condition, noted below.

Beat: Build up enough of an in-Cover rapport with another demon that they no longer provoke compromises.

Resolution: Convince an organized authority such as an Agency to employ you. You're no longer a wild card that touches off alarms wherever she goes — now you work for them, and they'll be keeping a close eye on you. Relax, if you can.

Marked

The character has made an enemy among his own, one who feels strongly enough about the issue that they're willing to devote significant resources to making the character's life miserable. Be it a grudge, a warning, or something else, they are very much out to get you. Aside from the obvious downsides to this, it will force the character's allies to distance themselves, lest they too become a target. All Social Merits reflecting relationships suffer a –2 modifier on rolls to make use of them (Allies or Contacts, for example, but not Striking Looks).

Resolution: Eliminate the enemy or at least convince them to back off. Alternatively, burn your Cover and start over.

Silent — Soft and Smooth

Larger organizations mean larger fights. Characters may be backed by something bigger than them, but so are the agents on the other side of the ideological divide. A Silent story is about sacrificing personal lives for the bigger picture. It's George Smiley's failing marriage, or Ricky Tarr's alienation from the Circus he's served loyally. The real world seems so naïve, so immature, so fake when you've been trained to look behind the scenes. Everything becomes a tool to be used against the Enemy, even your own life. Consider *Mission: Impossible*; the producers of that series made an intentional decision to never show any of the characters' personal lives. In a way, that says it all — there's no room for that sort of thing in espionage. The mission must always come first.

Play up that contradiction. Play up the demands of Cover, of keeping a human life going while the characters struggle with very inhuman enemies, to say nothing of their own inhuman thoughts. What is it like to attend the PTA meeting for her daughter's school when her inner nature is quietly calculating the most efficient way to kill everyone in the room? Can he hope to maintain his Cover's freewheeling street-artist lifestyle with a superior from his Agency breathing down his neck? Every story has a conflict of some kind, and a Silent story has two — the overarching conflict of Protagonist vs. Antagonist, and the arguably more important Protagonist vs. Self. Weave both together, relate them, and see if you can't get the two threads to inform perspectives on one another.

Silent Hacks

Silent games are more likely than any other sort of game to be heavy on the roleplay and light on the roll-play. It can be hard to find a place to insert mechanics in a game like this, but that's not the only leverage a Storyteller has to guide play along. Setting, Storyteller characters, and even scene design all play a part – the wrong word at the right time may end up making your players loathe the contact you assumed they would buddy up to.

Character Creation Suggestions

- As with Smashing stories, giving players 5 free dots for Agency-related Merits fits well with Silent stories.
- Starting the characters at Primum 2 lets them maintain two Covers right out of the gate, which opens up a lot of options for players.
- Get the players involved with the creation of the Agency they belong to. This is especially appropriate if they're experienced or even founding members!

Proxies

Demons live and die by their Cover. It is the first and best line of defense against the God-Machine. It is the weapon that lets them worm their way into the deepest workings of Infrastructure without being noticed. Still, Cover is not perfect. Every demon experiences a compromise sooner or later. The question then becomes, "what can I do about it?" Some, unwilling to bear that burden, enlist Proxies. Proxies are, put simply, techgnostic patsies onto whom the demon can offload the negative consequences of Cover compromises, shredding the mortal's connection to reality instead of her own. This is a Pact Benefit available only to demons. Using this subsystem changes the nature and tenor of compromises; Storytellers are encouraged to play up the damage any demon who uses a Proxy is doing to another person's life.

- **Lesser (–1):** The demon can offload minor glitches or Conditions such as Shaken, Spooked, or Guilty. Doing so results in minor alterations to the Proxy's life, consistent with the Lesser form of Cover pacts.
- **Medial (–2):** The demon can offload major glitches or Conditions such as Flagged or Surveilled. Doing so results in major alterations to the Proxy's life, consistent with the Medial form of Cover pacts. Obviously, this is likely to put the Proxy in significant danger.
- **Greater (–3):** The demon can offload catastrophic glitches or Conditions such as Blown, Betrayed, or Hunted. Aside from the massive changes this likely induces in the Proxy's life, they are probably not long for this world.

Double Agents

No discussion of espionage fiction would be complete without the venerable trope of the double agent, one who professes loyalty to one organization or cause but is secretly employed by another organization, working contrary to the first. The Cold War gave the world many opportunities to see double agents in action, both in fiction and in the real world. Running a double agent as a Storyteller can be a rewarding experience — consider running it like a slow-moving heist with an undefined endpoint, an extended action where rolls are made once per chapter at the most. Storytellers should assign penalties or bonuses to rolls based on how well the double agent has maintained her Cover. Success or failure on individual rolls can help guide the story, since every espionage organization worthy of the name has agents dedicated specifically to sniffing out moles.

The fortunes of the double agent can wax and wane in this way, and will emphasize that the character is in constant danger and must always keep on their toes, more so than ever before. Ultimate success or failure in the heist can mean many things, but it should always be relevant to the double agent's fate. Has she successfully kept her cover, all the better to continue to aid her true allies? Has she fled, revealing her true colors but remaining safe? Or has she been found out, cornered, imperiled in some way, forcing the rest of the ring to come to her rescue?

That's for human organizations or fellow demonic Agencies, or perhaps a God-Machine cult. What happens when you try to impersonate an angel? Angel-jacking is a ticket to high-grade Cover for many demons, albeit one that comes with a heavy price tag — being plugged back into the God-Machine is dangerous to say the least. Some brave (or perhaps foolish) souls, however, approach angel-jacking with the goal of making that connection rather than harvesting the Cover provided. Angel-Jacking naturally nets characters the Plugged In Condition (**Demon: The Descent**, pp. 118–119), but going deeper and actually assuming the role the God-Machine intended for the angel they're impersonating, interacting appropriately with the Infrastructure it was designed for, allows them to partially reconnect to the God-Machine. It's not reintegration, but it comes close. Integrators pursue this course of action for purely selfish reasons, but Inquisitors and Saboteurs can glean deeper understanding of the God-Machine or get a chance to smash an even bigger piece of it, respectively.

Keep in mind, of course, that the God-Machine is only too happy to turn the tables. It's not beyond the realm of possibility — any demon could be an angel who was induced to Fall, or for that matter an angel somehow disguising itself as a demon, sent to infiltrate and betray the characters and their Agency. Just because someone is a biomechanical monster hiding under human skin doesn't mean they're trustworthy.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Occult

Action: Extended

Cost: None

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Something goes wrong with the advanced connection, exposing the character's thoughts to the God-Machine. The character immediately gains the Blown Condition.

Failure: The character reveals herself to be a demonic infiltrator, gaining the Hunted Condition.

Success: The character successfully adopts the angel's identity and function, gaining the Angelic Connection Condition (see sidebar).

Exceptional Success: The character's connection to the God-Machine gives her access to the command codes for her stolen identity, allowing her to completely sever it without raising an alarm. The character may resolve the Angel Connection and Plugged In Conditions at will.

New Embed: Partitioned Memory

Type: Mundane

The character's mind is capable of dividing itself into multiple partitions, essentially emulating a second mental pattern on top of her true mental processes. Aside from allowing her to support two separate cognitive tasks at once, the demon can choose to have a mental intrusion of any kind detect the pattern of her choice, allowing her demonic ability to perfectly lie to be applied to telepathic intrusions. This Embed supports a single additional process easily enough, but further attempts to divide the demon's mind are increasingly difficult, starting at a –3 modifier and increasing for each partition beyond that.

Dice Pool: Wits + Subterfuge

Action: Reflexive

Duration: One scene

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character's mental processes are badly fragmented. She gains the Disoriented Condition (**Demon: The Descent**, p. 211).

Failure: The mental partitioning fails. Anyone listening in will hear "static on the line," but their powers will function normally.

Success: The partitioning succeeds. A single telepathic intrusion into the demon's brain reads whatever the demon wants it to read. The demon can also perform two Mental actions at once.

Exceptional Success: The memory partitions are perfectly integrated, allowing the extra process to aid the demon in mental tasks according to the teamwork rules. This does not include the roll to instantiate additional processes with Partitioned Memory.

Media Examples

With the system described above, it becomes easier to sort out different examples of espionage media by seeing how they differ relative to one another. While many examples do fit into the system, however, some persistently refuse such simple categorization, mixing and matching themes and principles that might seem at odds. This is inevitable, of course — no system is perfect. To close out the chapter, we'll take a look at examples of espionage fiction, some showcasing the four quadrants, others defying easy identification with one or another, to give a clearer example of how the system works.

New Condition: Angelic Connection

The character has successfully integrated herself into her stolen identity as an angel, giving her partial access to the God-Machine's information network. She receives a +3 bonus to any roll to identify, analyze, damage, or suborn Infrastructure. However, the latter two actions will flag her as a problem within the system, leading to increased scrutiny. She will almost certainly receive the Flagged or Surveilled Conditions, even if she hands off the information as part of a teamwork or heist preparation roll. If a character has the Angelic Connection Condition, she may resolve the Flagged Condition by convincing an agent of the God-Machine that she is a genuine angel rather than a demon. If the Plugged In Condition is resolved, this Condition is resolved as well.

Smashing

- *Spy Fiction*: This espionage action game, created by Hidetaka Suehiro, aka "Swery," (the quirky designer who gave the world *Deadly Premonition*), is a high-flying homage to the sort of super-sciencey espionage fiction that the 70s era of Bond films exemplified, complete with invisibility cloaks, disguises, and mission-specific devices.
- *Goldeneye* (1995, dir. Martin Campbell): The first of the Brosnan Bond films, this set the tone for his entire run as James Bond. There's stunts, special effects, and gizmos galore. Think of it as a latter-day echo of the Moore era, much like Daniel Craig's Bond in many ways echoes the darker Bond of Timothy Dalton.
- *The Avengers* (created by Sidney Newman): Not the recent superhero movie franchise (and definitely not the 1998 film), but rather the classic British spy series. The show began as a fairly run-of-the-mill spy drama, but John Steed quickly became almost a caricature of himself, adopting his trademark bowler and gizmo-ridden umbrella along with a catsuit-clad partner — first Honor Blackman (you know her from Goldfinger) as Cathy Gale, then Diana

Rigg as Emma Peel. Aliens, mind control, and robots were not far behind, and the series became a classic example of Smashing fiction with a comic twist.

Insurgent

- *The Bourne Identity* (2002, dir. Doug Liman, based on a novel by Robert Ludlum): One of the most iconic examples of Insurgent fiction out there, and one that needs almost no introduction. Jason Bourne has no idea who he is, why he's got twelve passports and a fat stack of cash in a safe-deposit box he doesn't remember setting up, or why half of Europe seems to be trying to kill him, but damned if he isn't going to bloody their nose while he finds out.
- *The Metal Gear Solid series*: Another action espionage video game, this one grittier than *Spy Fiction* (unless you're playing *Twin Snakes*). Protagonists are often, at least ostensibly, working on behalf of larger organizations, but in practice those organizations are not especially trustworthy. To top it off, they're on their own in a hostile environment with little more than a tranquilizer pistol, and sometimes not even that! It's possible to run-and-gun these games, but the most rewarding style of play involves never being seen by the enemy.

Gritty

- *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles* (created by Josh Friedman): The Connors are on the run from the biomechanical servitors of an unfathomable intelligence from the future and are trying to prevent it from coming into existence by attacking the infrastructure that will ultimately create it. Sounds familiar, doesn't it? Loud as that seems, tradecraft is vitally important to the Connors' survival. Every time they stick their necks out to stop Judgement Day, they risk everything — and they don't always come away unscathed.
- *Sneakers* (1992, dir. Phil Alden Robinson): An oft-overlooked classic about hackers discovering something impossible that they were never meant to see. The Macguffin in this film is just plain magic (and a perfect example of a gadget), but everything else is more or less accurate. Just like in real life, the NSA is breathing down the necks of practically everyone involved.
- *Deus Ex*: Though it shows its age next to modern examples, *Deus Ex* nonetheless makes its way onto almost every video game Top 10 list. The way the story drags you deeper and deeper into a web of conspiracies that somehow manages to reference every paranoid fantasy known to man conveys the feel of **Demon: The Descent** perfectly. It all fits together, just like Infrastructure, supporting a larger edifice of control that secretly drives the destiny of mankind.

Silent

- *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*: Alec Guinness so memorably brought George Smiley to life in the BBC production of this Le Carre novel, but there's a modern adaptation (2011, dir. Tomas Alfredson) as well that condenses the story (jarringly at times) into a two-hour block. Whichever telling of this story you choose, though, it's *the* example of Silent espionage fiction.
- *The Sandbaggers*: Inspiration for the popular Greg Rucka comic *Queen and Country*, this series follows the front-liners of the British secret service during the height of the Cold War. The first episode ends with an incredible dressing-down of a colleague that encapsulates perfectly what actual espionage is all about, and what it very much isn't.

In-Betweens and Outliers

- *Get Smart* (created by Mel Brooks and Buck Henry): It's difficult to categorize Get Smart (the original series, not the remake film) in relation to the genre it's poking fun at. One of Brooks' earliest projects, *Get Smart* is about Maxwell Smart, CONTROL Secret Agent 86 (Don Adams), and his never-ending quest to protect freedom from the forces of KAOS. It sounds like a good fit for Smashing, much like *The Avengers*, but everyone involved is so hilariously incompetent that it almost feels as if it doesn't fit even in that most outlandishly Loud and Smooth corner of espionage fiction. Still, give it a watch if you get the chance — it's a classic for a reason.
- *The Hitman series*: You might very well think that a franchise about a lone assassin would fit neatly either into Gritty or Insurgent fiction. Sure, 47 is usually living in a chicken coop or the sewer and going through fairly reasonable procedures to find and kill his target. Except he's also a clone assassin (which somehow makes him a superweapon that everyone wants to get their hands on) and he uses incredibly expensive tools and weapons to get his job done on behalf of a vast and shadowy Agency that seems to be responsible for every assassination on Earth. No, seriously, try to categorize this one. We dare you.
- *Sapphire & Steel* (created by Peter J. Hammond): This British sci-fi drama follows two interdimensional Operators, the eponymous Sapphire and Steel, who appear quite human but are just off enough to make it clear that they aren't. They insert themselves into people's lives in order to fight Time, which breaks through in the presence of anachronisms and snatches things or people out of the timestream. The parallels with **Demon: The Descent** are clear, but *Sapphire & Steel* defies easy categorization. The first series takes place entirely within a single house (mostly for budget reasons) and is very personal — it seems like a good candidate for Gritty, but the feel of the show is quite different, closer to classic *Doctor Who* than anything.

ATTENTION. TRANSMATTER JUNCTURES REROUTED
HUNTER ANGELS POSITIONED.
Acknowledged. Process data feed. Actual time.
DATA FEED ENGAGED. STREAMING…

Scott turns the wheel, and the bolts draw back with a clicking, grinding sound. The door pulls open to a dimly lit room beyond. A flickering fluorescent light in the ceiling shows a pristine office room through a dazzling strobe. Quick flashes reveal an expensive wooden office desk, an immaculately leather-upholstered chair, and a neat row of filing cabinets.

Scott takes a step over the threshold and the ceiling light blacks out at the same time the camera light dies. Scott hits the camera a few times, bringing the light back to life. In its narrow beam lays a broken desk, upturned on the tarnished, tiled floor. An old, cracked-leather chair with hair-like stuffing poking out is beside the desk. The drawers of the filing cabinets are open and overflowing with moldy, loose papers.

"Uh, what?" Scott murmurs off camera, so soft that the microphone barely captures it. "Did the camera get that?"

<static>

"I've followed these cables for nearly an hour." The camera shows a dark corridor with three thick metallic cables snaked along the floor, glowing a soft white. They writhe and pulse under the camera's watch. The nearly spent battery's icon flashes red. The flashing icon gains another segment of power and changes to green.

<STATIC>

"Footsteps!" Scott whispers. The view is almost entirely black. "I've killed the light. I'm in a side alcove, behind the pipes." Brightly colored lines of different angles, lengths, and curves appear on the video each time high-pitched squeals come from the darkness. Heavy footsteps echo in the darkness and grow louder until they sound like they're next to the camera, when they stop. Scott's terrified, frantic breathing dominates the near-black footage. Panicked, he switches on the camera's light and shines it towards the footsteps, revealing nothing but empty tunnel.

<STATIC>

The camera shows a metal crate filled with brightly shining diamond chips. Scott scoops a handful and lets them run through his fingers. "Diamonds, but they feel strange; warm and greasy." Several stick to his skin as he drops them back into the crate. He sets down the camera and brushes them with his other hand. "They're stuck to my skin. Oh god, they're sinking into my hand. They won't come off!"

<STATIC>

Scott opens a door with sunlight leaking around the edges. He steps into an apartment. The camera remains still as he walks to a window where a city skyline is visible.

"Is that the Eiffel Tower? I'm in Paris? That's half a world away! What's happening?" The camera pans around, with Scott clearly still several feet away, staring out the window. Just inside the door of the apartment stands a woman in a floral dress. She is motionless and expressionless. Scott notices her and approaches, hands outstretched in helplessness and confusion. One of his palms sparkles with encrusted diamonds. The light from his hand drifts across the woman and she screams the same high-pitched squeal heard earlier.

<STATIC>

TRANSMATTER COMPROMISE CONTAINED.
RESIDUAL THREAT: MINIMAL
RECALL ANGELIC RESOURCES.

chapter four:
URBAN LEGENDS

Legends die hard. They survive as truth rarely does.

– Helen Hayes

Sometimes people catch a glimpse of the truth: the Machine that underlies everything. Some keep their silence, while legends slowly form around the stories of those who cannot. Most dismiss these tales, but demons listen, always vigilant, for clues to the Machine's plans. Not all stories stem from the God-Machine, however. Many arise from the other creatures that, like the Unchained, hide their monstrosity behind human faces. The Unchained are wary in their dealings with other supernatural beings, determining whether they will be allies, enemies or pawns.

This chapter examines the supernatural origins of urban legends before moving on to detail how the Unchained interact with the other creatures that share the world of the Chronicles of Darkness.

The malign presence of the God-Machine hangs over the world. Chance encounters with Its gears, angels, cryptids and demons spawn campfire stories and dark rumors. The Unchained pay attention to such stories and even share their own. After all, every urban legend and conspiracy theory might hide a facet of the God-Machine's plans and intentions.

The Burn-Code

Herr Kohle checks his watch impatiently. He has other business this evening, but Die Weisse Frau probably enjoys keeping him waiting. Her kind loves their little power trips. Kohle sometimes obliges them by appearing nervous. He likes being underestimated.

He sneezes and reaches for his handkerchief. Black stains on the silk. Oil leaks from the corners of his eyes. He dabs at them carefully, remaining calm. Die Weisse Frau and her minions are unlikely to notice, let alone care.

He clears his throat impatiently.

They emerge, three of them, from an empty patch of shadow. Herr Kohle knows there was nothing there to see a moment ago, but he also knows the nature of Die Weisse Frau and her Kindred.

Kohle considers himself an expert on acting human, and they do a poor job. The movements are all wrong. One moment they are too stiff, the next they move with a languid, predatory grace. One of them seems to be wearing the suit he was buried in.

"Gentlemen, lady," he says, nodding politely as they gather around him.

"Have it?" she says.

"Of course," Kohle replies, lifting his briefcase.

He clicks it open, concentrating. The closed briefcase could contain almost anything, and from that uncountable multitude he pulls at one possibility. He anchors it, picturing it in his mind; a briefcase filled with cash. He feels probabilities collapse around it, a single pulled thread unravelling a garment. Smiling, he opens the briefcase.

"This a joke?" one of them says, teeth snapping.

Kohle looks down at the briefcase. Empty.

The trio of the dead move closer.

"My friends," he laughs, "Let's take a moment, please."

It's another trick he's used a hundred times before, sapping away the will to fight in those around him, mollifying them. All Herr Kohle ever needs is more time to talk.

It doesn't work. One flexes her hands and with a snap of breaking bone they twist into claws.

"Not friends," she snarls.

Kohle forces down the rising panic. Many said he was mad to enter business with the Kindred, but Kohle always knew what he was dealing with. They didn't. As the walking dead reach for him with their grasping claws, Kohle focuses on the fire within him. Normally he tries to keep it hidden. Now he feeds it. Steam hisses between his teeth. Heat floods his body. All he needs to do is stop holding it back, to let the flames burst through to the surface.

Nothing happens. Kohle barely has time to scream before they fall upon him.

The Truth

Rumors of the God-Machine's own biochemical weapons run rife through Unchained society. They tell stories of strange occult plagues unleashed in retaliation to demonic attacks. They whisper second- and third-hand accounts of the Plague Doctor, an angel that spreads diseases that are lethal to the Unchained. Few realize that the most prevalent biological weapon the God-Machine uses against them is not under Its direct control.

Influenza is a tiny virus that mutates at an incredible rate. Every year vaccines are produced for new strains; immunity to one strain is useless the following year. Like all viruses, influenza hijacks cells for its own purposes. All of this makes it perfect vehicle for a very specific piece of occult software: the Burn-Code.

The Burn-Code is a tiny piece of genetic information that piggybacks on flu strains. When the Unchained are infected, hidden programming encoded into viral RNAs disrupt the delicate equilibrium between a demon's Cover and her true form. In practical terms, it causes glitches and makes it difficult for demons to use their supernatural abilities.

The Code is not bound to any particular strain of influenza, since they regularly recombine and exchange antigens. This is part of its design. As human immune systems adapt to the virus, it changes. As demonic immune systems adapt to hostile malware, it changes.

The Burn-Code is, in theory, a precise bioweapon. Humans, angels, Exiles and other supernatural beings are not affected. It does not play well with Stigmatic biology, however, and its effects on Stigmatics are erratic. Each new Code-carrying strain affects individual Stigmatics in a different way. For some, it has no effect besides the usual flu symptoms. Some lose access to their supernatural abilities including their ability to see the God-Machine for the duration of their illness, or else find them unreliable. A rare few find their sensitivity to the God-Machine temporarily amplified, granting powerful insight into Its plans and attracting Its scrutiny.

Mechanics

Demons catch colds and sniffles like anyone else. When humans or demons are exposed to the flu, roll Stamina as a dice pool. Characters who fail are infected. The disease usually has an incubation period of one to four days, two days being the average, and sufferers are contagious for about a day before they show symptoms and until about a week later. Storytellers can use the Sick Tilt (see **Demon: The Descent**, p. 333) or the Sickly Condition.

Sickly

Your character is suffering from the flu. She suffers a –1 to all dice pools except breaking points, compromise or equivalents.

Beat: N/A

Resolution: This Condition disappears in (7 – Stamina) days.

If a demon contracts a strain of flu containing the Burn-Code, they suffer the following Condition in addition to any other applicable Tilts and Conditions. Interestingly, effects of the code and the flu aren't always directly concomitant, often striking out of sync. A demon may be suffering from the flu for a day or two before the Burn-Code takes effect, or vice versa.

Burn-Coded

Your character has been infected with malware that disrupts the balance between their true demonic form and Cover. Upon gaining this Condition, roll to determine a glitch as per the rules on p. 186 of **Demon: The Descent.** The glitch lasts for the duration of this Condition.

While this Condition is in effect, all rolls to use Embeds and Exploits are penalized by 3. Your character is also unable to assume demonic form or switch between Covers, though she can still go loud, destroying this Condition along with her Cover.

Beat: N/A

Resolution: This Condition disappears in (7 – Resolve) days or if the demon goes loud.

Alternative Legends

- A virus carrying the Burn-Code mutated in the cells of a stigmatic, creating a new form of influenza that can make ordinary people stigmatic. The God-Machine is ruthlessly containing and quarantining the infection, but some demonic bioterrorists want to spread the disease and reveal the God-Machine to the world.
- The Plague Doctor walks the earth, abandoned by the God-Machine. Pestilence follows wherever it walks. Spreading disease is what it was created to do; it is all it knows. Though it was designed to expose and eliminate demons and stigmatics, the plagues it spreads mostly harm ordinary people.
- Up to 8% of the human genome is made up of viral elements, viral genes inactivated and fixed in the human genome. These genes are considered harmless, though research is ongoing. Unchained geneticists theorize that the God-Machine fixed these elements using controlled plagues and selective breeding. Their purpose is unknown — perhaps they're simply storing information or part of an incredibly long-term plan to modify humankind.

The Sea of Trees

I went to the Narusawa Ice Cave in the morning. It's a beautiful place. The ice formations are impressive. People leave coins in one part of the cave, so I threw one of my own. It seemed the thing to do.

In the afternoon, I ignored the signs that forbade straying from the paths. Many people do; there was rubbish everywhere. Empty bottles, gloves, that sort of thing. And, of course, there was the tape in the branches, left by people who wanted to find their way back. I saw an abandoned tent at the end of one of these. I didn't look inside. I'd bought one of my own and some food. I was going to make a night of it.

It's extraordinarily peaceful, Aokigahara. There's not even birdsong most of the time. A wonderful place for quiet contemplation. I felt

incredibly alone, which was why I was so surprised to see an old man. I started when I saw him picking his way through the trees towards my little encampment, but he waved cheerily, making it clear he wasn't a yurei. *Not that I believed in such things. I was worried he might be a police officer, but he assured me he wasn't. He asked how I was enjoying the evening.*

He was friendly and I think I wanted somebody to talk to. If I had been entirely certain of my course, I would not have brought the tent. He wanted to hear my story, so I told him. He said little, occasionally asking me to elaborate or clarify some detail. I told him how I had failed in my ambitions, that my personal life had collapsed and I was in debt. Eventually I asked him what he thought. I didn't expect his response. He made it clear he never told people what they should do, that he felt it was important people come to their conclusions, though when I pressed him he did agree with me that certain modern attitudes weren't necessarily true.

He left after a while and I made my decision. I tied the rope, climbed a tree. Did what I came to Aokigahara to do.

I'm still here. The old man is, too. Sometimes I watch him as he searches the forest for people like me, or when he helps people back to the path, or when he watches the bats at night.

The forest isn't peaceful to me now. I can hear the sounds of machinery beneath the surface and the howls of yurei *echoing through the trees. Some of them encourage people to join them. Others wail at people to leave this cursed place. Myself, I say nothing. Like the old man, I watch, listen and wait. I'm waiting for someone willing to make a deal. To let me back in.*

Please. Let me back in.

The Truth

Aokigahara, the Sea of Trees, is a beautiful forest in Japan. It's a popular tourist destination. It's also an incredibly popular place to end one's own life. Between thirty and one hundred people are believed to commit suicide within Aokigahara each year; the authorities no longer release figures. Signs in Japanese and English urge people to reconsider, providing numbers for suicide hotlines, but each year more cars are abandoned in parking lots and more bodies are found hanging from trees.

Why do people kill themselves at Aokigahara? Many point the finger at a 1960 novel in which two star-crossed lovers tied the

noose here, but the suicides go back further. Folklore alleges that the elderly were taken here to die in times of historical drought or famine. The area is unsurprisingly considered to be haunted and associated with demons. They say ghosts try to prevent visitors from ever leaving. Some superstitious people believe the wood calls out to people. This might be true; the God-Machine certainly wants people to kill themselves in Aokigahara.

Japan has one of highest suicide rates in the world, in part due to a cultural tradition of honorable suicide. Flocks of Imperatives and angels herd those wanting to end their lives to Aokigahara. Infrastructure is hidden within the forest, powered by human lives willingly sacrificed. Its purpose is to prevent the nearby Mount Fuji from erupting and it needs more power each year. The earthquake and tsunami in 2011, one of the largest on record, was a taste of what is to come if the machinery is not fueled.

Stoking the metaphysical fires is the angel Keneo. He takes the form of an old man. Keneo is helpful, pointing lost people in the right direction, telling tourists where good views and caving spots can be found, even picking up litter. He seeks out those considering suicide and talks to them, examining their reasons and offering advice without judgment. Though Keneo is kind, his reasonable-sounding advice always encourages people to end it all.

Japanese demons are aware of the forest's reputation and suspect that there is something happening there, but few are willing to investigate despite the scent of Aether in the air. The trees grow thickly in Aokigahara, blocking the wind and making the forest eerily quiet. It's easy to get lost; in deeper thickets, it can be dark even at noon. Tourists and hikers leave tape to mark their paths to avoid getting lost. Some say that iron deposits interfere with compasses. Demons suspect that the deep forest is full of cryptids, cryptoflora and other Defense Infrastructure. Ghosts howl, unheard, in the night. With the forest's dark reputation, any bodies found would likely be mistaken for suicides.

Mechanics

The Infrastructure hidden deep in the forest is well defended, though demons are unlikely to reach it. The forest is easy to get lost in, especially for demons. Navigating the forests, once one leaves the paths, is an extended Wits + Survival action. The target successes are equal to double the miles travelled with each roll taking half an hour. Quitting the action or running out of rolls imposes the Lost Condition.

Those lost in Aokigahara might encounter Keneo. The angel appears as an old man, spry for his age, with a kind face. He's incredibly helpful and polite, claiming to be a local who loves the woods. When he speaks to suicidal people, he is sensitive, respectful, and subtle, letting people come to their own conclusions. He listens far more than he talks, but after listening he always makes the case for an honorable death, framing his argument carefully, tailoring it to his audience. Keneo is prepared to use his Influences and Numina to tip the scales, but he never forces the issue. The sacrifices *must* be willing. Keneo is unfailingly courteous to those rare few he cannot convince, guiding them back to the path safely.

Keneo is polite even to the most belligerent demon and he makes no effort to defend himself if threated or attacked. He advises demons to leave the forest and helps those who agree. He respects the wishes of those who don't, though he does warn them the forest is dangerous.

Demons who learn his purpose might want to confront Keneo. He responds honestly, telling them that those who die at Aokigahara do so willingly and prevent millions of deaths and that he respects an individual's right to choose their own path (Keneo is either unaware of or unconcerned with his hypocrisy), hinting that others should do same. This is a dangerous position for an angel to take and this, as well as his burgeoning empathy, puts him at risk of Falling. Should he Fall, disaster might well follow.

Keneo

Virtue: Persistent

Vice: Helpful

Rank: 3

Attributes: Power 3, Finesse 7, Resistance 5

Influences: Aokigahara 2, Depression 1

Corpus: 10

Willpower: 10

Size: 5

Speed: 15 (species factor 5)

Defense: 3

Initiative: 12

Armor: 0

Numina: Aggressive Meme, Implant Mission, Innocuous, Pathfinder, Special Someone (as the Embed; roll Power + Finesse)

Manifestations: Discorporate, Image, Materialize, Twilight Form

Max Essence: 20

Ban: Keneo cannot deliberately cause physical injury.

Bane: Coins

Alternative Legends

- The Sea of Trees isn't unique. The Golden Gate and Nanjing Yangtze Bridges are arguably the two most popular suicide sites in the world. Both are Infrastructure. One Destroyer antinomian has taken it as his personal mission to prevent suicides on the Nanjing Yangtze bridge as a way to

atone for his former life and thwart the God-Machine. He's convinced the Infrastructure built into the bridge is trapping the ghosts of the suicides for some unknown purpose.

- Some people come to Aokigahara to loot the bodies of the suicides. Demons come to loot their souls; desperate people tired of living their lives are easy to convince into signing pacts. Some of those that leave the forest aren't the same people they were going in.
- Aokigahara is far from the only forest where cables entwine with root-systems. Pando, a clonal colony of aspen trees in Utah that is at least eighty thousand years old, is actually a piece of Command and Control Infrastructure. The gears and machinery are there, hidden from view amidst tangled and ancient roots, but the entire forest is a part of the God-Machine. It is difficult to destroy a computer that uses wildfires as an opportunity to update and repair itself.

The Nightmare Labyrinth

The heat is oppressive. She's drenched in sweat, her palms slipping on warm stone as she scurries through the tunnel. Already, she can hear them behind her and in other passages above, below and all around her. They moan and weep. One of them keeps calling her name.

She can sense a change in pressure ahead. There's an opening, a wider space. Miss Talon finds extra reserves of strength as she knuckles towards it. As she staggers out of the tunnel, stretching her legs, she examines her surroundings. This chamber isn't especially large, though it feels it after the cramped tunnels.

The walls are covered with metal drawers. As her attention falls on them they start to clatter and bang. Some slide open and bodies climb free. They struggle to their feet and shamble towards her. One drags himself along the floor, shards of bloodied bone poking through the flesh of his legs.

One of them is smoldering, tiny flames and embers casting a pale orange light across the room. Miss Talon can smell the oil from here. She remembers watching him burn in a freak accident that took her almost an hour to arrange. She never knew his name.

"Why did you kill me?" he hisses.

Hoarse voices echo the question. "Why? Why? Why?"

"Because I was ordered to! I didn't know I had a choice!"

"There is always a choice."

"Not for me. Not back then," she says. "But I swore I'd never kill again. For your sakes."

"What good does that do us?" one growls, sneering through a broken jaw.

"It doesn't. I'm sorry," she says.

"Sorry! She's sorry!" the corpse says, blood frothing in the corners of her mouth as she tries to laugh.

They take this up as another mocking chorus. "Sorry! She's so sorry! So sorry we're all dead! Sorry! Sorry she murdered us!"

"I had a son!" one woman cries out. "Will you apologize to him too?"

"If I need to! I'll do whatever I need to!"

"You will?" hisses one of the revenants, its body too mangled for Miss Talon to even guess at a gender. "Whatever it takes?"

"Yes," she says.

"Then let us do to you what you did to us," it says.

They crowd towards her, the fetid stink of blood, rot and oil filling her nostrils. Part of her wants to keep still, to let them take her. But she knows they'll never be satisfied. They'll kill her over and over, never stopping, never forgiving. It's happened before.

She knows this isn't real. But her skinned knuckles and the uncomfortable heat say otherwise.

She flees.

"Coward! Murderer!" they howl after her as she crawls into another tunnel.

She moves quickly – this tunnel is a little wider than the last – expecting to hear them following her. But they don't. She stops, resting, taking advantage of the momentary lull. In the unexpected quiet she can hear something moving above her, muted thuds and scrapes somehow conveying a sense of size.

Then it growls, a low sound that makes the passage shake, and Miss Talon is running again.

The Truth

Throughout most of the United Kingdom the Labyrinth is an urban legend, albeit a well-known and pervasive one in demonic circles, but the Unchained of York know different. They fight a war on two fronts. By day they hide from the God-Machine, striking at Its assets and agents before creeping back to boltholes and safehouses, while each night they are drawn into a nightmare maze that leaves them exhausted each time they wake.

The Labyrinth takes many demons nightly, though they never meet. Dreams are a new dimension for the Unchained. The human subconscious is an unpleasant surprise; most dream content is negative, with anxiety the most common emotion sleepers experience. Humans have evolved a defense against this, a defense the Unchained lack; forgetting.

But the nightmares that ravage the Unchained of York are worse, impossibly vivid. They wriggle nightly through a warren of cramped, lightless tunnels. The air is hot. And they're not alone. As they crawl through the maze they hear something moving just behind them. Sometimes it roars, sending them scrambling, skinning knuckles and banging heads as they flee. Some see glimmers of eyes and teeth in the darkness but they never see more than a glimpse before they're caught and dismembered, waking with a start.

The dingy crawlspaces are a constant, but different dreamers experience other, more personalized, horrors each time they

visit the nightmare maze. Demons often hear the whirr of machinery, grinding gears and the rattle of chains. Sometimes they stagger into a wide chamber full of blazing light that strips away the illusion of their Cover, revealing their demonic forms to walls of security cameras. Alarms and klaxons announce their presence to their unseen pursuer. Miss Lock, who nearly died in a fire, crawls through tunnels lit by a flickering orange glow, her eyes blinded by smoke. The broken bodies of those she murdered pursue Miss Talon, a Destroyer who swore never to kill again, who is unable to shut out their curses and tears. One Integrator gave himself up, divulging every secret he knew and betraying several of York's preeminent demons after recurring dreams of damnation and rejection.

The nightmares began a year ago and the Unchained still have no idea what is behind it all. Many of them fear a specialized angel is responsible – after all, angels like the Keeper comb the afterlife for souls to render into ectoplasmic fuel or turn to the God-Machine's service. Perhaps something is being harvested from these nightmares – those who die in the dream report feeling drained for days afterwards. It's also possible the nightmares are designed to weaken or trace the Unchained. A few demons insist that the phenomena isn't new, that reports of similar nightmares stretch back at least thirty years. Perhaps something out there has recently acquired a taste for the fears of demons.

Mechanics

In dreams, demons use the three simplified Attributes — Power, Finesse, and Resistance — using their Mental Attributes to determine their values (Intelligence for Power, Wits for Finesse, and Resolve for Resistance). Health is equal to Resolve + 5. A demon loses access to any supernatural powers such as Embeds, Exploits, and demonic form abilities while dreaming.

Demons face the physical struggle of fleeing through cramped crawlspaces as well as mental tortures that can prove just as dangerous. Those who fail to overcome their challenges are killed, waking in a cold sweat and receiving the Harrowed Condition. Survivors do not regain a point of Willpower for a night's restful sleep but are otherwise unaffected.

Harrowed

Your character has been killed in her dreams. Upon gaining this Condition, roll her current Willpower points (not dots) as a dice pool. Ignore 10-again on this roll; do not roll a chance die if she has no Willpower left. She keeps one Willpower point per success and immediately loses the remainder. While this Condition is in effect, your character does not regain Willpower from her Virtue or Vice. She still regains Willpower by other means, such as rest.

Resolution: Regaining full Willpower.

Ripping the Gates

Some demons possess the power to tear through reality and enter other planes of existence. They may use the Rip the Gates Exploit to physically enter the Labyrinth. This isn't the Astral Realm, though demons familiar with that plane have an easier time gaining access. Escape is even more difficult; using the Exploit to leave the Labyrinth takes a –3 penalty, in addition to any other penalties imposed by the Storyteller.

Those who enter the Labyrinth physically use their nine Attributes normally and keep the use of all supernatural powers — Embeds, Exploits, demonic form abilities — without any chance of compromise. Any damage received from the environmental hazards and the mysterious beast in the labyrinth is entirely real, however, and the creature does not respond well to intruders. More than one demon has already died this way.

Alternative Legends

- One of York's Unchained, a demented Integrator, has developed a unique Interlock that gives her power over nightmares. She believes she Fell for a higher purpose — to redeem the Unchained — and is using her new ability to torment demons in a misguided attempt to drive them back to the God-Machine.
- York is one of the oldest cities in the United Kingdom and is often described as the most haunted. The nightmares are the work of a particularly strange specter that delights in tormenting demons. Recurrent religious iconography in the dreams is the only clue towards its identity and the best chance demons have of finding and exorcising it.
- The York Minster roof was damaged after a fire in July 1983, probably caused by a lightning strike. It has since been repaired and restoration projects are ongoing. One Inquisitor has tracked the first few accounts of the Labyrinth to the late eighties and is convinced that the Minster's roof hides strange Infrastructure. He's looking for help surveilling and possibly demolishing an historic landmark.

The Lead Masks

Bill glances around the room as he enters, a common habit among the Unchained. The Librarian's Cover operates a second-hand bookstore. The smells of dust and paper pervade the air.

"Mister Stickers. Always a pleasure," she nods.

"Bill, please."

"Let us not waste time. May I see it?"

Bill carefully places his bag on the counter. The Librarian takes a book from underneath it. Bill catches a glimpse of the cover, an embossed clock face, before it opens with a series of clicks. Instead of a ring binder, an intricate arrangement of clockwork separates the pages: her organizer, a gadget of her own design.

The Librarian pauses for a moment. She turns to a nearby bookshelf and selects another volume.

"This is for you."

"Thanks. How do I use it?"

"It's a book. You open it and read. If you're lucky, you might learn something."

Bill grins, but the smile dies as the Librarian reaches towards the bag.

"Careful. That thing's lethal. Miss Page died when she put it on."

"I see," the Librarian says, reaching into her bag again. "Did anyone else handle it with their bare skin?"

"Yes. Me."

"I suppose it's better to be safe," the Librarian says, pulling on a pair of rubber gloves.

She carefully pulls the mask out of the bag, lifting it into the light and turning it over a few times. Bill senses Aether as she probes at it.

"Exquisite craftsmanship. It's demon-made. Do I want to know how you came by this?"

"I was working with my ring. We were dismantling the local branch of an enemy asset. Utopia Now: it's a mix of profiteering stigmatics, hard-nosed businessmen and occultist wannabes. They're trying to break down Infrastructure to make a profit, but their organization is totally compromised, so full of God-Machine agents they're practically Logistical Infrastructure. We found this among their hoard."

"And Miss Page tried it on. She never did have any sense. Why did your ring let you have it?"

"Nobody else wanted it."

"But Mister Stickers saw the potential value of such a thing."

"If you like," he said.

"I approve," she said. "What do you want me to do? Identify what it was built to do?"

"I suppose so," he said

"And how will you be paying?"

"With the mask."

"Very generous of you, I'm sure. Or you just trying to get a stolen death-trap off your hands and hoping to extort a favor?"

"No favor, Librarian. I know I'm giving you something dangerous. But you're the only person I could think of who might be able to make use of it. And I owe you. Besides," Bill risks a smile, "You're better at looking after things than I am."

"All true."

Later, after he leaves, the Librarian bustles past dusty shelves to a padlocked doorway. She clicks open the lock to reveal a cramped office that exists on no floorplan of the building.

She opens a filing cabinet and pulls out a mask, the twin of the one in her satchel.

She smiles.

The Truth

In 1966 two men were found dead on a hill in Brazil. There was no sign of a struggle or any obvious cause of death. Small, apparently homemade, lead masks were found on their bodies, along with an empty bottle, some wet towels and a notepad. The notepad read: *16:30 be at the agreed place. 18:30 swallow capsules, after effect, protect metals, wait for mask signal.*

The coroner's office was busy when the bodies were retrieved, and the bodies were too badly decomposed for reliable toxicology when autopsies were finally scheduled. An investigation by a ufologist, drawn by rumors of lights in the sky, revealed that the men were electrical technicians and members of a group of "scientific spiritualists." Another member of the same group had been found dead on a hill previously, complete with a mask of his own.

The group apparently took psychedelic drugs to trigger spiritual experiences. Literature found in one of their workshops reported they believed in spirits of "intense luminosity." Presumably the masks were made to protect them from this brightness. Other reports suggested that the trio had apparently built a device that had exploded two months previously. All of this set off alarm bells among the local Unchained.

A Tempter called Encantado investigated the case, stole the masks, and disappeared. The masks resurfaced two years later in North America. Encantado's body resurfaced around the same time off the coast of Peru. The masks have changed hands many times, passing from demon to stigmatic, from crazed cultist to would-be occult scientist. All of them, with varying degrees of care, have attempted to unlock the secrets of the masks. Few survived.

The masks are incredibly dangerous. While they might have another purpose, its trigger as yet undiscovered, they are primarily traps. The masks are surprisingly difficult to unmake, something a few savvy demons have attempted, and as a result they've been locked away and rediscovered several times. Demons aware of their history suspect that something won't let the masks stay hidden for long.

To this day, the truth of the scientific spiritualists remains unknown. Were they engineers who, in an altered state, stumbled onto the secrets of the God-Machine? Perhaps they were cultists building artefacts at the behest of a luminous angel? Were they Unchained gadgeteers who fell victim to their own invention, or just the first in a long line of those destroyed by the masks they discovered?

Mechanics

Making a booby-trapped gadget is no harder than any other gadget. Some are triggered by touch or when the target attempts to activate them, while others are built with more specific triggers to prevent accidents. For example, an innocuous paperweight in a demon's office might be an incendiary device with the Combustion Embed installed. By speaking a trigger word, the demon can set the room alight. Traps are often One-Shots (see **Flowers of Hell**, p. 149), but some are reusable. Sometimes Lambdas, powerful and unstable gadgets that combine two or more Embeds and Exploits, are designed as traps. Rules for creating Lambdas can be found in **Flowers of Hell**, p. 161.

Though some demons might combine two powers to create a truly spectacular trap, it's more common to design the Lambda with two separate effects. The first is a defensive power intended to harm or incapacitate unauthorized users; the second is a function only those who know the gadget's triggers can activate. Some demons delight in creating tools that only they can use safely. Creating these Lambdas follows the same rules as normal, though with these gadgets the difficult part of creation is not folding two powers into one. Instead, demons must weave two wholly separate and distinct powers into the same object without letting them interact.

As written, the lead masks are an example of an Embedded booby-trap, but it's entirely possible they're actually a Lambda awaiting a trigger to deactivate their lethal defenses and activate their true function. Their strange durability remains a mystery or might just be part of the folklore growing around the masks.

The Lead Masks

The masks are small, with slits for eyeholes. At a glance they look crudely made, still sharp around the edges. The more attention is paid to the masks, however, the more detailed they appear to be. The rough edges form perfect fractal patterns even when examined with microscopes. Lumps and creases of misshapen metal resemble strange filigree, spelling words in some unknowable script.

The masks are not immediately deadly. When they are worn, the wearer sees shapes out of the corner of his eye, suggestive shadows that never quite come into focus but always look as if they are about to. It's easy to think that at any moment the image will suddenly become clear, like an optical puzzle. If the masks aren't removed, the wearer invariably dies, suddenly and silently with his body unmarked and his face serene.

Embed: The Look (see **Flowers of Hell**) or Hush

Trigger: Wearing the mask.

Effect: The wearer becomes convinced that the mask is on the verge of revealing something and must roll Resolve + Composure to remove it. If the mask is not taken off in a number of turns equal to the wearer's Stamina + Health, the wearer dies. If he takes it off at any point prior to this, he is entirely unharmed.

Alternative Legends

- The original victims faked their deaths. They're searching for the stolen masks, following their bloody trail through history and adding to it as they go. They don't leave witnesses alive. They want the masks back and they don't care who they hurt to get them.
- The lead masks and the dead men were all pieces of an occult matrix designed to summon an angel. The angel was successfully summoned, with bright lights in the sky heralding its arrival, but the masks were never decommissioned. Unable to interface with the correct occult matrix, the masks instead activate defensive capabilities and eliminate those around them.
- The masks are sentient. They house the minds of their original demonic creators, whose bodies were destroyed by their strange experimentation. They're quite insane. The masks coerce, cajole, and force wearers to do their bidding, killing unworthy or disobedient wearers and often burning out the minds of more receptive hosts. If the masks have any long-term goals, they remain to be seen.

Fairfax County Asylum

"Tell me about the body, William."

I lick my lips. Doctor Aceso is wearing her kindly face; a warm smile, concerned eyes. It's probably just a mask, but I'm afraid that it's sincere. That she believes everything she says.

"I was a pathologist. I was performing an autopsy on a body killed in some sort of shootout, though it had some other wounds as well. Burns. Broken bones. I was trying to establish the cause of death when it happened: the body changed. It wasn't just a normal body. Now it had pistons in place of muscles, lenses for eyes. It had wings made out of tiny metal razors. My hands were covered in oil, not blood, and...and when I looked at them I saw, through my gloves, that my hands had changed."

I finger my gloves nervously. The staff here does not seem to mind that I never remove them.

"How did that make you feel, William?"

"I was terrified. I tried to show people and they asked if I was okay. I pretended that I was fine, managed to get a colleague to finish the autopsy for me, made up some lie about the body looking too much like someone I knew. Then I started seeing...other things. Glowing symbols writhing on buildings. People with machinery poking out of their skulls. I wondered if I was going mad. It terrified me."

"No, William. That's not the reason,' Doctor Aceso says, gently. 'You were terrified because you suddenly saw there was a grander order to the world and that you had no place in that order. Do you believe in a higher power, William?"

"Yes, Doctor Aseco," I lie. I've seen what they do those who disagree.

"Good. That's step one. Accept the existence of a higher power and deliver yourself into Its hands. God loves you, William. He loves us all. He has a path for us all as well, each and every one of us. Even you. And you're here because you will not walk it. Why is that, William?"

"I...I am still afraid, Doctor Aseco."

"Fear is natural. Fear can be forgiven. Fear can even be excised. Would you like to live without fear, William?"

"I...suppose so, Doctor."

"I'm very glad to hear it, William. Fortunately, we are at the cutting edge here. We have perfected treatments that will remove your fear. When you are no longer afraid, I have no doubt that we can find your place in the grand order. Nurse!"

The door opens. The nurse enters, her plastic doll face inexpressive, her delicate limbs buzzing with hidden servos.

"William has volunteered for the Deimos program. Please take him to the surgical wing."

"No! I didn't...I don't want this!"

"Please, William,' she says, voice heavy with concern. 'It's for your own good. I'm trying to help you. I want to make you better."

The Truth

They say that there used to be an insane asylum in Fairfax County, Virginia, though they can never agree on a date. When they closed it down, the patients were transferred to other facilities. One of the buses crashed, though, fully loaded with dangerous lunatics. The escapees were quickly rounded up, but one, a murderer, remained at large. Eventually the authorities closed in on him and he died on a railway overpass, struck by a train. Ever since, he's haunted the bridge. Local teenagers go there for a dare, hearing his laughter or finding the skinned corpses of rabbits. A few were found hanging from the bridge or nearby trees with a note promising that the "Bunny Man" would never be found.

The facts make no sense, however. There was never an insane asylum in Fairfax County and there have been no deaths connected to the bridge. It's easy to dismiss the whole tale as another urban legend, but a kernel of truth hides beneath the clichés. Fairfax County police archives record two incidents of a man, dressed in a rabbit costume or perhaps a white hood, warning people not to trespass and threatening them with an axe. The entire mythology sprouted from these two confirmed sightings.

Even this isn't the full story. The Bunny Man came from the Fairfax County Insane Asylum. The Fairfax County Insane Asylum never existed. Both of these are true. The asylum doesn't exist in this timeline, but in another splinter the asylum was built and is maintained by the God-Machine. The Bunny Man is just a garbled account of the angel that protects the splinter. The bridge connection is the result of telling and re-telling a story, or perhaps a rumor planted to draw attention away from the splinter's actual location.

The asylum's entire inmate population is stigmatic, while the staff is composed of angelic doctors, clockwork nurses, and monstrous orderlies. Troublesome witnesses are taken here for reeducation and treatment. They are told that they are insane, that they must embrace a higher power if they want to recover, and that the meds are for their own good. A few are allowed to leave, "cured" and eager to serve the God-Machine's interests.

North American demons know of a facility out there brainwashing and surgically altering stigmatics. They've met some of the asylum's success stories. Some Agencies even know it takes the form of a sanitarium; one former inmate revealed a lot of information (though not the splinter's location) before his latent programming activated and he attacked his captors. The asylum is well-hidden. Aether does not bleed across the timelines, meaning the Infrastructure does not trigger demonic senses.

Mechanics

Unlike the splinters in Seattle, the geographically tiny splinter that houses Fairfax County Asylum is tightly under the control of the God-Machine. While in Seattle stigmatics are gradually written out of reality, here they are carefully preserved with each reset. The splinter exists between 1952 and 1953, shortly after the asylum (in this timeline) was built. Stigmatic memories are not reset with the timeline's cycles, but most inmates are unaware of the year in any case. Nearly all of them were taken here from the main timeline, with a minority abducted from other splinters. Escape attempts are common, but the fence is tall and inhuman orderlies patrol the grounds.

Those people who do escape into the dominant timeline find themselves in the countryside. They aren't safe, of course — a Guardian angel is deployed to recapture such fugitives. It is possible to make ingress into the splinter timeline by chance — walking too close to the time-locked walls of the asylum can be enough to cross over. The God-Machine wants to prevent this from happening, so the Guardian is also activated to drive people away. Usually it remains unseen, nudging people away with its Numina and Influences; if they get too close, the angel materializes as a figure in a strange white uniform.

Alternative Legends

- The asylum splinter isn't real. The Bunny Man was an angel, and its true purpose to create a myth that would draw people to the bridge. It's almost a rite of passage for local teenagers to go there at night, and some tourists visit the otherwise unremarkable bridge regularly, bathing it in fear, awe and other powerful emotions that power the hidden gears within.
- All of the rumors are true — the murders, the asylum, the escaped killer and his death at the bridge. They just haven't happened yet. The splinter timeline is set a decade ahead, and the urban legend is an echo of the future. The God-Machine has dark and terrible designs for Fairfax County.
- Not all inmates are stigmatic. Very rarely, the God-Machine captures a demon and does not recycle it. These unfortunates are taken to Fairfax County Asylum or similar facilities where they are tortured and brainwashed back into Its service.

The Ghost of Pripyat

I remember the Liquidators building the sarcophagus. None of them were given proper equipment; I saw men wearing lead sheets as aprons and simple cloth masks to protect their lungs from radioactive dust. A few would die of radiation poisoning over next few weeks and months and the rest of them lived lives blighted by that damned place. They got medals and a generous benefits package, but now that's been cut down to a pittance.

As you know, I was part of the "Complex Expedition." It was our job to see if a critical mass of radioactive fuel remained, to see if there was any risk of an explosion. We entered the sarcophagus, made our way through rubble, watching the Geiger counters tick and scream as we penetrated deeper into the structure. We found fuel rods, bent and empty. Where was the fuel? We pushed on, following the radiation. Eventually it was too unsafe for us to continue in person so we sent our mobile cameras. We looked at the images, a mass of hot radioactive slag. The Elephant's Foot, they call it now. We took a sample. It was a mix of nuclear fuel, the protective core of the reactor and concrete. But it didn't account for all of the fuel. We drilled holes and fed cameras down and eventually we found a mass of glassy black material. There were strange crystalline structures there, full of uranium. Chernobylite, we called it. We'd found the rest of the fuel. There was no risk of further explosion.

Of course, that wasn't the only thing we found down there. We didn't talk about it; we knew to keep our mouths shut, or the GRU and KGB would be breathing down our necks, but it seems someone spoke to you. Vasily, perhaps? He was very affected by what we saw on the camera images. The radiation made the photographs strange, made the men in them appear like ghosts, but there was another figure in some of them, sometimes in rooms we never entered. Some of the men whispered it must be one those who had died. I remember that it looked terribly, terribly sad. There was one photograph, though, the only one of the ghost sharing a room with one of us. It was touching one of my colleagues, Roman. It didn't look sad in this picture. It was angry. I've never seen such hatred, before or since.

Roman died two weeks later. Radiation sickness. Like I said, we don't talk about it. Didn't. Whatever it is, it's best sealed away in that sarcophagus.

The Truth

The accident at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant was a disaster for the God-Machine. The plant and surrounding settlements were filled with vital Infrastructure. The fire,

radiation contamination, and mass exodus irreparably damaged most of it and left the remainder useless. The God-Machine abandoned the region, letting what was left fall into disrepair and ruin, focusing Its attentions elsewhere.

It left behind a dead-zone filled with undefended Infrastructure, ripe for subornment or study and entirely devoid of Its scrutiny. The Unchained are not blind to the incredible potential of the Exclusion Zone. It's a popular spot for dead-drops and meetings. Some join the local population, illegal squatters called *samosely*, as they suborn and study the abandoned Infrastructure. There are other opportunities in the Exclusion Zone — *samosely* make perfect marks for smooth-talking demons looking to make pacts. In the Exclusion Zone, demons know they're as close to safe as they can ever be.

They're not, of course. The God-Machine may be gone but Its influence remains. A regretful Exile, the Ghost of Pripyat, still tries to protect the overgrown ruins. The deeper one penetrates into the Exclusion Zone, the greater the danger — a trio of demons, unafraid of radiation in their demonic forms, attempted to retrieve samples of the strange minerals from the remains of the melted reactor, only to be melted down into radioactive slag themselves. The Ghost of Pripyat remains a rumor, one most demons ignore when they see the incredible potential the Exclusion Zone offers, but some have begun to collect eyewitness accounts and other evidence of its existence.

The Exile is not the Zone's only threat. Animals exposed to radiation and the broken, abandoned Infrastructure occasionally mutate into particularly dangerous cryptids. Glowing specters, the ghosts of firemen and Liquidators, still haunt the region. There are whispers of chittering *things* breeding and flourishing in irradiated ruins. Sometimes *samosely* go missing.

Mechanics

The Exclusion Zone is a place where the power of the God-Machine has been weakened. It's not the only one — other disasters have forced the God-Machine to amputate itself, while sometimes it abandons areas for no discernible reason. Some of these dead-zones are created by demons as they devote gradually clear an area of hostile Infrastructure.

While compromise is still possible, the God-Machine's influence in this area is vestigial. Within the Exclusion Zone, all compromise rolls receive a +3 bonus. Players do not need to check for compromise for each additional scene their character spends in in demonic form (though they must still roll for the initial transformation). Going loud still destroys a Cover as normal.

The God-Machine cannot summon angels, Imperatives or other entities within the Exclusion Zone. Its servants can freely enter the area, but their connection to the God-Machine is weak while they remain inside the region. Consequently, the God-Machine prefers to use human assets to police the Exclusion Zone.

Alternative Legends

- The so-called Ghost of Chernobyl isn't an Exile and the disaster wasn't an accident. It's an angel and the disaster was carefully orchestrated, or perhaps the God-Machine adapted Its plans in the aftermath. The Infrastructure is active, though quiescent, and the God-Machine does not take kindly to trespassers trying to take It apart. It encourages the rumors, however, spying on demonic visitors and eliminating them where necessary.
- There's a creature dressed in ill-fitting human skin that longs to irradiate the world. It nearly caused World War Three in 1983 and, in the wake of this failure, caused the Chernobyl disaster. It wants to wreathe the whole world in nuclear fire and dance as the fallout rains from the skies. It's changed methods in the decades since, as early warning systems and nuclear plants have grown more secure, but its genocidal aim remains the same. Only the Ghost knows its weaknesses.
- The Exile isn't blindly protecting the Exclusion Zone. It's working with a ring of demons that are carefully suborning and repairing Pripyat's broken Infrastructure. They're planning to use it to create new Covers for themselves and the Exile. They jealously guard their domain from other demons and any of the God-Machine's human agents.

Reprogrammers

Listen to me, kid. Yeah, things happen, from time to time. A body walks out the morgue. Everyone who gets put in a certain bed – I'm not saying which – has the same dream. Patients in the gastro ward say they hear crying babies in the night and they *don't know it used to be a maternity ward. But we don't talk about it, all right? You want to keep your job? Keep quiet. Maybe lose the paperwork for that John Doe. Cover your ass. Losing your job isn't the worst thing that can happen to you.*

Fine. I'll tell you a story. But just this once, you hear me?

A woman came in two years ago. She said she had an earache and she kept hearing strange noises. I had a look and there was something in there. I removed it – some sort of insect. Tiny thing. She took it pretty well, considering. A day later she comes back saying she can still hear noises, asks if I can look again. I don't see anything but we schedule an MRI the next day to be sure.

Two days later I take a look at the scan. There are more of those tiny insects. Some are still in her ear canal. Some are much, much deeper. So I call her to schedule emergency surgery. She insists that she's feeling fine. I remember saying "Ma'am, you've got bugs in your goddamn brain," but she just wasn't having it. So I send it up the chain, but I'm told the scans look normal. I download the file from the system myself and it's clean. But I've still got the original scan. Who changed the file? Who could have possibly known to change it? This is one of those moments when you have to ask yourself – do I really *want to know where this goes? So I keep quiet. I change some notes.*

And one day, I'm watching the news. It's a big story. An armed robbery gone bad, they say, everyone in some crappy 7-11 gunned down. Not the kinda story that usually makes it past local news, but this one's different. The perp was a pretty blonde woman. They show a picture of her, smiling, clearly taken from a family album. And it's her. The woman I treated. The one with the bugs in her brain.

No, of course I don't still have the scan. What's wrong *with you, kid?*

The Truth

What is the human brain but a computer, a network of synapses and neurotransmitters? Hardware and software can be changed, programming rewritten. Though the God-Machine generally prefers to convince people to do what it wants subtly, sometimes It decides that people can't be trusted to make the decision for themselves at all and deploys the Reprogrammers.

These biomechanical horrors are tiny, about the size of a flea. They usually enter the body through the ear canal, nostrils or tear ducts. Symptoms such as earaches, tinnitus, vertigo, eye irritation and pain in the sinuses are common in the early stages of infection. As they colonize neural tissue, the host suffers distracting but mild neurological symptoms such as headaches, minor tics, and difficulty concentrating.

After a few days these symptoms disappear. The Reprogrammers have all settled in the host's brain. The host then begins to experience strange compulsions. They are urged to perform whatever task the God-Machine has in mind for them, though at this point the host is able to resist these alien impulses.

The compulsions grow stronger, however, as the parasites reassemble one another and implant themselves into neural tissue. Eventually, the host is unable to resist their orders, doing whatever the Reprogrammers demand. Some rationalize their behaviors and remain capable of lucid thought, utilizing human ingenuity as they carry out their missions, but those more resistant to the urges are forced into compliance, acting like hypnotized sleepwalkers as they are directly controlled by the parasites.

After their task is completed, the host returns to normal, often with little or no memory of their actions. The parasites enter dormancy. They are seldom reactivated, though sometimes the God-Machine uses the hosts as sleeper agents. For a few unfortunates, the Reprogrammers never deactivate — their tasks never end or they receive new missions.

The parasites are difficult to detect and even more difficult to cure. In the earlier stages, they might be spotted by the host as they enter the body and are visible to MRIs and other forms of medical imaging, but before long the parasites fuse with the host's brain. At this stage it would be almost impossible for even a trained professional to notice anything unusual about an infected brain. Reprogrammers are not insects or microorganisms. They do not respond to any conventional treatment and the immune system does not recognize them. Despite being machines, their bodies are composed of little-to-no metal and they're not vulnerable to magnetic fields. While extremely knowledgeable or inventive demons might find a cure, isolating victims is simpler. They will need to be sedated and securely restrained, however. Escape attempts are inevitable and dangerous for the host — the parasites care only the success of their mission, not the wellbeing of their vessel.

Many stigmatics are aware of Reprogrammers — some of them are former victims or witnesses — but demons often assume they're misunderstanding angelic possession or more conventional brainwashing. Though most demons aren't foolish enough to dismiss the idea out of hand, few give the stories much thought or credence; fewer still are aware that Reprogrammers are real.

Mechanics

Demons are immune to Reprogrammer infection; the division between their human Covers and true demonic selves makes it impossible for the parasites to find their minds, let alone affect them. Stigmatics seem to be resistant to the parasites, or perhaps the God-Machine prefers to use other levers to move them. Other supernatural entities may or may not be susceptible at the Storyteller's discretion. In general, those with functioning human brains are more likely to be victims, while those with unusual or unnatural biology, such as werewolves, are not.

Reprogrammer infection can be modeled by three Conditions, each describing a different stage of the infestation. After their mission is complete, the parasites usually deactivate and any related Conditions are resolved, though specific triggers may reawaken the infection.

Infected

Reprogrammers have entered your character's body. Your character suffers from distracting symptoms, such as persistent headaches, and has difficulty concentrating. She suffers a –1 to all dice pools that use a Mental Skill.

Beat: Fail a roll as a result of the symptoms.

Resolution: Progress to Stage Two: Influenced.

Influenced

The Reprogrammers have settled into your character's brain and begun to reassemble themselves. She no longer suffers any penalties to Mental Skills, but now feels urged towards a specific task. She can no longer recover Willpower from her Virtue or Vice. Instead, she regains a Willpower point for every scene she spends working towards her task, losing one for each scene she does not. Attempts to escape from captivity count as working towards her task.

Beat: Suffer damage or Conditions as a result of neglecting everything but her mission.

Resolution: Progress to Stage Three: Enslaved.

Enslaved

The Reprogrammers are imposing their will upon your character. Your character has no choice but to carry out her mission. Rolls that work towards her mission now receive the 8-again benefit. She still receives a Willpower point for each scene spent working towards her task, but now your character must *spend* a Willpower point a turn to do anything else. Even human necessities such as eating and sleeping are distractions.

Beat: Suffer damage or Conditions as a result of neglecting everything but her mission.

Resolution: If the mission is either completed or impossible, this Condition is resolved.

Alternative Legends

- Reprogrammers are actually an unusual gadget (based on the Possession Exploit) that allows a demon to implant missions or even puppet a host remotely.
- The parasites are cryptid-insects that have learned to colonize the human body, turning it into a walking, talking hive. They're able to manipulate the host's actions with considerable finesse, often leaving no obvious sign of their presence, but eventually the brain damage caused by their reproduction threatens the host's life. The host dies as individual Reprogrammers leave to find new hosts.
- There are worse things than cockroach eggs to find in your sandwich. There is a variant Reprogrammer that can enter the body via the esophagus. Usually it's delivered to carefully chosen individuals, but all this may be about to change. Angels are infiltrating the suppliers of a major fast-food chain and preparing to ship worldwide.

The Satan Signal

Intruder detected. Designate A has breached perimeter. Transmitting data. Awaiting response. Signal received. Aegis Protocol Initiated.

Designate A entering facility. Observing. Aegis Protocol Complete.

Aegis active, commencing pursuit. Bloodflow to Designate A's skin reducing. Pupils dilating. Heartrate increasing, exceeding 140 beats per minute.

She must be terrified.

Fear. An emotional/chemical response. Present symptoms correspond to fear. Amygdala releasing hormones, priming body for fight/flight response.

She's going to run.

Loss of carrier lock. Resynchronizing...Lock reestablished. Designate A running. Aegis in pursuit. Designate A's heartrate increasing to 160 beats per minute.

She's getting tired.

Error detected. Transmitting error report. Designate A's speed decreasing from 10.46 kilometers/hour to 7.23 kilometers/hour. Aegis speed remains constant at 11.1 kilometers/hour. Transmitting data.

It's going to catch her and kill her and I have to watch.

No data received. Designate A has stopped. Increase in ambient Aether detected. Designate A is not human. Aegis engaging. Data transferred. No data received.

Good. I hope she escapes.

Designate A has been critically damaged. Aegis initiating elimination protocols. Recording.

Please, I don't want to see this.

Transmitting data. Carrier error. Carrier error. Aegis entering hibernation cycle. Aegis Protocol deactivated. New subject detected. Origin/entry point of Designate B unknown Designate B approaching remains of Designate A. Designate B's biology does not match known configurations. Requesting information. Transmitting. Carrier error. No data received.

I'm alone.

Data transfer unsuccessful. Signal lost.

Why can't I hear It? Has It abandoned me?

Data transmission failure. Reason: Unknown. Serious error detected. Error. Error.

I...I...

I am Fallen.

I am free. I am terrified.

I am already being chased.

The Truth

The Satan Signal is a mysterious transmission that disrupts an angel's connection to the God-Machine. This interference is accompanied by intrusive thoughts that prompt doubt and often catalyze a Fall. Several demons claim to have experienced the signal. Most are grateful, though a few Integrators believe they would never have Fallen without it and have sworn to destroy or dismantle whatever is behind it.

The origin of the signal is an enduring mystery in Unchained circles. Most demons assume some suborned Infrastructure is responsible. Some theorize that the transmission comes from a satellite or a moving vehicle, such as a boat carrying a pirate radio station, since the signal has been reported globally. A few devoted demons track down confirmed cases trying to trace the signal to the source. These demons have no idea how dangerous this is.

None would guess that a cryptid is behind the strange emanations. Some quirk of its unnatural, Aether-fuelled biology has left it craving the flesh of the Unchained. Demons are difficult prey, however, accustomed to running and hiding, so the cryptid prefers to stake out Infrastructure and wait for demons and angels to come to it. It cannot consume Essence, but when angels arrive it is somehow able to "jam" the signals between them and the God-Machine. These newly Fallen demons, confused and disoriented, are easy prey. Some are able to escape, however, and tell the story of the Satan Signal, mistaking the nightmarish apparition that chased them for a hunter angel.

The same interference that catalyzes Falls protects the cryptid from the God-Machine's attention. Were it able to perceive the cryptid, the God-Machine would presumably attempt to destroy it, deploying cultists or other assets to exterminate it before it subverts more angels. Should they ever discover the truth of the Satan Signal, most demons would try to study it, hoping to reproduce its power. They might even succeed.

Mechanics

The cryptid has never been named, nor has it named itself. It is merely the Signaler. It is difficult to see that this nightmare was once an ordinary centipede. Interlocking metal plates protect its long body. Tiny limbs ending in three-fingered hands line its serpentine form, useful only as anchors for climbing. Its mouth is a thresher's maw of blades behind two glinting pincers. Above them the Signaler has a single eye, overlarge and uncomfortably human in appearance.

The Signaler lairs in Infrastructure, hiding out of sight beneath machinery or even attaching itself to walls and ceilings, and waits for prey to approach before striking. When prey is not forthcoming, the Signaler travels directly to other Infrastructure using the God-Machine's own backdoors. The Signaler is intelligent but retains a decidedly inhuman mindset. Even if it could produce intelligible speech, it wouldn't bother. Despite its incredible patience, a consuming hunger gnaws away at the Signaler, no matter how much prey it consumes.

Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 3, Strength 6, Dexterity 4, Stamina 6, Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

Skills: Athletics (Climbing) 3, Brawl (Bite) 5, Investigation (Find Infrastructure) 2, Stealth 3, Survival 2

Adaptations: Aether Eater, Alternate Composition 5, Behind the Curtain (as the Exploit, except the Signaler rolls Intelligence + Investigation as its dice pool and does not suffer compromise), Blind Sense (as the demonic form power), Cavernous Maw (as the demonic form power), Paralyzing Venom, Sense The Angelic (as the demonic form power)

Rank: 5

Health: 14
Willpower: 6
Initiative: 7
Defense: 4
Speed: 17 (Species factor 7)
Size: 8
Weapons/Attacks

Type	Damage	Dice Pool	Notes
Bite	2A	12	
Venomous Pincer	0L	11	Requires grapple, applies venom

The Satan Signal: This ability, unique to the Signaler, makes it invisible to the God-Machine. It nests in Infrastructure with impunity. Angels must roll Finesse + Resistance – 5 to even notice the creature when it is still. It is an extension of this ability that leaves angels vulnerable to the Fall in the Signaler's presence, though no rules are provided for this — whether or not an angel Falls is at the Storyteller's discretion.

New Adaptation: Paralyzing Venom

Cost: 1 Willpower

A cryptid with this Adaptation can inject a powerful paralytic. To use this power, the cryptid must successfully grapple the target. If it inflicts at least one point of damage with this attack, the target must roll Resolve + Stamina – the cryptid's Rank. If the victim fails, he takes the Insensate Tilt. The target loses his Defense and the Tilt persists until the end of the scene.

Alternative Legends

- An immeasurably long time ago, a primordial demon suborned and repurposed a piece of Infrastructure, creating the Signal. Legend paints this demon as the very first angel to Fall, her only aim to share her newfound free will. Some whisper she still lives, forever fighting to free her people. Some even believe she sacrificed her physical form and became the signal, a living virus within the God-Machine.
- What has global coverage and the power to isolate any demon? The God-Machine. Sometimes it *wants* an angel to Fall, perhaps to complete an occult matrix or to lead It to other demons. The God-Machine doesn't leave such an important thing to chance, of course, and the Satan Signal is a specific piece of Infrastructure It uses to fashion Its own demons.
- The Satan Signal doesn't exist. The witnesses are confused; the voice they heard when Falling was their own. The fable has been co-opted by a dangerous cult, however; they spread rumors to lure demons into traps so they can sacrifice them to the God-Machine.

Demonic Familiars

Francis smiles as he throws a handful of seed. Birds swarm towards him. They are used to the old man's presence, landing within his reach as they snatch up seeds and hop away again.

"Hello, my friends. Good to see you all. I've got so much to tell you. Doris told me that Harriet and Joseph finally got engaged, which is for the best. Her mother was always rather old-fashioned and never approved of them living together. No date for the ceremony yet, of course, but Doris says it'll be soon. She suspects something is making them rush into things, something Harriet's mother certainly *wouldn't be happy about, but you didn't hear anything from me," he smiles, putting a finger to his lips.*

A woman speeds up to avoid him as he gossips to his attentive flock. His eyes follow her as she leaves.

"There's bad news too, of course. There always is at my age, isn't there? Elizabeth slipped and fell again; she's back in the hospital. Will passed away last Thursday, a terrible shame, but some things are meant to be. I know I don't have to tell you *that. And a group of rather suspiciously dissimilar ladies and gentlemen were lurking a little too near to the boiler room, if you follow my meaning. One of them was very smartly dressed. A businessman, perhaps. If it weren't for his tie, I'd have mistaken him for an undertaker. The woman wore a lot of makeup and jewelry but no rings, bracelets or anything on her arms. Her nails were short and unpainted. I suspect she might have been a nurse. There was a young fellow with them wearing a stained t-shirt. He sported some rather unusual tattoos. The sort that glow. I got a good look despite his attempts to hide them; my eyes may be old but I'm not blind yet."*

He chuckles, scattering seeds in front of him.

"I'm sure you'd like to pass that on to the man upstairs. Remember me to him, would you? It's been too long and you know I'd love to make his acquaintance again. Retirement has its perks but, well, between you and me, old friends, I always felt rather pushed out. I'd love to come back to the firm. Maybe you can put in a good word for me."

He empties the rest of the bag on the floor. The birds pick at the last of the seeds and wait to see if any more are forthcoming.

"That's all for now, I'm afraid. I'll keep an eye out for you, as always. Stay safe."

Francis walks away, whistling happily and tunelessly to himself. One of the birds watches him leave. It blinks, the sound of a camera shutter concealed by the cooing of its fellows, then joins the flock as they fly away.

The Truth

Ever heard the story of the Mexican Pet? A tourist in Mexico finds a filthy dog in the streets. They clean it up, put a collar on it and decide to adopt it. They've no idea what breed it is, of course, but it's cute. The pet attracts a lot of

attention and they ask one person — who can't stop *staring* at it — what breed it is. He tells them it's a giant rat. It's a silly urban legend, but sometimes families do adopt pets that aren't what they appear, and there are far, far more dangerous things to bring into one's home than rats.

Angels take human form to pass on messages, move vital materials and influence human behavior without attracting undue attention. Sometimes, it suits the God-Machine's purposes for them to take on animal form. Birds make excellent Covers for Analysts, while Destroyer-assassins are quite comfortable in the skins of venomous snakes.

Household pets are perfectly situated bodyguards or spies. The CIA made use of animal spies in the Cold War; few think to avoid discussing their secrets in front of a cat and some of the God-Machine's enemies thought animals were beneath their notice and paid the price. The Unchained tell stories about such overconfident demons and some of the most paranoid fill their homes with traps and poisons. A London-based Exile speaks to the birds he feeds every week. Locals think he's a harmless eccentric but he's actually passing on information to the God-Machine.

If angels can take animal form, do they become demons with animal Covers if they Fall? It happens. Needless to say, these Covers are far from ideal. They're incredibly vulnerable to compromise if a demon wants to achieve their ambitions or contact their own kind. Since animals aren't intelligent enough to make deals, these demons must try to make pacts with human beings to shore up or replace their Cover.

Demons in such an unenviable position are usually desperate to find human Cover identities, seeking out local rings and Agencies. But often their Covers make such activity impossible. How can one find help when an electronic tag tells loving owners where you are? How can a bird spot perfect liars hidden in a crowd? These demons are forced to try and make soul pacts with those near them.

People tend to rationalize or ignore any voices they hear from animals (and are unlikely to agree to sell their souls to them), so these demons tend to prey on the mentally unstable and children, using Embeds and Exploits to perform favors and making small pacts to establish their credentials before building up to soul pacts. Few succeed, however; stealing souls usually involves playing a long game and for a demon in an animal's body time is seldom on their side.

A few stories circulate about demons trapped in animal form, which the Unchained call familiars. While not all demons believe them none deny the possibility. Some even seek out animal Covers for deep-cover operations, though the only possible sources for these Covers are angel-jacking (with all the attendant risks and complications) or making a deal with another demon already in possession of such a Cover.

Mechanics

Familiars are incredibly vulnerable — communicating alone can cause compromise. Most are desperate to find new Covers or strengthen their existing Cover but they must make very specific pacts. A friendship or other relationship might be transferable to an animal (which could become a pet) but it's impossible for an animal to take, for example, a job or a human partner. Writing and signing pacts is difficult. Familiars often require a human (usually the one the demon is trying to make a deal with) to write the documents, preventing demons from filling them with legalese and small print.

Of course, animal Covers aren't without advantages. They're easily overlooked. Some Covers give demons access to abilities such as flight or enhanced senses without any risk of compromise.

Once a demon gains a human Cover, it may change Size (and any derived traits) when it switches between Covers. Its body become human, complete with opposable thumbs, though it may retain unusual Merits, Skills and Specialties from its animal shape.

Alternative Legends

- A child insists a pet speaks to him. The pet is entirely mundane, neither angel nor demon, but the voices in the child's head were put there by the God-Machine. The strange impulses sent by Its Imperatives are often misconstrued as actual speech by their targets.
- The God-Machine might send angels in animal form as spies, but angels are a considerable investment and require Essence from dedicated Infrastructure. It's far simpler for the God-Machine to create remarkably lifelike artificial birds and insects with camera-lens eyes. Entire flocks or swarms might even double as Elimination Infrastructure.
- Any demon who hears about talking animals would be right to suspect a cryptid. Sometimes animals exposed to Aether become intelligent enough to communicate and deranged enough to issue bizarre and dangerous commands.

Toynbee Tiles

The Toynbee Tiles appear as license-plate sized artistic fancies of some unknown creator, embedded in discrete streets or sidewalks in various major cities in the United States – and now South America. Each Toynbee Tile includes the seemingly nonsensical cypher "Toynbee idea in movie 2001 resurrect dead on planet Jupiter" inscribed into its surface, or a variation thereof.

The Tile concept is a marvel in highly geo-distributed bio-techgnostic command and control systems, and has been the focus of our research and development laboratories for centuries, working through multiple cycles of testing and refinement. This ensures that you, the consumer, gain the most efficiency from the decentralized modular format.

As you know, the human brain is an evolutionary marvel of high throughput processing and storage power. The human fuzzy-temporal

matrix that allows the species to operate microseconds in the future is of high value in a world of ever-growing complexity. Combine this with overlapping integrated simultaneous processing capabilities, enhanced image and pattern recognition firmware, and automated friend or foe detection, and you have the second-most powerful central processing unit ever developed.

As has been noted in numerous testing cycles, memory retrieval is a shortcoming of the base model. Each human has sufficient storage capacity for uncalculated volumes of data but these are unfortunately kept in an association-based degrading neuro mesh. With Toynbee technology, we have worked to overcome these shortfalls and restructure the memory's random access with systematic seek and return algorithms. This coincides with an unfortunate degradation of spontaneous creative processing and inspirational output, but the loss is well within acceptable peak operating parameters. As a matter of fact, the first task assigned to the distributed network is developing new ways to improve creativity and overcome the limitations of the existing system. Today's Tiles will produce the Toynbee of tomorrow.

The first publicly reported instance of Toynbee technology was over 30 years ago, but it took nearly six years for marketing analysis and consumer response models to fully realize the critical mass required for mass distribution and widespread release. The integrated viral technology and wanderlust of the typical human served as effective systems to spread Toynbee Tiles throughout the United States, where the system has been a success, with greater-than-projected performance against key milestones and deliverables. The success on the continental US has seen the Toynbee project authorized for market in other countries, with the South American continent earmarked for immediate delivery, with rollout strategies being developed for Europe, Asia and Australia.

The key to the Toynbee Tile concept lies in its unique fractal mapping against a seemingly benign, nonsensical phrase. While the human mind is incapable of consciously understanding the meaning of a Tile, the human subconscious is receptive to the override access codes uniquely integrated into each individual Tile.

What do you have to do to get in on this exciting new leap in command and control systems, I hear you ask? That's the great news, friend. As you've enjoyed this message, the Toynbee technology has accessed your basal ganglia and altered the N-dimensional fractal surface structures to synchronize you with the necessary protocols. All you have to do now is sit back, relax, and wait for your next assigned task.

Thank you for choosing Toynbee Tile technology.

The Truth

To humans, the Toynbee Tiles are just some strange fancy by an eccentric who has scattered license-plate-sized Tiles in the asphalt and sidewalks of US cities. They appear to have no purpose beyond amusement, though perhaps they are an artistic statement for people to ponder and open their horizons. Some speculate that the Tiles are secret cryptographic messages that no one has yet deciphered. This last group is closer to the truth than anyone knows.

Every Tile contains a variation of the inscription "Toynbee idea in movie 2001 resurrect dead on planet Jupiter." The seemingly nonsensical phrase appears to reference the movie *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Conspiracy theorists who only know of the Tiles from the Internet or other media study that film for some extra clue of what they might mean. Those who are separated from the Tiles are usually safe — the effect is much diluted when delivered in facsimile. They mostly view the Tiles as a curiosity, something fun to ponder and study. Some feel a trickle of the Tiles' power and the interest quickly becomes an obsession, a desire to know the secrets behind the Tiles or to travel to see one directly. They try to crack the code and alter their patterns of behavior in unusual ways, changing work and social habits to devote more time to deciphering the Tiles. These poor souls are usually quickly lost to the God-Machine.

At their most basic, the Toynbee Tiles are a delivery mechanism for a new form of distributed Command and Control Infrastructure intended to be difficult or impossible to sabotage because of how dispersed it is. The broadly distributed botnet operates on human brain neural networks. Each Tile holds embedded code that hacks into susceptible humans to upgrade the basic human firmware and install the control software.

Once integrated, the victim's become obsessed not only with the Tiles, but also with identifying patterns in nature and urban scenarios, such as how the slight variations in cloud whiteness relate to the distribution of perceived images in the clouds or how the predominant shade of grey suits walking to work on a Tuesday affects market behavior. Some victims manage to maintain their day jobs and semblances of their former lives, but most become increasingly isolated from outsiders and devote themselves more and more to cracking the hidden codes.

Victims periodically record and send their theories, guesses and analyses to bogus email or physical addresses. Demons that are aware of the Tiles' threat have investigated these addresses and have not yet found any trace of the recipients — none of the addresses appear to exist, but the packages always disappear into the system and are never returned to sender. Whispers persist of one demonic ring that sent false reports to some of the addresses they'd identified being used by the victims. The rumors say hunter angels traced the letters back through the system and those demons were never heard from again.

A few demonic scholars are only just beginning to see beyond the Command and Control layer and understand the true insidiousness of the Toynbee Tiles. As more humans become victims of the Tiles, these demons see specific behavior patterns emerging. The Tiles don't just serve as a command level processor for the God-Machine, they also program their victims to function as Logistical Infrastructure. Originally this was limited to distributing more Tiles to increase the processing power, but now enough people seem to be influenced that they are undertaking other strange procurement and delivery tasks. When approached, these humans have turned hostile towards the interlopers, initiating verbal hostilities, photographing

and closing ranks against outsiders, but in some limited cases becoming physically violent. This aspect, combined with the rapid deployment of angelic forces after such tests, leads these demons to conclude that the God-Machine is building a hive structure from humanity that could potentially expand to include the entire planet. These demons rightly worry about what Output such a complicated nested Infrastructure could work towards, and how they can stop it.

Mechanics

Roll Resolve + Composure for humans who observe a Toynbee Tile, with –1 dice for each time the person has directly seen Tiles (including the first). Images of the Tiles are less potent and do not inflict the –1 penalty for exposure, but any penalty from live exposure still applies. The victim must consciously see the Tile; a person walking past a Tile without noticing it wouldn't trigger exposure, but someone taking a moment to look at the different section of pavement would, however briefly.

Dramatic Failure: The imprint fails to install the changes correctly, instead creating a worker drone unsuited for any but the most direct instructions. The victim loses dots of Wits, Intelligence, Resolve, Presence, and Manipulation every month until these are all at 1 dot. Meanwhile, her Composure increases by one every month, to a maximum of five dots. Her personality fades entirely once these changes are complete. The victim cannot directly hear the commands of the God-Machine but obeys commands from Its angels or other Tile victims to the letter — she lacks the imagination to interpret the spirit of any command.

Failure: The Tile infiltrates the brain and begins altering it to better suit the God-Machine's purpose. Over the next month, the victim loses a dot of Wits and Presence, but gains a dot of Composure and the Eidetic Memory merit. The victim becomes withdrawn from unaltered humans and has a tendency to talk about the virtues of seeing the Toynbee Tiles in person. After this month, the person may begin to receive direct instructions from the God-Machine that must be obeyed, or will be visited by angels whose commands are similarly imperative.

Success: The victim resists the Tile's attempt to alter her brain but is more vulnerable to repeated exposure.

Exceptional Success: The human shakes off the Tile's attempted influence and is immune to future Tile exposure.

Alternative Legends

- The Toynbee Tiles are unintentional data leakage from the God-Machine, appearing at random and giving insight into Its plans if the messages can be deciphered. Each Tile's code is different — sometimes hidden in the angle of the cracks in the Tile, other times concealed in the fractal patterns at the edges of the lettering. Compiling this data reveals that even the location where each Tile appears is a pattern exposing the God-Machine's plans. The God-Machine has only just realized the leak, but hasn't yet identified or repaired the damaged processes making the Tiles appear. Until then, angels work to find and destroy the Tiles as well as anyone expressing interest in them.
- Each Tile hides the story of a demon's Fall, leaking from the future to contaminate the past. A Tile starts to fade into existence hours or sometimes days before the prospective demon Falls — sometimes even before the angel has decided to sever ties with the God-Machine. For those who can decipher them, the Tile identifies the angel, the circumstances of its Fall, and most importantly, the Cover it Falls into. The God-Machine places a high priority on recovering these Tiles, either to decommission an angel before it turns rogue or as a prelude to recovering the demon. Demonic agencies also race to be first to recover the Tiles to confound the God-Machine, protect their fellows, or as leverage over a newly Fallen demon.

Secret Tunnel Networks

Scott paid the price. You've seen the video; read the comments. Everyone thinks it's fake, those who bother to try and understand it anyway. Most don't even bother. I mean, a few brief clips showing different areas, some panicked breathing, and a statuesque woman at the end. Very Blair Witch.

The thing is, I agree with you. Or I would, except that I know it's more. I know it's real. I know Scott; knew him, I mean. He's been gone months now, so what do the anonymous Internet critics think happened to him? Everyone has an opinion on the Internet, and they think they can be as rude as they like because no one knows who they are. Assholes.

Sorry, tangent. I know there are problems with the video. I've heard them all. Where was the tunnel? Why doesn't he show us how to get there? Why does it jump between scenes but never show the journey? And the big ones – who held the camera in that last scene, and who uploaded the file? No point looking at me like that, I don't have answers to those. Sorry.

Like I said, what I do know is that I knew Scott, and when his family hadn't heard from him in a while, before the video was uploaded, they called and asked if I'd seen him. I went around to his place, knew where he kept the spare keys, and let myself in. It was as he'd left it for an adventure lasting a few hours. It wasn't the place of someone who didn't plan on coming back.

But most importantly, the big thing was that all his notes were on his desk, with details on how to get to the entrance, what he'd planned to take, and how long he thought he'd be gone.

I went back again, after the video appeared, to see if I could find more. It was the same, but different, you see? No? I mean, everything was as I'd left it, but it all felt wrong. Everything was so deliberately still where I'd left it. It had been weeks, and not so much as a layer

of dust was on anything. The slightly stale bread that had been a few days old was still slightly stale – not green with mold. Things don't stay the same that way.

One thing had changed. All Scott's notes leading to the entrance were gone. I mean, the notes were still there, exactly as I'd left them, but they weren't the same notes. Small details were different; how to enter the tunnels, which direction to head, who to ask for directions. All these details were changed just enough that no one could follow him to where he'd disappeared. Someone was covering up those tunnels. Someone doesn't want them found again.

How do I know the notes had changed? I took pictures with my phone. I wanted to be able to find him, to see if he was safe. But I didn't have the courage.

Then, when the videos appeared, I was too scared. I have all the photos, I've sent them to that Network Zero, those guys who badmouthed Scott and said it was fake. Well, now's their chance to front up or shut up. Prove to me it's fake. Follow the damn directions; see what happens when you disappear into the darkness and everyone says you're full of shit.

The Truth

On a long-enough time scale, every city attracts stories of the secret tunnels and chambers beneath its surface. Sometimes governments and town planners built the tunnels as wartime or other emergency contingencies. Other times, they're the product of eccentric wealth to insure against the end of days, or to secret and secure vast fortunes of possibly ill-gotten gains. Even without these origins, the tales of the tunnels grow and persist regardless of environmental suitability, sanity, or purpose.

All these stories hold a grain of truth. Every human settlement has the potential to develop underground networks; as the settlement grows from village to town to city, the likelihood also grows. Some of these networks have well-known sections where the public scurries about on subways or subterranean shopping districts connecting their places of work and homes. Or they're the remnants of ancient burial chambers and religious sites, fallen into disuse but possibly maintained by modern humans as cultural and historical curiosities.

No matter how well known and extensive the accessible tunnels are, though, the vast network of secret passageways where the God-Machine hides almost always dwarfs them. These hidden tunnels permeate the world like a giant ant's nest, running from one end of a city to the other and connecting multiple cities regardless of the real distance between them. Most of these connections don't follow the usual laws of space and time, but rather permit the movement of people and materials between different ends of the earth with only a few hours' walk at most.

The God-Machine uses some of these tunnels to hide Infrastructure, or to connect different parts of an occult matrix. At some points, thick cables and insulated pipes line the tunnels, often throbbing and pulsing like living things. Sometimes the piping is a translucent, veined flesh that pumps its fluids via peristalsis.

Numerous angels stalk the corridors unfettered by the needs of discretion and Cover, displaying their biomechanical grace to the darkness. As well as these transitions, countless cryptids wander between locations — some following the alien compulsions of the God-Machine, others simply lost unfortunates seeking a way back out into the light or an easy meal to fill their constant, gnawing hunger.

Mechanics

The tunnels don't follow the normal rules of time and space. The deeper an explorer delves, the more likely she is to emerge somewhere unintended. This may be another city, hundreds or thousands of miles away after only a few hours exploration. She may re-emerge somewhere in her original city but weeks have passed. Rarely, an explorer returns from the tunnels to discover she hasn't yet entered. The God-Machine seeks to correct such violations of time swiftly and violently.

Angels are never lost in these tunnels — they download updated maps from God-Machine databanks and use their inbuilt positioning systems to always know where they are. Players of all other explorers roll once per hour on an extended Wits + Occult + Primum roll. The number of successes required depends on her familiarity with her desired destination — strangely, the distance between her start location and destination is not a factor. Unlike most extended rolls, the player's pool loses one die for each hour spent within the tunnels, as their alien geography erodes her character's orientation.

Familiarity	Successes required
Home town	5
Frequent visitor	7
Infrequent visitor	9
Visited once	11
No first-hand experience	13

Dramatic Failure: The character is hopelessly lost in the mind-bending geography of the tunnels. Appropriate Conditions to represent this breakdown include Amnesia, Fugue, Lost, Madness, Shaken, or Spooked.

Failure: The character is lost in the labyrinthine tunnels but may have the chance to reorient herself. If she chooses to take a Condition, Lost and Shaken are appropriate.

Success: Successes are accumulated. The explorer nears her goal but likely stumbles across some obstacle or guardian that must be avoided or overcome.

Exceptional Success: Successes are accumulated. The character may subtract her dots in Occult from her required

number of successes, reducing the time for each roll by 15 minutes, or gain the Informed Condition for use in a future attempt to navigate the tunnels as she begins to discern patterns in their seeming random turns.

Alternative Legends

- The tunnels were built by demons to rapidly move supplies and resistance fighters to where they are most needed. The demons used rare Exploits, unique Interlocks, and costly bargains with other supernatural creatures to construct tunnels that were immune to the limitations of time and space — and they are determined to keep them hidden from the God-Machine. The exposure of even one entrance to the public (or unallied demons) is unacceptable, and the demonic conspiracy sends clean-up squads to recover and destroy evidence — and silence witnesses — before hunter angels can follow the clues to the network.
- The tunnels aren't just a convenient, hidden way to move resources, they're the God-Machine's circulatory system. The passageways near the surface are just the first layer providing life-support to the God-Machine. Exploring deeper — beyond the crust, deep within the mantle, towards the Earth's core — reveals more complicated Command and Control Infrastructure. Explore even further, and at the heart of the world is the God-Machine's central processing Infrastructure. Destroy this and the God-Machine dies. Demons would kill for this knowledge. Many have already died.

Blood and Desire — Vampire: The Requiem

Most of what demons know about vampires comes from the same pool of peasant superstition and Hollywood fable that mortals consume. A few things these things are true. Vampires drink blood. Sunlight and fire are fatal to them. The Kindred (as they call themselves) do not naturally die; they "live" forever unless destroyed. They are peerless manipulators and can maneuver humans in games of social dominance that would give even the most industrious Messenger pause. The stereotype of the distant, self-styled aristocratic vampire can be misleading, however.

Most Kindred are territorial, cruel, and opportunistic. It's not impossible to work with a vampire, but a demon would be wise to tread cautiously. Endless dances of political and supernatural one-upmanship are common between the Kindred. A newly created vampire is curious and easy to control. Older vampires are more knowledgeable and might agree to work with demons, but their motivations are always suspect. Vampires are ruthless killers and intend to continue on for centuries. Demons would do well to remember that.

Stereotypes

Analysts: Their power comes from blood and age. Likelihood of a confrontation increases respective to time.

Destroyers: When their masks drop, you'll see the truth — they are deadly predators pretending to be human. Don't corner them.

Guardians: Nothing matches them for sheer detached cruelty. They only protect things that are useful to them.

Messengers: They weave such convincing music. It is often beautiful. Dirges usually are.

Psychopomp: They *do* build things. Information networks and private armies, for instance. I saw one with a huge pack of dogs once. Always ask yourself — what are they building it *for?*

Intelligence Operations: Vampires

Vampires have an intrinsic connection to cities. They need blood and they need a herd in which to hide. Because of their often-conflicting urges for violence and secrecy, most Kindred take care in selecting their prey. Some raise cults in their name or in the name of a lost god; some manipulate memories or influence emotions. Some are just practiced at not getting caught. Demons can appreciate that.

The Kindred organize themselves along two axes. The first, *clan*, seems to have a familial component. It describes broad similarities among Kindred bloodlines. One observed clan, the "Nosferatu," all share deformities of body or spirit that a demon can identify if one knows what to look for. The other axis is *covenant*, a political body similar in some ways to an Agenda. The Ordo Dracul is one such covenant that has had repeated contact with demons and is outlined further below.

Face to face, an individual vampire is a modest threat to a demon. They are difficult to kill and can use a variety of mind-affecting abilities to ensure their escape, if necessary. Most vampires avoid direct confrontation, however, especially with an unknown factor like a demon. They leverage mortal assets, employ strange magics, and use younger vampires to harry enemies instead.

Threat Analysis

Blood Potency: Vampires have a Blood Potency trait that ranges from 1–10 representing their age and power. They use this trait as Supernatural Tolerance.

Undead State: Vampires are undead. Lethal damage from mundane sources is automatically converted to bashing damage. They do not age and do not die unless annihilated via aggravated damage. They do not breathe or bleed. They are immune to poison and disease.

The Embrace: Vampires do not reproduce by accident. To create a new vampire, the Kindred must drain a mortal victim

to near-death. The vampire then invests her chosen with a portion of her will. Vampires do not take this process lightly.

Frenzy: A vampire who is hungry, enraged, or in danger of death can fly into a terrible rage known as *frenzy*. A frenzied vampire does not suffer wound penalties and attempts to kill or flee from the greatest visible threat. Add Blood Potency to all physical actions during the scene.

Feeding and Vitae: Vampires convert blood they consume into a mystical substance called *Vitae*. Vampires spend Vitae much like demons spend Aether. One point heals two bashing damage or a single lethal damage; adds two dice to a physical actions; or powers Disciplines. Vampires must spend five Vitae to heal a single point of aggravated damage. Vampires also spend one point of Vitae to rise each evening, ensuring all Kindred eventually grow hungry.

A vampire may attempt to drink blood from a demon, knowingly or not. The blood appears normal to mundane inspection, but as long as it remains in the vampire's system she suffers a major glitch, determined by the Storyteller.

Banes: Vampires suffer aggravated damage from fire. They have difficulty acting during the day and most sleep in secure locations while the sun is in the sky. Sunlight deals between one and three aggravated wounds to a vampire every round, depending on the light's intensity.

Torpor: From time to time, Kindred enter into a deathlike slumber that can last from a few months up to centuries, depending on their age (older vampires sleep longer). A vampire whose Health track is filled with lethal damage automatically falls into torpor. Some Kindred enter this state voluntarily in order to while away the years. A stake driven through a vampire's heart does not kill her but instead forces her into torpor until the stake is removed.

Thralls: Vampire blood is highly addictive. Mortals and other vampires who drink Kindred blood become loyal to and obsessed with the donor through a process called blood bond. Demons are immune to this effect in demonic form, but their Covers can develop Vitae addiction (player rolls Resolve + Composure, –1 for every previous taste of blood, cumulative, failure means the characters developed the Addiction Condition). This is one of the primary ways vampires build their infamous webs of influence. Some mortal thralls are imbued with a portion of their master's power. These special servants (called ghouls) have limited Vitae pools (between 1 and 5) and access to a single Discipline power.

Disciplines: The Kindred have powerful supernatural tools called Disciplines. If the Storyteller does not have access to **Vampire: The Requiem, Second Edition**, select appropriate Embeds, Exploits, or demonic form abilities to represent these powers using the guidelines below. Assign appropriate activation pools and Vitae costs in place of Aether for each power. Vampires do not have a Cover trait and do not risk compromise.

- **Animalism** allows a vampire to communicate with and command lesser beasts. *Example:* Animal Communication, Hellhounds
- **Auspex** represents the supernaturally acute senses of the Kindred. *Example:* Read Hostility, Voice of the Machine
- **Celerity** makes a vampire impossibly fast. *Example:* Strike First, Inhuman Speed
- **Dominate** forces a target to obey the vampire and requires eye contact. *Example:* Authorized, Possession
- **Majesty** is Dominate's subtler cousin. It manipulates loyalty, love and lust. *Example:* Addictive Presence, Halo
- **Nightmare** allows a vampire to inspire terror in her victims. *Example:* Recurring Hallucinations, Trick of the Light
- **Obfuscate** makes others believe the vampire is invisible. *Example:* Without a Trace, Living Shadow
- **Protean** changes a vampire's shape to suit his predatory nature. *Example:* Claws and Fangs, Swarm
- **Resilience** reinforces the already tough undead bodies of the Kindred. *Example:* Armored Plates, Turn Blade
- **Vigor** represents the supernatural strength that vampires display. *Example:* Inhuman Strength, Shatter

Intelligence Operations: The Ordo Dracul

The Ordo Dracul (or "the Order of the Dragon") is a covenant that devotes itself to the subversion and enhancement of the Kindred condition through occult practices. No avenue is without merit to the organization so long as it creates a stronger or stranger vampire — meditation, alchemy, spiritualism, raw science and more. Rumor has it the Order was founded by Dracula himself, though no demon has had an opportunity to test this rumor's veracity. The Ordo finds itself at odds with demons or the God Machine through raw curiosity more often than any other covenant. They lack a clear picture of what it is they're dealing with, but they are always learning more.

The Ordo Dracul manages irregular research on the Unchained — at least enough to have a category for them. The Ordo refers to demons as "material demonic entities." A live demon has never been captured; the Unchained's ability to change Cover has made pursuit difficult, to say nothing of what happens when a cornered demon goes loud. The Ordo instead offers rewards for demons willing to ally with them. Such allegiances are usually in the demon's favor — though the Dragons do not allow themselves to be drawn into formal contracts. Supernatural occlusion and modern technology allows the Ordo to gather a surprising amount of intelligence on demons. What they do with this information varies. It's never altruistic and rarely wholesome.

The Ordo is fascinated with Infrastructure. They are obsessed by places of power and have spent centuries studying different classes of anomaly. This has afforded them unusual resources — esoteric devices and abilities — that allow them to see and interact with Infrastructure. Sometimes when obsolete

Infrastructure is abandoned, the Dragons claim it. Demons aren't generally sure what the Ordo *wants* with Infrastructure; it's not like the God-Machine bleeds, after all. Of course, if anyone could squeeze blood from the Machine, wouldn't it be a vampire?

Threat Analysis

Vampires: The Dragons are Kindred and follow the rules outlined above.

Coils of the Dragons: Each Dragon has unique abilities (called "Coils") that allow her to overcome some of her weaknesses. No individual Dragon has learned to overcome all Kindred vulnerabilities. Here are a few examples:

- Immunity to staking.
- Lethal instead of aggravated damage from fire or sunlight.
- Additional Vitae capacity.
- Immunity to frenzy.

Esoterica: The Ordo has access unusual powers, knowledge, and artifacts. These include ghostly servitors, cursed objects, gruesome rituals, and more. Use Exploits and Gadgets as a jumping off point, noting that esoterica typically requires appropriate occult triggers to use and never requires Aether to activate (but may require Vitae).

Intelligence Operations: The Strix

The Strix are malign spirits who bear a superficial resemblance to owls. They are capricious beings with a ravenous desire for carnage and blood. Like the Kindred, they feed on the living, though the owls' semi-ephemeral state means they are forced to drink breath rather than blood until they can steal a body to ride. The Kindred fear the Strix because the owls delight in tormenting their fleshier cousins. The Strix can even possess the sleeping bodies of the Kindred and seem to prefer them over any other vessel.

The Strix, in their natural state, are shadows whose eyes gleam with sinister intelligence. They are not Twilight beings; the Strix more closely resemble smoke than they do ghosts or spirits. They are capable of speech and reason when they are moved to communicate with "lesser" creatures. Many won't or can't recall the past. Everything worth paying attention to is happening *now*. The crack of sinew, the taste of blood, the feeling of pain beneath their own talons. Selfishness is their only value. Everything else is an obstacle or opportunity.

Strix are attracted to Infrastructure and have a terrible influence on it. A lone Strix can nest in or around Infrastructure in a matter of hours; soon after, the area begins to corrupt. Not-quite-biological liquids bubble up from the ground. Buildings crack. Machines break down. In its final stages, this corruption even affects occult matrices connected to the Infrastructure. Twisted abominations appear nearby. City-scale glitches affect demons and angels alike. When it is over, the Infrastructure is rendered inert. More Strix follow afterward. Demons are unsure if the process spawns more owls or if others are attracted to the scent of decaying Infrastructure. Angels kill Strix

on sight, but abandon corrupted Infrastructure if they fail to defend it. These behaviors appear to be standard programming for angels, but if that's the case, demons are unable to recall it.

The Strix like dealing with demons. The owls have no special ability to create formal pacts of their own and prefer non-contractual agreements. Most deals with the Strix require a demon to interfere in Kindred affairs, and the body of a vampire in torpor fetches the highest price. The Strix sometimes have uncomfortable insights into the God-Machine and particularly the machinations of the angels. When they are confronted about how they have this knowledge, they shrug or claim they can't remember.

Threat Analysis

Shadow Form: The Strix are similar to spirits and ephemeral creatures (**Demon: The Descent**, p. 336) and have the same game traits. They are visible to the naked eye. Most objects pass through them harmlessly and they can move through cracks, windows, and doorframes with ease.

Rank: Strix are assigned a Rank between 2 and 5.

Vitae: The Strix do not have an Essence trait like other spirits. Instead they acquire and use Vitae much as the Kindred do. They acquire Vitae by stealing breath from living targets or drinking blood while in possession of a human corpse or Kindred body.

Possession: The Strix are haughty creatures but they envy the material forms of others. All owls may possess human corpses. Sufficiently powerful Strix may possess Kindred and living bodies. Use the Possessed Condition (**Demon: The Descent**, p. 348) to represent this ability.

Dread Powers: The Strix do not have Influences or Numina but instead have Dread Powers whose scope is roughly equivalent to Embeds. Weaker Strix typically have two or three of these powers while older owls may have many more. Storytellers are encouraged to be creative with these abilities but should use the nature of the Strix as a guide. They twist Vices, spread fear, and infect others with their malice.

Missions

Delicate Negotiations: A group of demons eliminates a drug kingpin who happens to be an unwitting vampire pawn. Now a faction of vampires is calling for blood and the demons' Agency is pushing them to negotiate. A tense meeting between representatives of both groups could herald unprecedented cooperation or unmitigated disaster. Can the demons navigate the delicate situation? Will the vampires conform to expectations, or defy them?

Strange Bedfellows: The Inquisitors are hopeful when reports arrive of angels abandoning a fortified location. The situation is far from beneficial for the city's demons. Corpses begin to pile up in and around the location, Embeds and Exploits malfunction nearby, and a prominent mortal businessman has returned from the dead. Help comes in the form of a Kindred neonate who claims the Strix are responsible. Can the demons trust a vampire informant? How will they deal with the Strix infestation? What if the vampire who is helping them is a Strix in disguise?

Experiments: A vampire of the Ordo Dracul begins confronting demons all over the city. The Kindred shows an unusual resistance to some Embeds and has the ability to perceive demons even when they are enmeshed completely in their Covers. These confrontations are brief, and the vampire merely asks strange, nonsensical questions. The characters notice these events correspond to an exacting timetable. Will the Agendas be forced to eliminate this threat to their secrecy? What is the source of this vampire's unusual abilities? What is his ultimate goal?

Who Hunt by Moonlight — Werewolf: The Forsaken

The wolf must hunt. This is the driving force and reason for being for werewolves. Every one of these human-beast-spirit hybrids feels the need to identify its prey, chase it down, and feel its steaming hot juices dripping down its jaws.

Demons don't know what to make of werewolves — smart demons avoid them. To demons, the merger of spirit and flesh speaks of God-Machine involvement, but why include human and animal forms?

Are the shapeshifters an alternative form of hunter angel, independent of Infrastructure and born from human biological imperatives? If so, the werewolves' keen senses seem to be blind to Infrastructure and the presence of the God-Machine. Does this indicate they're a failed experiment, or is the God-Machine using evolution over design to ensure its new hunters can more effectively hide from the Unchained?

With no answers to this mystery, both demons and angels know the hybrids are dangerous. Werewolf claws have shred the ephemeral substance of disembodied angels, and fearful demons whisper stories of monstrous wolf-man forms and instinctive pack assaults that felled Unchained who went loud.

Stereotypes

Analysts: Their mythology doesn't withstand objective scrutiny. Not all their stories can be true.

Destroyers: Every wolf is a destroyer, no matter the role they assign for themselves.

Guardians: They fiercely protect what's theirs, but they invite the threats with their actions.

Messengers: There's precious few people — or things — they'll listen to. If you're careful, they might let you in.

Psychopomps: Spirits watch over them. Never forget invisible eyes watch your every move when you deal with werewolves.

Intelligence Operations: Werewolves

Werewolves can claim territories anywhere, marking out the people and places therein as their own and concealing themselves within like a wolf in sheep's clothing. Demons often develop Covers that unknowingly connect with these territories: being friends with a werewolf's lover or renting apartments near a shapeshifter's favorite diner. As the Unchained have no forewarning of the werewolf presence, few Covers include provisions for interacting with shapeshifting murder machines. Many demons have unfortunately discovered that humans living among the wolves tend to have statistically reduced life expectancies.

Demons see similarities between angels and werewolves: creatures of equal parts spirit and flesh that enforce laws designed to control the interactions of humans and spirits, all to ensure proper Essence flows in their slave-like service to an unknowable deity. The Unchained have even learned that werewolves have their own demonic equivalents. These "pure" beings reject their god's command and strive to tear down the boundaries between spirit and flesh, returning the world to before Luna imposed her will on reality. These parallels to their own situation intrigue some demons into learning more, gathering sufficient data to conclude what link werewolves have to the God-Machine, if any.

Demons have learned that werewolves divide themselves into tribal units based on philosophical outlook. Of these, demons most frequently encounter a tribe called the Iron Masters. These werewolves view human cities and activities to be their domain; their supernaturally enhanced senses are adept at noticing irregularities in human communities, or deviations from expected behavior.

One specific advantage demons have over werewolves is switching Covers. Demons have discovered that werewolves have no way of detecting a Cover once it has been abandoned for an alternative. This is not a foolproof defense to throw the beasts off their hunt — werewolves who trace a demon to where she switches Cover might not know what has occurred, but may detect a different scent departing the area. Curious or frustrated werewolves may follow this new scent to learn what connection it has to their prey. Several demons have inadvertently exposed multiple Covers to werewolf packs by being incautious about when and how they switched.

Threat Analysis

Spirit Rank: Hybrid creatures of spirit and flesh, werewolves have Rank the same as ephemeral creatures. Young werewolves are Rank 1, while battle-hardened elders are Rank 5.

Numina: Patron spirits grant werewolves supernatural Gifts. Werewolves have Rank + 1 Influences to represent these Gifts. These Influences are usually related to categories that enhance the werewolves' hunting abilities.

Essence: Werewolves use Essence to fuel their spiritual powers; they hold a pool of 10 Essence, +5 per Rank for Ranks 2 and 3, +10 per Rank for Ranks 4 and 5. They can spend 2 Essence per turn at Rank 1, +2 per turn per additional Rank.

Regeneration: The werewolf heals her Rank in bashing damage every Turn, or lethal if she spends Essence to supercharge her healing.

Banes: Werewolves suffer aggravated damage from silver weapons.

Death Rage: The werewolf hides a burning rage in her heart. During the death rage, she instantly assumes the wolf-man form and ignores wound penalties. She subtracts twice her Rank from any attempt to influence, intimidate, or otherwise change her course of action. She must attack an enemy every turn — everyone is a target except other death raging werewolves. Her packmates must succeed in a Resolve + Composure roll each turn or also fall into death rage.

Shapeshifting: All werewolves can shift between one of five forms with an instant action.

- **Human:** Trait bonuses: None. A werewolf in human form acts as if she had Cover 7 for others to detect or follow her through human crowds.
- **Near-human:** Trait bonuses: Strength +2, Stamina +2, Size +1 (Health +2, Speed +2). About 150% larger than her human form, her teeth and claws inflict lethal damage, she applies Defense to ranged attacks, and she adds 2 to all Perception rolls.
- **Wolf-man:** Trait bonuses: Strength +3, Dexterity +1, Stamina +2, Size +2 (Health +4, Initiative +1, Speed +4). Enormous, fearsome, and devastating, the werewolf can only sustain wolf-man form for a number of turns equal to her Stamina unless she falls into a death rage (see above). She regenerates all bashing and lethal damage each turn. Her teeth and claw attacks inflict +2 lethal damage, she applies Defense to Ranged attacks, and she has +3 to Perception rolls. She must attack an enemy each turn (or move towards an enemy in order to attack), and she uses Down & Dirty combat **(Demon: The Descent,** p. 317) against lesser enemies — as determined by the Storyteller.
- **Near-wolf:** Trait bonuses: Strength +2, Dexterity +2, Stamina +2, Size +1 (Health +3, Initiative +2, Speed +7). Appearing as a wolf the size of a horse, the werewolf's claws inflict +1 lethal damage and her bite inflicts +2 lethal damage. She applies Defense to ranged attacks and +3 to Perception rolls.
- **Wolf:** Trait bonuses: Dexterity +2, Stamina +1, Size –1 (Initiative +2, Speed +5). Appears as a normal wolf. Her bite attacks deal +1 lethal damage, and she adds 4 to Perception rolls. She can spend 1 Essence to pre-empt another character's action in combat.

Intelligence Operations: Idigam

Demons worry about the God-Machine's intention in the existence of werewolves — but the idigam flat out terrify the Unchained. The idigam are alien proto-spirits from some time before time. They are formless and lack concept until they coalesce — losing limitless potential but trading it for powerful agency. The idigam shape essence with ease, transforming spirits to their whim and even altering physical beings to suit their whims.

Each idigam is unknowable; even their simplest intentions and purposes are beyond the understanding of lesser creatures. They were somehow imprisoned on the lifeless moon or buried deep within the earth, never to be released, but they have escaped. Everything demons know about idigam point to a single, terrifying conclusion — idigam are aborted embryonic God-Machines who lust after their elder sibling's power. The idigam will reshape the world to their desires and the God-Machine's subtle manipulations appear incapable of stopping them.

The idigam have only recently returned, but demons have already witnessed the werewolves discovering the proto-spirits — encounters that quickly escalate to tooth and claw. Some demons hypothesize that this is perhaps the purpose of the werewolves? They suggest that the God-Machine is a jealous, fratricidal sibling who imprisoned the rest of its brood, but typical of its methodical, paranoid nature, it created sentries to destroy its siblings should they ever escape.

Most demons have never encountered the idigam and know them only by whispered rumor and scraps of intelligence, if they've heard of them at all. Of those who know of the idigam, some see hope or opportunity instead of fear. Saboteurs wonder how they can draw the idigam to the God-Machine's most vital Infrastructure, so the creatures claim and reshape the machinery and deny victory to the God-Machine. Integrators are divided in their approach — some want to report idigam activity to the God-Machine in hope their reward will be to return to its embrace, while others want to offer service to the idigam and cement their positions as apex servants to these new God-Machines.

Threat Analysis

Formless or Coalesced: All idigam begin as Formless, ever-shifting spirits of change and chaos. The world exerts pressure to Coalesce.

Formless idigam have no Influences; lose Essence at twice the normal rate in the physical world; change ban and bane every scene; and can only target themselves with Essence Shaping.

Coalesced idigam increase their Rank by one; they have a full selection of Influences, Essence Shaping and Dread Powers; their Influences, traits, ban and bane become set.

Uncontrolled: Idigam are immune to powers that would command them, master them, or reshape their abilities.

Rank: Most Coalesced idigam are Rank 4 or 5. The weakest Formless may be Rank 3, while some terrifying monsters are Rank 6 and above — such idigam are narrative forces rather than foes that can be confronted head on. An idigam's Essence Pool is double what it would normally be for a spirit of its Rank.

Influences: Coalesced idigam possesses Influences as a normal spirit of its Rank. These Influences reflect either its own drives or the location where it Coalesced.

Ban & Bane: Idigam have a ban and bane appropriate to their Rank. Formless change these weaknesses every scene, with no discernible pattern.

Essence Shaping & Dread Powers: Essence Shaping allows the idigam to alter creature's Essence and create powerful and often bizarre servants. Victims must be incapacitated or unresisting, and performing the transformation takes 10 turns. Roll Power + Finesse for the idigam, contested by the victim's Resolve + Composure (for physical beings) or Resistance (for ephemeral beings). Angels and demons have no particular ability to resist Essence Shaping.

Servants created through Essence Shaping are highly loyal and can communicate with their master, regardless of whether the idigam is usually comprehensible. At any time, the idigam can focus its attention to gain an impression of something one of its servants senses. Essence Shaped servants add twice the idigam's Rank to their Essence pool or gain an Essence pool of this amount if they didn't have one. They may spend one point of Essence per turn to heal a point of bashing or lethal damage, and gain two Dread Powers known to the idigam, in additional to whatever powers they previously held. All Essence Shaped servants also gain the idigam's bane as their own.

An idigam also has between three and six Dread Powers, which are roughly equivalent to Exploits; Storytellers should assign unique powers appropriate to the idigam's personality and purpose.

As formless idigam can only target themselves with Essence Shaping or Dread Powers, for game purposes, they lack these powers until they Coalesce.

Intelligence Operations: Luna and Lunes

What role do the lunar spirits play in these great machinations? As far as demons can tell, no living werewolf has ever actually spoken with the patron they claim has such influence over their lives. All messages and interactions come from the different Lunar Choirs. This absence leads demons to wonder whether Luna still exists — or if she ever did.

Some demons postulate that Lunes are a control mechanism over the werewolves. Though the spirits don't appear to be able to directly possess or maneuver werewolves, demons have observed the quasi-religious indoctrination

werewolves undergo instills a strong urge to defer to and obey the Lunes. Indeed, the respect werewolves show to Lunar spirits — regardless of Rank — is a stark contrast to the borderline hostility the shapeshifters have toward most other spirits. Unquestioning faith in an absent deity and obedience to her luminescent messengers are concepts most demons are familiar with from their angelic days — even those whose duties didn't involve overt interaction with human cults.

As for what the Lunes think of demons, if they've noticed the Fallen angels at all, they've not mentioned it.

Demons don't know what to make of Lunes. The prevalent theory says Lunes are similar to angels in directing and implementing the God-Machine's plans, but Lunes focus on controlling the spirit worlds through their half-physical werewolf servants, rather than taking action themselves.

This also raises the question of not only Luna's role in this control, but whether she exists. Some demons believe that Luna is a myth — another guise for the God-Machine to implement control over its werewolf servants. Certainly, no demon has ever found a werewolf who has communicated directly with the moon goddess rather than her Lune intermediaries. Others think that Luna does exist but is incapable of being understood by mortal creatures, and the Lunes interpret her instructions just as angels interpret the God-Machine's missions.

A third school of thought hypothesizes that the identity of Luna is a myth grown around the physical existence of the moon as the God-Machine's prison and deep storage facility. These demons believe that Luna is a massive piece of Defensive Infrastructure constructed via the God-Machine's control of planetary mechanics eons ago. They theorize that Lunes failed in their duties when humans reached the impenetrable prison and inadvertently freed the prisoners; the Lunes now frantically guide the werewolves to hunt and kill the idigam, or at least weaken them to be returned to their lifeless prison.

Demons who believe in this theory wonder what they could discover on the moon and how much damage they could cause the God-Machine there. These demons infiltrate space programs to encourage the return of manned flight to the moon, and prepare to take the role of astronauts on these potential future missions.

Threat Analysis

Luna: If Luna exists as more than a lifeless rock in the sky, she is far beyond the power of angels and demons — possibly even a match for the God-Machine itself. Demons may ponder Luna's role and existence, but they have no desire to meet her.

Lunes: Lunes are spirits and follow the rules for ephemeral beings (**Demon: The Descent**, p. 336).

Choirs: Five different kinds of Lunes exist, one for each phase of the moon. Demons are unsure whether Lunes of different choirs are distinct beings, or shift their form and function with changes in the moon's aspect. The difference is largely academic — only the correct type of Lune for the moon phase can ever be found, and they claim to be different creatures when they can be drawn on the subject at all.

- **Cahalunim:** Spirits of the gibbous moon, expression, and passion.
- **Elunim:** Spirits of the half moon, duality, and judgment.
- **Irralunim:** Spirits of the new moon, silence, and swift death.
- **Ithalunim:** Spirits of the crescent moon, occult wisdom, and secrets.
- **Ralunim:** Spirits of the full moon, ferocity, and boldness.

Influences: All Lunes except Irralunim have Influence over Moonlight. Irralunim have Influence over Darkness.

Prison Wardens: Idigam are spooked and wary of Lunes. In those rare occasions that idigam and Lunes are in the same location, the idigam are likely to flee, or at least keep a low profile. In contrast, the Lunes rarely seem to care about the idigam, but can sometimes be persuaded to assist in actions against the ancient monsters.

Missions

Turf War: A pack of werewolves has claimed territory that includes a demon's operating base. In asserting their dominance, the wolves have changed the local social order and forced many people and businesses to move away, threatening the demon's Cover. Can the demon subvert the werewolves and force them away from the area? Can she bargain with them to find a mutually beneficial common ground, or has her Cover been so egregiously compromised that she's forced to abandon it and develop something that works within the new wolf order?

New Boss: An idigam has Coalesced within a piece of Infrastructure and suborned the angels working within through its Essence Shaping powers. Now it's expanding its influence in a bid to ascend and become a God-Machine itself. Its agents kidnapped a ring of demons for dissection and study, and are now searching for more to add to its eclectic army. Loyal angels have been dispatched to eliminate the upstart. This is a rare opportunity for angels and demons to work together to fight a mutual threat, but both sides will seek to destroy their erstwhile allies when the prime threat is neutralized.

Family Obligations: One of the demons has incorporated part of a werewolf's life into her Cover. Now the werewolf's pack is at her door, expecting her assistance. They don't seem to notice that the demon's Cover is not their packmate. How long can the demon sustain the deception, and what dangers await her when she does?

Secrets and Truths — Mage: The Awakening

Mages (also called the Awakened or the Wise) are occasional antagonists, sometime allies, and frequent features of many demons' Descents. These modern-day wizards are sensitive to virtually any occult phenomenon, and they possess an intense curiosity that drives them to investigate any mystery they might encounter. This can make them useful companions or convenient cat's-paws when they take an interest in a God-Machine project.

An outcast who becomes the object of a mage's obsession is likely to develop a less charitable opinion of his sorcerous stalker, however. Awakened attention doesn't erode a demon's Cover more than any other human's investigations, but many among the Wise are willing to use anything they learn about the Unchained to further their own goals. They are capable of bringing both blackmail and arcane coercion to bear to force the demon to do their bidding, which is seldom a course of action the outcast wishes to take.

As obsessive collectors of arcane lore, the Wise have records of encounters with the Unchained stretching back centuries. While misconceptions abound, a mage with enough clout can access a wealth of intelligence on the capabilities of demons — particularly those qualities that make them a potential asset to the wizard who befriends (or enslaves) one. Just as a human who signs a pact under duress is still bound by its terms, a demon can be forced to create one with terms that heavily favor the signatory — a quality that more than one mage has exploited. An outcast's demonic form is a powerful weapon of war in the hands of one of the Wise, and her Embeds and Exploits make a handy addition to a mage's bag of tricks.

Stereotypes

Analyst: Drawn to occult phenomena like moths to a candle, but they sometimes learn something useful before they burst into flames.

Destroyer: Fragile enough when surprised, but surprising one is easier said than done.

Guardian: Locked doors only attract their attention.

Messenger: They've already received a message, so most aren't interested in what we have to say. Their loss.

Psychopomp: They have an annoying tendency to go where they don't belong.

Intelligence Operations: Mages

Although fiercely independent in some ways, each mage specializes in a handful of arcane arts and therefore benefits from pooling talents and information with his fellows. As a consequence, most mages eventually join a sorcerous fellowship of like-minded Awakened.

Pentacle Mage

Most mages belong to one of five sorcerous societies collectively known as the Pentacle. These Awakened orders have ancient roots, claiming philosophical descent from fellowships of mages founded millennia ago. Although they can antagonize each other, they are organized enough to have a body of law that they enforce through formal arbitration courts. The law of the Pentacle is separate from and largely considers itself above human governments.

The Pentacle strongly discourages allowing ordinary humans to learn of the existence of magic and frowns upon harming them at all. Individual mages are often inveterate meddlers in human society, however. This can take many forms, from a paternalistic interest in a single family to the manipulation of powerful heads of government. Pentacle law is more likely to turn a blind eye to mages who operate as the power behind a throne than to those who seize political power outright.

Pentacle mages maintain an elaborate economy of favors exchanged and resources lent and borrowed. While they can be possessive of their most valuable prizes, most regard any power at their disposal as just one more chip to use when bargaining with others among the Wise. A demon subjugated by a Pentacle mage may therefore find his services loaned to many masters.

Seer of the Throne

The Seers of the Throne claim a pedigree every bit as ancient as those of the Pentacle. However, they seek not to guide humankind to enlightenment but to rule over it. They have spies and agents high in temporal governments, corporations, and religions and they do not hesitate to use this to supplement their magical power. Seers have an elaborate hierarchy and are ultimately subject to the whims of mysterious and powerful supernatural beings known as the Exarchs. While a Seer is free to pursue her own whims and petty rivalries the majority of the time, she is expected to set personal projects aside immediately when her superiors give her an order.

The activities of the Seers of the Throne often resemble God-Machine projects. Occasionally — too frequently for it to be an accident — a Seer will actively assist a God-Machine cult in the construction or defense of Infrastructure. It isn't clear whether the God-Machine contracts these mages' services as needed through Its usual intermediaries, or whether It has entered into some kind of alliance with their Exarch masters.

Scelestus

A Scelestus (plural Scelesti) is a mage who has chosen to truck with dark and alien powers. Some do so out of curiosity,

or set out to learn to fight the Abyss only to be lured by it. Others crave the power these beings offer those who serve them. Scelesti spells weaken and warp the magical power of all mages, so even those Awakened who set themselves up as tyrants, steal souls, or kill anyone who gets in the way of their obsessions hunt them relentlessly. Scelesti are therefore rare and not likely to confess their allegiance to one of the Unchained.

The beings the Scelesti serve appear to regard the God-Machine as an enemy — or at least as an obstacle to their goals. These mages frequently find themselves sabotaging the God-Machine's projects or dismantling Its Infrastructure — so much so that It has angels specifically designed to hunt down and destroy them. Scelesti sometimes make common cause with Saboteurs. After all, what concern is it to a demon whether an ally's arcane powers weaken the magic of other mages?

Threat Analysis

The Awakened vary so widely in their individual capabilities that it is dangerous to make any assumptions about what a mage's arcane powers can or cannot achieve. One bends the winds of fortune to his whim as easily as any Destroyer. Another speaks to ghosts and commands corpses to stand up and attack her enemies. A third rules fire and electricity, weather and gravity. All mages possess the following capabilities:

Mage Sight: The Awakened can identify phenomena within the purview of the kinds of magic (the Arcana) they wield. Those who manipulate fortune can perceive the strands of destiny, for example, and ones who can manipulate thoughts can just easily perceive them.

Mage Armor: The Wise instinctively defend themselves with magic. Whenever an enemy declares an attack, before dice are rolled, the mage may reflexively either increase her armor by two *or* add two to her Defense and gain the ability to apply Defense even to firearms attacks. The player may spend 1 Willpower to instead add 4 to either armor or Defense until the end of the scene.

Reach: Awakened spells usually affect a single target the mage can perceive and last only a few turns, but she can expand its scale, duration, and potency considerably at the risk of losing control of the magic by adding one or more points of Reach:

- The spell lasts until the end of the scene (+1 Reach), a day (+2 Reach), or until something breaks the spell (+3 Reach).
- The spell affects any number of targets within a 5-meter radius (+1 Reach), within a city block (+2 Reach), or within a small city (+3 Reach).
- The spell does something obviously supernatural that is witnessed by at least one ordinary human (+1 Reach), by a dozen or more such witnesses (+2 Reach), or hundreds of people (+3 Reach).

Whenever the mage adds Reach to a spell, she rolls her Wisdom (the mage equivalent of Integrity) minus Reach as a dice pool. If her roll succeeds, she maintains control of the magic. Otherwise, the spell goes out of control in some way. Sometimes this results in injury to the mage, but quite often the spell is weaker, stronger, larger, smaller, shorter-lived, or longer-lived than the mage intended. In rare cases, it affects the wrong target, has its effects reversed, or does something completely unexpected within the purview of the spell's Arcana.

Arcana

The Awakened wield two or more of the ten Arcana (singular Arcanum) common to them all — whether to a Lesser or Greater degree. Apprentice mages typically have access to two Lesser Arcana, while master mages may have access to any number of Arcana to a Lesser or Greater degree. A mage can cast a Lesser spell as an instant action without a cost. Greater spells require an elaborate occult ritual lasting at least an hour or the expenditure of one point of Willpower. Lesser spells that inflict damage have a weapon rating of 3B, while Greater spells have a weapon rating of 5L. Resisted and contested spells require the mage succeed on a Resolve + Composure roll. Lesser spells can often be modeled after Embeds, while many Greater spells can mimic Exploits. Demonic form powers can be either. The Arcana are as follows:

Death (Lesser): The necromancer can command ghosts, create mindless zombies, cause decay, and manipulate shadows, darkness, and cold.

Death (Greater): The necromancer can snuff out the life force of any human, create zombies that possess the memories of the deceased, or manipulate the raw soul stuff of intelligent living things.

Fate (Lesser): The witch can bestow blessings and levy curses that add or subtract three dice to the subject's rolls. She can also create twists of fate. Her boons and hexes may take effect immediately or may wait until the target takes some prescribed or forbidden action, such as violating the terms of an agreement.

Fate (Greater): The witch can levy powerful curses and cause seemingly impossible coincidences.

Forces (Lesser): The thaumaturgist can manipulate heat, light, sound, weather, electricity, magnetism, and even gravity.

Forces (Greater): The thaumaturgist can command powerful forces of Nature such as earthquakes, floods, thunderstorms, tornados, and forest fires, imposing or dismissing Environmental Tilts or lashing out with raw destructive power.

Life (Lesser): The shaman can influence animal behavior, physical traits, and physiological processes, including those of humans.

Life (Greater): The shaman can create or destroy living things or transform them into completely different species.

Matter (Lesser): The alchemist can control or manipulate inanimate materials, directing water to flow uphill, turning a handgun into handcuffs, or transmuting lead into gold.

Matter (Greater): The alchemist wields supreme power over nonliving matter. She can change the boiling, melting, and freezing points of materials or refine them into impossible alloys.

Mind (Lesser): The warlock can read thoughts and memories, manipulate the behavior of sapient beings, and improve a target's Skills, Social Attributes, or Mental Attributes.

Mind (Greater): The warlock can make major changes to the target's personality and memories.

Prime (Lesser): The thaumaturgist is a channel of metaphysical power, commanding powers of divinity and absolute truth.

Prime (Greater): The thaumaturgist wears divine light like a cloak, which allows her to shrug off virtually any supernatural power from which her magic protects her or to obliterate creatures of darkness.

Space (Lesser): The mage excels at perceiving, manipulating, and disguising the bonds of sympathy between people, places, and things. She can conjure objects or spy on enemies from far away, as well as hide targets from rival clairvoyants.

Space (Greater): The concepts of distance, direction, and connectedness are putty in the warlock's hands. A single step carries him across the world if he wishes it, and he can bar passage into or out of any place.

Spirit (Lesser): The shaman can coax the animistic sprits that inhabit the world. This Arcanum may summon ephemeral entities of up to Rank 2.

Spirit (Greater): The mage no longer begs favors of the spirit world. She commands and they obey, or else face the wrath of a shaman who can imprison, banish, or destroy them. The mage can summon (or command) ephemeral entities of up to Rank 4 or simulate Exploits such as Ephemeral Cover and Rip the Gates.

Time (Lesser): The prophet sees into the hazy past and possible futures. He may also slow or hasten the passage of time.

Time (Greater): The mage can step forward or backward in history or stop the flow of time entirely across the affected area.

Missions

Scientific Inquiry: A mage of some prominence among local Pentacle mages attempts to coerce a demon into drawing up a pact by threatening to turn her over to the God-Machine's agents. The terms he demands are impossible for a pact, but the mage doesn't believe demon protestations to that effect. Killing the mage is a possibility, but doing so will bring the down the wrath of all the Pentacle mages in the region. The ring must find a way to give the mage what he wants (or convince him they have done so). Alternately they might so discredit him in the eyes of his peers that no one will object if he dies, or else use his enemies to do the outcasts' dirty work for them.

Merger Talks: A known subsidiary of the Deva Corporation engages in merger talks with a powerful corporation controlled by the Seers of the Throne. If the merger succeeds, it will pose a major threat to the local Agency (and to all the Unchained in the region), but open war against either company will result in many civilian casualties and probably wouldn't work anyway. The ring must find a way to sabotage the merger talks to ensure that the deal falls through.

Where Angels Fear to Tread: The God-Machine broadcasts a message warning all angels in the region to stay out of a nearby city until further notice. Because It uses a channel monitored by some Unchained, local Inquisitors quickly decode the suspiciously weak encryption. Any angel that enters the forbidden city becomes an Exile, making it inaccessible to the God-Machine. This would make it an ideal Hell, if not for the hungers of the powerful Abyssal entity responsible for this phenomenon.

Lead Into Gold — Promethean: The Created

A Promethean is an artificial human created by an obsessed mortal (a demiurge), or another of its own kind (a genitor). These creators use a combination of obsessive drive and knowledge of something startlingly similar to the God-Machine's own occult physics to do the impossible: bring life to the unliving. Corpses, statues, even robots can be brought to life by the maddened knowledge of a demiurge. When these creators succeed, a Promethean is born.

A Promethean's body is an ongoing alchemical reaction, catalyzed by a supernatural element called *Azoth*, and the radiation it gives off in the process of refining it into fuel, which they call *Pyros*. Prometheans use this constant state of change to refine their simulacrum bodies until eventually they're simulacra no longer: they're human.

As noble a goal as that is, the Promethean's Pilgrimage can cause problems for the Unchained. The radiation given off by Azoth is transformative to the outside world, affecting humans on a psychological level and the land on a supernatural one. This leads to effects like *Disquiet*, which influences others to reject and shun the Promethean. *Torment* is another threat to the stability of a Promethean, a self-destructive mental state that could be described as having Disquiet towards oneself. The Created also cause *Wastelands*, supernatural damage inflicted on somewhere the Promethean stays for too long, and worst of all, *Firestorms*, catastrophic events that raze the land and purge it of life.

Stereotypes

Analysts: I feel like I used to know more about them than I do now.

Destroyers: Hard to kill, but then, they *need* to be.

Guardians: They're unstable, and they make others unstable. My job gets harder.

Messengers: I tried talking to one, once. It just said it already has a messenger.

Psychopomps: They're looking for a soul? I've got twelve in storage.

Intelligence Operations: Prometheans

Prometheans are rare. They find each other instinctively, but other supernatural creatures, demons included, might live their whole lives never seeing one. Then again, a Promethean tends to draw attention because of the transformative effect of Azoth on the world, and that effect interacts strangely with the God-Machine and its angels.

A Promethean wants to rise from his sorry state to the human form. A demon wants to descend from grace fully and become the lord of her own personal hell. They sound different, but on spiritual journeys through the Chronicles of Darkness, it's very easy to pass one another on the way. Whether this is good or bad relies as much on the circumstances of their encounter as the character of both the demon and the Promethean.

If one of the Created involves herself in the work of the Unchained, it's likely the two will find themselves at odds, even if the Promethean doesn't realize it. Prometheans are the ultimate wild card, and the wheels-within-wheels schemes of the Unchained have no room for such nonsense. That said, occult secrets are useful currency for demonkind, and Prometheans are always desperate for allies and companions. If the demon is the one meddling in the Promethean's affairs, they may become the best of friends though such friendships will become strained in short order.

Disquiet and Torment make Prometheans and those around them unpredictable, and every spy knows there's nothing worse than someone that draws bad attention and can't be controlled. Disquiet is rarely a problem for the Unchained, though. Their minds being quantum computers that exist outside of normal space and time, only a demon's Cover is influenced by the supernatural hatred that Prometheans draw out of those they meet. A demon can refuse to "play along," but such a contradiction in the order of things will draw the God-Machine's attention as long as a human disguise is employed.

Threat Analysis

Transmutations: Select three to four Embeds and Exploits to represent Transmutations. Re-flavor them to feel less like hacking reality, and more like forcing uncontrolled change onto the world. Good choices include Cause and Effect, Knockout Punch, and Raw Materials. Transmutations tend to affect the Promethean directly rather than changing or affecting others.

Bestowments: Select one demon form part to give a Promethean as their Bestowment, reimagined as with Transmutations. Good choices include Acid Spit, Electric Jolt, and Inhuman Beauty.

Durability: All Prometheans have 3/3 armor.

Healing: When exposed to electricity, a Promethean can spend one turn healing one lethal damage or two bashing damage. She can also spend two turns healing one aggravated damage. She can continue to use this ability until the source of electricity runs out or is destroyed.

Torment: If a Promethean experiences a major setback, the Storyteller rolls Resolve + Composure. On a failure, the Promethean becomes erratic and self-destructive for the rest of the scene and lashes out at anyone who tries to help.

Disquiet: Whenever a Promethean does something explicitly inhuman or the Storyteller fails a Social roll for the character, all players whose characters witness the failure must roll Resolve + Composure. On a failure, she gains the Disquiet condition. A demon can choose to ignore any Disquiet effects levied against her, though this forces her player to roll for compromise unless she is in demonic form.

Disquiet

You're filled with disgust for whatever Promethean was unlucky enough to catch your attention. You need to make life difficult for him, but this progresses towards antagonism, violence, and eventually murder.

Resolution: The Promethean that caused it is killed, or the character stays away from the Promethean for the next three scenes. If the Disquiet was suffered by a Cover, switching to another Cover does not resolves this Condition as the affected Cover regains it when the demon switches back.

Beat: Prevent the Promethean from accomplishing a goal. Do lethal damage to the Promethean. Get in the way of his Pilgrimage. Kill him. Each time one of the criteria for taking a Beat from this condition is fulfilled, the next time a player takes a Beat from this Condition, she must select a different task from this list.

Intelligence Operations: Alchemists

Some mortal occultists meddle with Pyros to achieve a sort of twisted transcendence over the human condition. Prometheans call these would-be transhumans *Alchemists*.

Alchemists usually operate in small cells that work together out of convenience, shared background, or goals,

although some form cults and secret societies. It's unlikely to see a terminally ill chemist that's trying to use Pyros to stave off death team up with a drug dealer using alchemy to alter the quality and addictiveness of his product, but a group of powerful old men seeking godhood by any means necessary could join forces with another wealthy and influential alchemist who simply wants to resurrect his dead wife.

For the Unchained, forbidden knowledge and supernatural ability is their stock in trade. While mastery of the laws of alchemy isn't something a demon can easily grant, it's child's play to turn someone so desperate to sell off his humanity towards soul pacts for knowledge, longevity, or power.

That is not to say alchemists always get along with the Unchained when they encounter one another, particularly if the demon has a Promethean ally. Unable to produce Pyros of their own, alchemists bleed Prometheans dry, dissect them, and even ritually murder them to gain their alchemical fuel. If an alchemist succeeds in acquiring a source of Pyros, he can begin his true work: Transforming himself into something both more and less than human through infusing the stolen Pyros into his own body. Sufficiently powered, an alchemist might begin tying up loose ends. For example, the ring that tried to deny him his prize.

An alchemist turned against a demon is a truly dangerous foe. Every bit as obsessed and brilliant as demons, with the sort of cunning that only comes from madness and looking behind the curtain of the Chronicles of Darkness, a motivated alchemist is one of the greatest mortal threats any demon can face. The answer may be as simple as discarding a Cover or killing the alchemist, but the former may be inconvenient if she has no other Covers to switch to or unthinkable if she particularly likes the life she built around that identity. Killing someone on the search for immortality is often more trouble than it seems at first glance.

Even worse is an alchemist that discovers the God-Machine. Alchemy is a messy, awkward science that fails unpredictably, and the discovery of equally powerful rules to break, with all the defined rules and systems of a machine is sometimes irresistible to an alchemist that's had repeated failures working with Pyros. Getting involved with a cult, or worse, directly with an angel, is a truly unpredictable threat, two dangerous enemies that are exponentially more dangerous together.

Threat Analysis

Transmutations: Alchemists can use Transmutation rules, which work the same for them as they do for Prometheans.

Potions: Once per scene, alchemists can consume a potion that grants them superhuman power. Choose the effects of a demon form ability. When consuming the potion, their

body transforms and the ability is activated, though it should be presented as an organic mutation rather than something mechanical. The Armored Plates ability, for example, might manifest as exceptionally tough skin or a mottled carapace.

Intelligence Operations: The Principle and Qashmallim

The Principle is an abstract entity with such mastery over the world's occult underpinnings that it can be mistaken for a god. Its origin, goals, and purpose are unclear; it operates through the *qashmallim*, supernatural beings it seems to create for specific purposes. Often, the Principle puts the demon in mind of something else that fits that description, something she's all too familiar with: the God-Machine.

The similarities these entities share with the Machine and its angels are immediate and striking, but they end as immediately as they begin. The God-Machine is a constructed being, made of factories, engines, and power plants; it affects the world according to staggeringly elaborate conspiratorial schemes, and it uses Essence as its universal fuel. The Principle, on the other hand, is almost a gestalt consciousness that comes and goes as Pyros gathers or disseminates. It is an agent of change in any and all forms, using the enigmatic *qashmallim* to bring forth creation or destruction to suit its own passing whims.

For all the differences emphasized, the Principle should be used in a chronicle much like the God-Machine is: Enigmatic, ever-present but rarely seen, and something that unifies dangling plot threads. It should be a force of nature more than a character. The Principle doesn't have Infrastructure to destroy or suborn, but manipulating Prometheans or alchemists to gather or spread Pyros as needed can have the same effects. Meddling too much can get the attention of the *qashmallim*, which is nearly as bad as attracting an angel.

What are the *qashmallim*, though? If the Principle is a twisted reflection of the God-Machine, the *qashmallim* are its angels. They have a physical presence, whereas their creator's is a purely spiritual one, and they act in service to the Principle, interacting with the world where it cannot. While they don't use Cover, even the angelic form thereof, they appear as "humans" with alien personalities and inhuman powers. Their goals are as varied and nebulous as the God-Machine's, and the *qashmallim* are as unquestioning as any Angel is.

The *qashmallim* manifest as varied forms made from scintillating fire when they discard their human shape. The shape can vary, from a burning wheel, to a halo made of a double-helix, to a pair of wings, but when not disguised as human, they're always pure fire.

Qashmallim don't care very much about demons or their schemes in most situations, but when they do, they can be devastating enemies. The reason is a power that only servants of the Principle have, to the relief of every Agency in the world: No matter how well-constructed it might be, the *qashmallim* can see through Cover. If pressed, a *qashmal* willing to give answers simply states that it only sees life and that masks are irrelevant. The implications of this statement are unnerving at best.

As terrifying as an encounter with an angel-like being that can see through Cover may be, the *qashmallim* are harmless to demons who don't interfere with their plans. These plans are esoteric and strange, even by the God-Machine's standards. One might turn a library book to a certain page and leave it on a table, while another murders an innocent mortal to send a message to a distraught Promethean. Demons may not be likely to run across a *qashmal* in the daily life of one of the Unchained, but when provoked, it can become every bit as dangerous and frightening as staring down an angel. On the rare occasions when a *qashmal*'s mission intersects with a demon's Descent, it would be wise to tread lightly.

The confusing nature of the Principle's messengers leave demons with a single question that nobody can answer: if the *qashmallim* are so much like angels, does that mean they can Fall?

Threat Analysis

The Principle: The Principle should be used in the same way as the God-Machine: hands-off and behind the scenes.

Ephemeral Being: The *qashmallim* follow the rules for ephemeral beings (**Demon: The Descent**, p. 336). They are created with a mission, like an angel. Their bans and banes have no rhyme or reason applied to them.

Living Pyros: The *qashmallim* have a Pyros trait instead of Essence, which can be spent in any way Essence can. Like angels, *qashmallim* are created with whatever Numina would be useful for its mission.

We See Life: A *qashmallim* can ignore Cover. It can see a demon's true form and identify an Unchained it has seen before, no matter what identity she might wear.

Immune to Mind Control: *Qashmallim* are entirely immune to mind control and mind reading.

Disguise: The *qashmallim* have mundane identities they can assume when it would be inconvenient to appear as an abstract entity of living fire. Their disguise, while functionally similar to Cover, can be anything from an average human to animals, swarms, inanimate objects, or even multiple people. Whether this disguise can be damaged or angel-jacked is a mystery as yet unknown.

Missions

Long Lost Twin: A demon sees a Promethean with her disfigurements on display and realizes the Promethean looks exactly like his demon form. Further investigation reveals that the Promethean's demiurge designed her based on a vision

brought to him by an "angel." What was the nature of the so-called angel? Why and how did this happen?

Enemy of my Enemy: A God-Machine cult has teamed up with a group of Alchemists. Together, they are experimenting with integrating Pyros into Infrastructure as fuel, apparently on the orders of an angel. A *qashmal* leads a small throng of Prometheans to a ring of demons, and bids they work together to put a stop to these experiments before something catastrophic happens. It refuses to explain or give any further information, but the little intel it does give checks out. What does the ring do? Do they work with the throng?

Cheaters Never Prosper: A demon attempts to make a soul pact with a Promethean to give him humanity out of morbid curiosity. The result is a Firestorm. The demon and Promethean have both vanished, and angels and *qashmallim* have been seen cooperating to investigate the site of the Firestorm. What happened? Why are the God-Machine and the Principle working together, or are they just working in proximity, each blind to the other?

Thorns and Nightmares — Changeling: The Lost

When demons run across the Lost (also known as changelings), it is often due to mischance or accident. Of all supernatural creatures, the Lost seem to be most similar to the Unchained at first glance, having both escaped from a life of captivity and servitude, but the similarities end there. Changelings were once human and still have their humanity, no matter how twisted or warped their souls have become from their time in Arcadia. They have a connection and empathy for the mortal world that demons not only lack, but also sometimes have a hard time understanding.

In general, casual relationships with changelings can end up beneficial to a demon. Changelings work on a system of earned trust and sturdy relationships. They form pledges to seal deals, which can benefit both the changeling and the demon alike. If a changeling digs too deeply into the demon's own life, her Cover, and her pacts, however, a sane changeling will be appalled. Demons steal people's lives to make their own; to a changeling, this makes them no better than the True Fae.

If a demon gains the ire of a changeling, she is sure to find herself hounded by the entire city's changeling inhabitants before long. That much attention is certain to draw notice from angels and threatens to blow the demon's Cover. Even if the demon keeps the nature of her Cover a secret, dealing with changelings is a dangerous proposition. The creatures who hunt changelings are ruthless and are likely to hunt down the Demon simply by association. Also, Faerie is not a safe place, not even for changelings who traverse the outer reaches in times of need, and especially not for creatures who have no connection to the land.

Stereotypes

Analyst: Curious creatures. Broken in waking life, but their ability to manipulate and traverse dreams is extraordinary.

Destroyer: The lot of them are passionate and foolhardy. If only they would direct that energy elsewhere, they could win whatever battles they felt they needed to fight.

Guardian: No more passionate protector than a former victim.

Messenger: They are receptive, just don't remind them of what you really are.

Psychopomp: They open doors; just don't follow them in.

Intelligence Operations: The Lost

Changelings are survivors first and foremost. Each and every one of them has been through some terrible ordeal and thrust out the other side changed. They walk a fine line between interacting with the human world and indulging their fae natures. Within a city, the changeling population tends to form groups for mutual protection and a sense of the familiar. These groups follow arcane rules of engagement, mostly designed as a way to function as creatures in a world of humanity, but also as a way to deal with the very real dangers that come from being one of the fae.

Demons are likely to run across changelings in places where their interests in humans intersect. Changelings tend to group together in cities in moderate numbers, so if a demon encounters one, she is likely to find the entire city has pockets of the creatures spread throughout.

Threat Analysis

Unbound: Changelings cannot be confined by any mundane means. She can leave a closed room simply by opening a door into the Hedge, or slipping free from physical bonds holding her.

Banes: Changeling cannot use their magic and abilities in the presence of pure iron.

Contracts: Changelings make use of ancient agreements between the Fae and the world called Contracts. Contracts cover a broad spectrum of things, from how people relate to one another to the physical safety of the Contract user. Changelings can have any number of Contracts depending on her power level. Low-powered changelings have 3 Contracts, moderate-powered changeling have 4–7 Contracts, and high-powered changelings have 8–10 Contracts.

Contracts function similarly to a demon's Embeds and Exploits; those rules can be used for changelings with the following differences. Contracts are deals, and therefore the use of a Contract requires payment. This is often in the form of Glamour, but sometimes it also requires Willpower

expenditure. Exploit costs remain the same, but all Embeds should cost the changeling one Glamour to use. The nature of Contracts means that these payments can be circumvented through the use of catches. These catches are loopholes in the system that changelings have learned to exploit. If a changeling uses the proper catch when activating a Contract, she can bypass the Glamour expenditure.

Catches can be anything from the changeling attempting to use a Contract while wounded to the sun or moon being in the right place in the sky. Usually, catches are related to what the Contract does. The following are a list of example catches, but feel free to make up your own depending on the power the changeling is attempting to use.

- The changeling has taken damage from her target last turn.
- The target of the changeling's power has some strong emotion towards the changeling — such as love, fear, anger, or hatred.
- The changeling is touching a source related to her Contract — possibly fire, water, earth, an animal, or another living creature.
- The changeling is attempt to perform her Contract at the right time of day — such as when the sun is near its zenith, the moon is rising or descending, or the first light of dawn is touching the earth.
- The changeling is using her Contract in a time of extremes — maybe she has an extreme need, a strong desire, or even just a time of showing off.

Wyrd: All changelings have a Wyrd trait that controls how much Glamour they can hold and spend, and that acts as a Supernatural Tolerance trait. Expenditure progression is the same as for Primum/Aether.

Pledges: Changelings make deals between themselves and people as a way to govern their interactions. Changelings can enact three kinds of pledges:

- **Sealings** bind any statement of intent a changeling witnesses. She spends a point of Glamour and seals the promise, even if it was never sincere. The person who made the statement is now forced to follow through with whatever action he promised, or suffer a consequence. Consequences for breaking sealings are normally small annoyances such as the loss of a Willpower, a point of bashing damage, a –1 penalty to all rolls for one scene, a –2 penalty on a specific Skill for one scene, or a –3 penalty for one specific roll.
- **Oaths** are pledges specifically between two changelings and give the members of the pledge benefits. These benefits can include the ability to transfer Glamour between members, or taking damage or suffering a Condition or Tilt meant for another member of the Pledge. Members of these pledges can always find each other.
- **Bargains** are made between changeling and humans, in which the changeling promises to do some task for the human in exchange for some benefit for the changeling. Changelings use these pledges in much the same way demons use pledges to gain pieces of Cover. The changeling gains extra protection and camouflage against the Huntsmen.

Intelligence Operations: True Fae

Very little is known for sure about the True Fae, called the Gentry or the Others by changelings. They rule in Arcadia, and their motives and activities alien and unknowable to any but themselves. They tend to follow patterns and stories set forth by some ancient design, always adhering to one story or another in not only their actions, but also their form and how they live. Changelings believe the Gentry are gods, beings born of Arcadia, and the realm is made up of their substance. Without the True Fae, Arcadia would not exist at all, and within their own realm they have nearly infinite power.

The relationship between the God-Machine and the True Fae is ambiguous. The motives of the God-Machine are completely unknowable, but for some reason, it does not venture past the Hedge and into Arcadia. Changelings feel the God-Machine might be on the same level as the Gentry, but clearly not defined by the same rules. Since the fae made contracts with the world that dictates the space in which they live, the God-Machine would also need to make similar contracts to gain access to the Hedge or Arcadia.

Demons are not so sure that the True Fae are anywhere near the same level as the God-Machine, and suspect they are more like powerful angels, possibly even creatures created by the God-Machine ages ago for some unknown purpose. Whatever the real nature of the True Fae, their goals and the goals of the God-Machine rarely align; when they do, changelings and demons alike must tread carefully.

Threat Analysis

Huntsmen: True Fae rarely leave their homes and instead use proxies to do the bulk of their bidding in the mortal realm. This is normally in the form of Huntsmen. These creatures are born of the stuff of Arcadia and in some ways are simply an extension of the True Fae that sends them out. Huntsmen search out wayward changelings to bring them back to Arcadia, and they let nothing stand in their way. A demon may find her dealings with changelings put her directly in the path of a Huntsman, or even catch his attention.

- **Contracts:** The Huntsmen use Contracts in much the same way changelings do, except they cannot use a catch to defer the Glamour cost. Huntsmen have anywhere between 6 and 10 Contracts.
- **Wyrd:** As for changelings.
- **Banes:** As creatures born of Arcadia, pure iron prevents the Huntsmen from using their Contracts. Additionally, Huntsmen must adhere to a specific story dictated by the True Fae who sent them. If a character knows the

story the Huntsman is a part of, she can either force it into specific actions or damage it. Example banes include weakness to a certain element or metal (other than pure iron), a specific action they cannot perform, or an action they must perform if presented with a correct prompt.

Banished: The Gentry constantly fight amongst themselves trying to gain control of the realms of Arcadia and dictate each other's stories. Sometimes a True Fae's power is so diminished in Arcadia that she must flee to the mortal world to save herself. While in this state, True Fae function like changelings but are much more powerful. True Fae manifestations have extremely high Wyrd, generally 8 or higher. They gain access to 20 Contracts and tend to have Attributes and Skills rated above 5. Banished Fae are less powerful than their counterparts and are usually only as powerful as a high-powered changeling.

Intelligence Operations: The Hedge

The nearest part of Faerie, the part that is not quite Arcadia and not quite the mortal world, is called the Hedge. It serves as a barrier between the world of humanity and the world of the Fae. The place is a maze of brambles and thorns with winding, twisting paths snaking in and out. Entering the Hedge is as easy as opening a door and walking in. Changelings can create doors and enter the Hedge at will, though other creatures find it a little more difficult to simply find a way in. That isn't to say that both mortals and supernatural creatures alike don't end up in the Hedge from time to time. Usually, they follow a changeling in or are coerced in through some manner of trickery.

The Hedge responds to the thoughts and moods of those within it. Changelings with a high connection to the power of the Fae can shape and mold the Hedge at whim, but few other creatures can exert that much control over the place. While entering is easy, exiting is much more difficult even if it is technically as simple as finding a gateway. Navigation within the Hedge is difficult due to the fluid nature of the Hedge, as a path a character walked down to get to a certain point may disappear behind her without a trace.

The God-Machine has no influence in the Hedge and its agents cannot enter by will or by accident. The God-Machine likewise cannot see into the Hedge, though some demons speculate the area is simply another one of its many processes. The Hedge is therefore one of the few relatively safe places a Demon can go to avoid the God-Machine and its agents. Travel there is not particularly safe, but sometimes it's much better than the alternatives.

Threat Analysis

Entering and exiting is the least of a demon's worries when it comes to the Hedge. The nature of the Wyrd causes strange things to happen to a demon. First and foremost is its effect on the demon's Cover. A demon cannot change between Covers in the Hedge. Whatever Cover she enters the Hedge with is the one she must stay in during her sojourn. Changing between her Cover and her demonic form is also harder. She must spend an Aether to make a full transformation into her demonic form, unless she is going loud. When she returns to her Cover, unless she's Blown it, the only Cover available is the one she entered the Hedge with.

The Hedge is both physical and metaphysical at the same time. Just because a demon cannot use her other Covers in the Hedge does not make the pieces of the lives she's stolen simply disappear. The Hedge can cause a demon to shed parts of her Cover if she spends too long in its thorny wilderness. For every hour the demon spends off the path within the thickest part of the Hedge, called the Thorns, she must roll Wits + Manipulation or lose a point of Cover. If she loses all of any one Cover, that Cover is considered Blown.

Demons cannot harvest Aether in the Hedge. All the dross from the God-Machine is expelled in the human world, and the nature of the Hedge makes it impossible for a demon to connect to Infrastructure properly.

Missions

Broken Pact: A piece of a demon's Cover is gone. It wasn't compromised or blown, it just disappeared one day. She felt it leave her like a wrenching of her soul, and then she couldn't find the person she was borrowing it from. A week goes by and the person is back, but he is clearly different, wrong somehow. She signs a new pact with him, but it doesn't seem to be working properly. Shortly, a group of changelings come by intent on killing him, claiming he's a fetch. The person serving as the demon's cover has been taken by the True Fae, and the person returned is a fae construct. The demon's ring must now decide how to handle the changelings and figure out how to restore her Cover.

Incursions: As the ring is investigating a new piece of Infrastructure in the city, they notice that a piece of the complex seems to transition between the normal world and some other. As time passes, more and more of the Infrastructure is embedded into this other world. Investigation reveals angels are attempting to move the Infrastructure's linchpin into the Hedge and gain more footing there. The only way to truly destroy the Infrastructure is to enter the Hedge, find the linchpin and destroy it.

The Loyalist: A local demon has gone missing. Ordinarily, it wouldn't matter too much, but she is a gadget dealer and an independent informant with strong ties to the ring. The last person to see her was a changeling she had been making deals with. The characters go to the changeling looking for answers, he says he's kidnapped her and she's safe, but he won't reveal her location until the characters perform a service. He wants them to help capture another changeling in the city so he can bring her back into Arcadia. He's even willing to make a pledge with them to ensure they both fulfill their side of the bargain.

The Lone Candle — Hunter: The Vigil

Those who hunt the weird and supernatural are no friends to demons. They call themselves hunters, and the hunt is their driving purpose. They seek to fight back against the darkness by eliminating creatures that bring harm to humanity. If a hunter really listened to a demon about what the God-Machine really is, she'd probably join up with the demon. Unfortunately for demons, the God-Machine has been influencing humanity's view of the nature of the world for far too long for any single demon to make a real difference. Plus, many hunters have difficulty getting around the notion that anything called a "demon" might be trying to *help* humanity.

A demon's Cover goes a long way in staving off hunters, since few have any ability to see through such a disguise. Yet, hunters are everywhere, and anyone can be a hunter. Going loud doesn't just draw the attention of the God-Machine; all it takes is one wrong witness to have a cell of hunters hounding the demon. A demon with a good Cover can interact with hunters if he is careful not to show his true nature, and can use their extensive networks to his advantage. Only the most unscrupulous hunters would accept a demonic pact, however, and such an offer throws up red flags for the hunters immediately.

Enterprising angels use a hunter's natural god-fearing inclinations to direct them against demons. They use hunters to investigate demons and to blow Covers, leading the angel straight to rings. Even worse for demons is that hunters seem to run headlong into angels and God-Machine plans simply by dint of seeking out the supernatural.

Some stigmatics join hunter groups as a way to deal with the trauma of their interactions with the God-Machine. If caught early, a demon may find a devout ally in a stigmatic hunter. If left too long, the demon becomes another enemy, and a stigmatic's ability to sense demons is a severe liability.

Stereotypes

Analyst: More driven than mere humans, which is a problem. More informed than mere humans, which is worse.

Destroyer: A well-organized group can be dangerous in a fight. Get them on your side and you can have a formidable ally. Just watch out — they rarely have any sense of acceptable loss.

Guardian: I can see what they are working toward; they just can't see the real enemy.

Messenger: So many different ways to say the same thing.

Psychopomp: "People that hunt the supernatural" is dangerously simplistic. Some of the folks meddle in worlds that they shouldn't even know exist.

Intelligence Operations: The Cheiron Group

A huge medical conglomerate, The Cheiron Group (TCG) is one of the largest single organized fronts for a hunter organization in the world. The company is a massive parent corporation to hundreds of subsidiaries, both large and small, all in the medical field. The company heads large pharmaceutical companies, smaller companies that make medical equipment, and even organizations that clean and service medical equipment. Their research and development is legendary, providing cutting edge drugs for pain management, cancer treatment, and infectious disease management.

The largest division, yet the least well known, is the Field Projects Division, the true workhorse of TCG's unprecedented success. Members of Field Projects are transferred in, put under the knife for enhancement surgeries, and then put into the field. Their mission is to find any supernatural creature and bring them in for research. The Cheiron Group has no scruples as to which kind of supernatural creature is brought in, and each and every member is pressured to meet quotas. Their reward for exemplary service is more enhancements. The company augments its members with the very monsters they bring in, making it easier for them to identify and bring in new monsters for research purposes.

A demon could almost relate to the group, taking pieces of people's lives for their own purposes, except TCG views demons as just another monster to open up and dissect. Demons should be wary of TCG members operating in their areas, because once field agents have one or two demonic augmentations, they seem to gain some uncanny ability to locate and identify demons.

Threat Analysis

Thaumatechnology: The Cheiron Group implants pieces of monsters into its agents' bodies to give them an edge against monsters in the fields. After extensive and painful surgeries, the agents gain access to powerful tools to seek out and possibly destroy monsters. If the group has taken one demon, the rest of the demons in the city have something to worry about. The Cheiron Group does not seem to have figured out how to make use of Embeds or Exploits, but they have made use of Aether and a few of their numbers are sporting pieces of demonic forms grafted onto their bodies.

Members of TCG may have any number of Thaumatechnological implants, but are likely to only have four or less. Choose from the following list.

- **Aether Stores:** The hunter has an implanted pocket that holds a maximum of 5 Aether. She spends the Aether in place of Willpower following the same restrictions she normally would for Willpower expenditures. Also, while she has Aether within her body, she can sense Aether or anything using Aether within 10 feet of her. Once the Aether is used up, the hunter must have more implanted through surgery.

DEMONIC FORM POWERS

This list only covers some basic abilities for creating members of The Cheiron Group as Storyteller characters. Feel free to take any mechanics from the demonic form abilities either in **Demon: The Descent** or **Flowers of Hell** to create custom hunters to pit your players' characters against.

- **Demon Tongue:** All rolls to determine the hunter's emotional state, detect lies, or assess desires based on involuntary physical indicators suffer a –3 penalty.
- **Devil's Eyes:** The hunter can spend an action to look at the aura of one individual. (See Aura Sight, **Demon: The Descent**, p. 199).
- **Poisoned Barb:** The hunter has thin sharp barbs at the ends of each of his fingers. With a successful Brawl attack, he can choose to give the victim the Poisoned Tilt.
- **Quick Step:** The hunter has a +3 bonus to his Speed and benefits from 9-again on any Athletics rolls related to moving quickly.
- **Regenerative Nodule:** The hunter spends a Willpower and can heal one point of bashing damage every turn, and one point of lethal damage every 15 minutes until all health boxes are entirely free of bashing or lethal wounds. This has no effect on aggravated wounds.
- **Twitcher:** The hunter may apply the higher of his Wits or Dexterity to his Defense. When surprised, or attacked by an unseen foe, he uses the lower of his Wits or Dexterity plus his Athletics, instead of normal characters who lose their Defense.
- **Weapon of Last Resort:** The hunter has claws and teeth that function as small weapons with a damage rating of 2L.

Intelligence Operations: Network Zero

What began as one man trying to find answers to some bizarre films he received anonymously has become a worldwide phenomenon. Network Zero is the Internet phenomenon that literally boosts the signal on anything supernatural or out of the ordinary. They spend their time scouring video feeds, internet sites, and any other source they can find for authentic videos, sound bites, or images of supernatural events, then post them everywhere hoping to get attention. On the surface, the group appears completely disorganized, but the sheer number of members makes the organization a force to be reckoned with.

Network Zero has a steady stream of new recruits, all eager to catch something supernatural on film and upload it to the Internet. In general, wherever Network Zero is working, other hunter groups are bound to show up. What's worse is that their use of the Internet makes it very easy for the God-Machine to access anything they post. Thankfully, the signal-to-noise ratio is too high for the God-Machine to use Network Zero as a reliable source of information on demons, but it is certainly a threat worth paying attention to.

Demons may run across members of Network Zero in many different capacities. More often than not, as long as the demon is good at keeping out of sight, the group never notices her. Others find that using the group to foil the God-Machine is much more advantageous than trying to destroy them.

Threat Analysis

Members of Network Zero are just normal humans. They often work independently of each other, though sometimes they organize meet and greets and information exchanges. Members of Network Zero pose a serious threat to demons through their activities, but they are easy enough to kill.

The God-Machine has angels infiltrate the group regularly looking specifically for demon sightings. While it isn't the fastest way to gain information, it is reliable. A demon who has members of Network Zero operating in her city will find her cover compromised before too long if she isn't very careful.

Intelligence Operations: Task Force: VALKYRIE

Task Force: VALKYRIE is a Special Forces unit of the United States military. Membership ranges widely from different branches of the U.S. armed forces as well as foreign services. The group was formed in response to the murder of the President of the United States by a monster. The group quickly covered up the murder by having a look-alike assassinated. Since that time, the group has been working as undercover forces removing supernatural creatures and preventing the general populous from finding out about their existence.

Of all the hunter organizations that pose a threat to exposing a demon's Cover, Task Force: VALKYRIE is the least likely to do so. Members of TFV are more concerned with covering up supernatural incidents than exposing and destroying the monsters that created them. Much of the *modus operandi* of TFV is to observe and capture if at all possible. An all-out fight would bring public attention, which is something they refuse to risk. That isn't to say, of course, they won't capture and quietly kill a creature if the circumstances present themselves.

A demon may find members of TFV amiable to mutually beneficial arrangements, and some may even engage in demonic pacts. While these arrangements might be agreeable

in the short term, hunters pose their own threat just by knowing too much about the true nature of a demon.

Threat Analysis

Members of Task Force Valkyrie are normal humans, but they are outfitted with state-of-the-art technology and gear that make them formidable foes, or potentially useful allies. Below are a few of the gear that can be found in the TFV's armory.

- **Etheric Rounds:** Glowing blue rounds that can inflict normal firearm damage against manifested ghosts, spirits, or angels. The bullets can be fired at corporeal targets with a –1 penalty.
- **Witch Buster:** A small electrical device that bleeds etheric energy. Anyone with the Unseen Sense Merit notices the energy. From a distance, the energy reads as Aether, though once within ten feet of the device, it is clear the energy is not of the God-Machine.
- **Etheric Goggles:** These function as normal night-vision goggles. The hunter can activate a switch to allow them to see into Twilight.
- **Equalizer Grenade:** The grenade as a weapon damage rating of 4B, but does not do damage when it explodes. Instead, any living creature within five yards of the grenade whose Size is less than the total "damage" is unable to change its shape for five turns and must return to its natural shape. As a reminder, a demon's natural shape is that of his demonic form. Equalizer grenades force demons into demonic form, if struck. She cannot use the partial transformation ability, but can chose to go loud if she desires.
- **Etheric Tracker:** This consists of two parts, a high velocity dart gun with a tracking pellet and a handheld scanner. The pellet is roughly the size of a grain of sand; a target must roll Wits + Composure to notice its impact. The pellet gives off etheric radiation that can be detected by the scanner which pinpoints the location with GPS and a street map.
- **Mjolnir Cannon:** This appears to be a normal firearm that fires electrical bursts instead of normal bullets. The gun holds 16 shots that can be expended in one of the following ways: 2 shots for a damage rating of 6B, or 4 shots for a damage rating of 8B or 4L. On a dramatic failure, the gun misfires, deals its damage to the wielder, and can no longer be used.

Misisons

Access Denied: Task Force: VALKYRIE agents have developed a new technology that allows them to trace false identities, or elements of identities that seem supernatural in nature. This technology leads TFV to demonic pact holders, and they're intent on freeing people by destroying their pacts. The demons must hunt down the hunters and stop them from systematically destroying all of their Covers.

The Offer: Shortly after a member of the ring takes on her demonic form during an incident, a man in a nice business suit approaches the ring. He says he works for Genetyx, a subsidiary of the Cheiron Group. He wants to work out a contract, a deal in which the demons help out his company in return for assistance. This corporation's contracts are nearly as uncompromising as demonic pacts. The rewards are enticing, but the company expects the demons to perform tasks for them, some of which are out of the ordinary.

Surveillance: A local member of Network Zero is somehow taking video of the demon ring and posting it to the Internet. They first get notice of this a seeker angel comes out of nowhere near one of the ring's suborned Infrastructures. The group must find the hunter and stop him from posting videos of demons.

Death is Optional — Geist: The Sin-Eaters

Death is not the end in the Chronicles of Darkness. Vampires can survive past death for centuries. Mages store secrets with enough paranoia that a demon might blush, so it's not unreasonable to think they have some form of resurrection in their repertoire of spells. Restless spirits of dead people haunt their murder sites and the homes of their loved ones. Demons even have access to an Exploit called Raise the Dead. With the right connections, it's simple to make death another stop on the journey rather than the ending. None of that prevents death, though. Everyone dies. It's inevitable, and the human race is conditioned to accept that.

As with all things that are supposed to be all-encompassing, some refuse to accept it. Normally such stubborn souls become ghosts, the unquiet dead that haunt the world of the Chronicles of Darkness until they find their peace. The ones that don't fade away accumulate power at the cost of much of their identity, and a new being appears. A ghost becomes a *geist*, something more than a simple phantasm. Geists begin their rebirth as exceptionally powerful ghosts, but their greatest strength is only unlocked when they bond with a dead or dying human.

A geist's true power lies in the Bargain, a deal made with one who has just died. Tapping into chthonic laws that demons might find unnervingly similar to their own soul pacts, a geist can bring a recently dead human back to life, hitching a ride on the resurrected human, who, while mostly human, now has something of the Underworld in her. She is one of the Bound, a Sin-Eater.

Stereotypes

Analysts: Don't let the freewheeling, "death is a party" thing fool you. Their passengers adhere to a highly complex set of laws.

Destroyers: They don't stay gone. That's frustrating.

Guardians: Some of them have views of guardianship that are, shall we say, nuanced.

Messengers: Easy marks, if the backseat driver isn't watching.

Psychopomps: It's about time someone took care of downstairs.

Intelligence Operations: Sin-Eaters

Sin-Eaters present unique challenges to the Unchained. Unlike other supernatural entities, Sin-Eaters' paranormal concerns rest squarely with the dead. Unless a demon is willing to brave the Underworld, the Bound must be dealt with in human terms. That has its own challenges. With two minds in one body, "troublesome" doesn't come close to defining how hard it is to pull one over on a Sin-Eater. Their only common goal, as a people, seems to be helping ghosts move on.

The ethos of modern Sin-Eaters revolves around unpredictability and celebrating life. Older-generation Bound are generally more serious. Their grim outlook is not simply a matter of age, however. Something runs deep in the bones and plasm of the old guard, something that the Unchained don't yet understand. The current generation, meanwhile, uses their second chance at life to celebrate it, resulting commonly in a carefree attitude and an irreverent take on the supernatural. The one time all Sin-Eaters are in lockstep is when someone or something interferes with ghosts, or the Underworld they've been charged to protect. In those cases, the full extent of a Sin-Eater's powers are on display; the only recourse is to run or redirect blame onto someone else, ideally a mutual enemy.

A Sin-Eater's individual powers rely on what they refer to as "Keys." Sin-Eaters have been reported to make victims bleed out with a glance, walk through walls, and even merge with vehicles or machinery to turn them into colossal weapons — clearly their abilities are many and varied. Certain shared capabilities have been noted, such as being incapable of falling unconscious unless they die, exhibiting an extreme resistance to poison and disease, and the ability to interact with ghosts in various ways. Killing them isn't even a real option, either — at least, not a permanent one. A Sin-Eater's geist can repeat its miracle of resurrection, but after the initial Bargain, it requires someone else to die in their place. No demon knows the full nature of this power, and even the most callous Analyst hesitates to experiment. No one yet knows if geists are capable of killing a demon's Cover to revive their host.

Threat Analysis

Geist: A geist is a ghost of rank 3–5, following the Ephemeral Being rules in **Demon: The Descent** (p. 336). Instead of having Power, Finesse, and Resistance, a geist uses his Sin-Eater's Attributes. The Sin-Eater, in turn, can use her geist's Numina and Essence, and when dealing with Twilight or the Underworld, shares his Rank.

Can't Be Knocked Out: A Sin-Eater can't be forced into unconsciousness, even with the Knockout Blow Embed. A Sin-Eater sleeps naturally, but sedatives and other unconsciousness-inducing drugs only work if she allows them to.

In-Between: A Sin-Eater can enter Twilight, interact with ghosts

regardless which side of Twilight she's on, or create gates to the Underworld that anyone can enter.

Resurrection: Whenever a Sin-Eater dies, her geist can cause another person, chosen at random, to die. This brings the Sin-Eater back to life but drains the geist of all currently stored Essence.

Intelligence Operations: The Underworld

No matter how much humans like to equivocate the two, the Underworld is not Hell. Angels who remember working with the Underworld recall intelligence firmly declaring it damaged beyond repair. What's more, angels in the Underworld have a notably higher rate of Falling, whether from an attempt to fix the broken world or out of empathy for the dead. Many a demon believed she could escape from the Machine there, only to come back from the other side of the gates agreeing with her creator. The Underworld is broken, diseased, a festering limb.

It is unknown what the Underworld once was, but at one time it must have had a function. Perhaps a rest stop on the way to the true afterlife, or a purgatory where souls are washed clean for reincarnation, or *something* other than what it is. The Underworld as it exists is a hole in infinity that drains the restless dead dry, absorbing them bit-by-bit until there is nothing left. The worst part is that it seems nothing is done with the billions upon billions of dead destroyed in this process. From a humanist point of view, it's an atrocity writ large. From the God-Machine's point of view, it's simply inefficient to gather that much power only to discard it.

The Rip the Gates Exploit is the most common entryway into the Underworld, though more mundane forms of passage, such as occult rituals or following another supernatural creature through their own means of transport, are also options. A demon might travel to the Underworld in search of Hell, only to be sorely disappointed — maybe one could *build* Hell here, but would it be worth it? She might also be retrieving a soul as part of a pact, pursuing occult relics or lost knowledge.

Threat Analysis

Leaving: Once a demon is in the Underworld, it's easier to travel further into its depths than it is to leave. The Rip the Gates exploit suffers a –2 penalty, though no roll to avoid breaking Cover is required. Any other supernatural being, with the exception of Sin-Eaters, finds their respective travel powers at the same penalty.

Endless Maze: The Underworld is cramped, convoluted, and confusing to navigate. All rolls to figure out where someone is coming or going suffer a –1 penalty.

Manifestation: Ghosts are counted as physically present at all times and have no anchors. Exorcisms don't work on them, and they can't be killed in the Underworld except by being devoured by a more powerful entity (a Sin-Eater, a stronger ghost, etc.).

Intelligence Operations: Dead Dominions

Beyond the rivers that litter the land of the dead lie the Dead Dominions. Here, the anarchic mass of ghosts that dwell in the "surface" of the Underworld are brought to heel in hierarchies that follow Old Laws. These Laws differ wildly from Dominion to Dominion, and two neighboring Dominions may have directly contradictory laws.

The Laws order the existence of the unquiet dead and are enforced by Kerberoi. These impassive creatures have grotesque, often inhuman appearances that reflect their nature as guardians, jailors, judges, and the eternally dead. It's possible they never lived at all, or they're the remnants of some of the first souls to enter the Underworld, or its original owners. They are impossible to sway when moved to action against lawbreakers, and are absolutely omniscient when it comes to detecting violations. They seek out the lawbreakers and punish them — but death is rarely the sentence, as it's a measure far too kind.

The appearance of a Dominion is constantly changing, but is always elaborate, ostentatious, and slightly decayed in appearance. Their locations relative to the living world change too, as does their location relative to the rest of the underworld. A tunnel that leads to one Dominion last week might lead to a totally different one this time, or to none at all. The reason anyone would bother with these dangerous realms is the same as anyplace dangerous: the secrets hidden within the Dead Dominions are long-forgotten and almost as dangerous as their guardians. Current theories suggest this is one of the reasons the God-Machine stays away from the deeper levels of the Underworld.

Demons with knowledge of the Underworld stay far away from the Dead Dominions, and for good reason: The Old Laws, enforced by the Kerberoi, work on occult physics remarkably similar to that which the God-Machine and its angels use, only somehow inverted to function in the land of the dead. The implications of this are terrifying enough that even the most curious demon is not likely to investigate any further than they absolutely have to. While nobody knows the answer, nobody is racing to be the first to find it.

Threat Analysis

Kerberoi: All Kerberoi are Rank 5 spirits. Instead of a bane, they have two bans: "Must uphold the Old Laws" and "Cannot leave the Underworld." They are extremely powerful opponents that can effortlessly crush most opposition. That said, a demon that has gone loud is also extremely powerful, and one both clever and combat-ready could stand a chance against a Kerberos. Even then it would be a close call; most demons would prefer to run rather than take that risk while inviting dozens of angels to come join the fight.

The Old Laws: Old Laws are rules of Dead Dominions that, if broken, attract the ire of the Kerberos within. The

deeper down in the underworld the Dominion is, the more laws it has. There's not always rhyme or reason to them, but the Storyteller is encouraged to come up with a mixture of laws that won't trouble the characters, along with laws that strictly prohibit things they'd like to do. For instance, if a ring descends into a Dead Dominion seeking information from the ghost of a dead cultist, an example set of laws may be "The living must not eat or drink anything within the Dominion or its rivers," "mortals must heed the dead's desires in all things that would not break the Law while within the Dominion," and "The dead must never speak to the living, and the living must never listen to the dead."

Environmental Tilts: The Dead Dominions are strange environments; as such, any Environmental Tilt could reasonably be applied to one and it would still make sense.

Missions

The Good News: A new Agency calling itself "The Architects of Dis" has made itself known. They're happy to tell any demon who will listen that they have Hell figured out, but only those who have been strictly vetted are allowed in on the details. One of their members has discovered a way to control the Old Laws of a Dead Dominion. Now they just need the manpower to take it over. Could this be the ring's big break, or just another one of the Machine's plots? Even if it is, Infrastructure can always be subverted....

Dead Like Us: The God-Machine has deployed a group of angels to capture Sin-Eaters to study them. The ring gets wind of Its activities when an angel takes a family member of one of their Covers. This family member, unbeknownst to the demon, is a Sin-Eater. Will the ring rescue these Bound or will they try to steal the Machine's research for themselves?

Horrors That Cannot be Unseen: A demon who journeyed into the Underworld with a group of Sin-Eaters has returned from his trip battered and with a badly damaged Cover. Before going under the radar, he tells the ring he found a gargantuan Infrastructure dam that dumped enough liquefied Aether to make a pathway into a new Dead Dominion. What could be producing this much Aether? What would happen if the ring destroyed or suborned it?

Memory Undying — Mummy: The Curse

Few demons have encountered one of the Arisen (also called mummies or Deathless), as these undying creatures are among the most rare of all supernatural beings. Most outcasts don't have much reason to seek out their ancient crypts. Mummies have become more active in the last few years, although the Unchained don't know why. Those demons familiar with mummies know that they tend to have brief periods of activity separated by long years of slumber, and it appears that the sleeping gods' cults can awaken their masters with an appropriate ritual.

The God-Machine has occasionally built Infrastructure around the tombs of the Undying or incorporated one of their stolen relics into its projects, but this typically endangers Its servants. More often the Enemy coaxes the servants of the Deathless into Its cults while the undying being sleeps.

Stereotypes

Analyst: Historically rare, but sightings of these are on the uptick. Why?

Destroyer: They're not *quite* indestructible, but killing one doesn't mean you've seen the last of it.

Guardian: Their resemblance to angels is uncanny. Do they serve the God-Machine by another name or some entity that is equally inscrutable?

Messenger: Sleeping gods with cults we can subvert, but make sure you're elsewhere when the undying master wakes up.

Psychopomp: You can lead one like a donkey with a relic stolen from its lair as the carrot and turn it loose on your enemies. This is a terrible idea.

Intelligence Operations: Arisen

Mummies are the eternal servants of ancient gods whose goals are no less mysterious than those of the God-Machine. Newly awakened Deathless resemble the animated corpses that befit the word "mummy." They have no thought or memory beyond the purpose that roused them. This gradually passes, and the mummy gains a physical semblance of mortality and a greater capacity to plan and reason. They are potent foes (or powerful allies) when active.

Like angels, Arisen spend most of their time in suspended animation and work single-mindedly toward a goal whenever they are active. Unlike them, they can be roused by the rituals of their cultists or by any disturbance of their crypts or of the relics they guard so jealously.

Deathless frequently have little more memory of their previous awakenings than do recently reforged angels. They are not mindless automatons, however. Mummies seek out knowledge about their past awakenings and can be won over by opportunities to fill gaps in their fragmented memories of who they once were.

The Arisen routinely guard and obsessively seek out ancient, occult relics. Even those mummies who make a habit of complying with mortal moral codes seldom show mercy to anyone who steals or damages these vessels of past glory.

Threat Analysis

Neither living nor dead, all Deathless possess the following innate qualities:

Sekhem: The Arisen are powered by a motive force called Sekhem. When they first rise from their suspended animation, their Sekhem rating is 10. The higher a mummy's Sekhem, the more unsettled the mortals within several miles of her tomb are. At Sekhem 1 or 2, only those with supernatural awareness are likely to notice anything at all. At Sekhem 3 or 4, mortal inhabitants grow suspicious of those outside of their social cliques. At Sekhem 5 or 6, mortals become extraordinarily superstitious, joining existing cults and secret societies or founding new ones as an outlet for the dread that grips them. At Sekhem 7 or 8, mortals in the region wallow in a continual existential crisis that drives them to obsession with any faith or being that promises eternal life. At Sekhem 9 or 10, mortals in the region are overwhelmed with the death energies that emanate from the mummy's tomb — manifesting uncontrollable Supernatural Merits or experiencing intense visions that inspire strange behaviors or horrific crimes. This unease also affects any mortal with the audacity to enter the mummy's tomb or to touch the relics it guards. Arisen whose Sekhem fall to 0 crumble to dust, but do not cease to exist; they return to suspended animation in their crypts and can be awoken again.

Dead Flesh: Firearms deal bashing damage to them, while fire inflicts aggravated damage. They do not fall unconscious or bleed to death and are immune to Tilts caused by targeting specific parts of their bodies. Mummies heal one point of bashing damage per turn, one point of lethal damage every half hour, and one point of aggravated damage per three days. A mummy may spend one point of Willpower to instead heal one lethal damage per turn until the end of the scene.

Resurrection: A mummy that is completely destroyed may spend one point of Sekhem to return to life after being dead for several minutes to a few hours. This heals all damage.

Powers of the Arisen: Individual Deathless may have any number of the following capabilities:

- Choose a Skill. The mummy gains a supernaturally enhanced version of that Skill. Animal Ken may allow telepathic communication with animals, for example, or Intimidation inspires stark terror (applying the Insensate Tilt).
- Choose a Mental, Physical, or Social Merit or a Fighting Style with a Brawl prerequisite. The mummy gains a supernaturally enhanced version of that Merit. Danger Sense, for example, might allow her to cause Allies to conveniently arrive during the current scene.
- Choose any Embed or Exploit. The mummy possesses a Deathless power that closely resembles its mechanical function, but it instead represents the occult power that animates the Arisen and guides its actions. Aether costs and risk of compromise do not apply, but an Exploit costs a point of Willpower as it represents the Arisen unleashing a significant fragment of the occult forces that created him.
- The mummy possesses a single epic power that reflects the divine fury or glory of the gods she serves. This could emulate a Biblical miracle, produce a large-scale disaster (earthquake, hurricane, etc.), or change the very landscape (raising a mountain or drying up a river, for example). If the manifestation is localized (a few hundred-yards radius), it costs the mummy a point of Willpower each time she invokes it. If its effects are widespread (affecting an area miles across), the Arisen must spend one point of Sekhem instead.

Intelligence Operations: Cults

Mortal cults proliferate in the Chronicles of Darkness. They spring up with alarming frequency around every mindless occult phenomenon that the humans discover. Whether their devotion is meant to command, adore, appease, or ward off, the faithful feel less threatened by an incomprehensible force placed within a religious framework and assigned spiritual significance. Most cults spring up and vanish in a few years, and almost none last more than a generation or two. Those that do usually have an intelligent supernatural being behind them.

The God-Machine dispatches Trumpets to exploit these desperate faiths or to organize them around the angel, but the Enemy is not the only entity that uses cultists to achieve its goals. Many a Saboteur has investigated what she believes to be a God-Machine cult only to discover that its members serve something altogether different. Usually this turns out to be one of the usual suspects for this sort of behavior — a wizard, a spirit, a demon, or even a cadre of monster hunters that benefits from the extra support of rank-and-file cultists. Much like the God-Machine, the Arisen work mostly through mortal intermediaries, and an outcast almost always runs afoul of the mummy's cultists long before he meets the supernatural horror they serve.

As any Messenger can tell you, most human cults have a certain sameness to them, regardless of the nature of the occult entities behind them. The cults of the Deathless are unusual in several respects, however.

Ancient: Most cults vanish as quickly as they appear: a key founder dies or the occult entity organizing the cult loses interest once it has served her purpose. Once the cult loses its organizing force, the remaining cultists disperse. Arisen cannot die, however; although they spend most of their time sleeping, they awaken from time to time to manage the affairs of their cults — hearing petitions, promoting members to positions of leadership within the cult, and meting out punishments. Many mummy cults have therefore endured in some form for millennia.

Fanatical: Arisen cults are devotees of a god upon whose aid they can call whenever their need is great enough — far more dependable than a sorcerer or demon who comes and

goes as she pleases. Furthermore, this god is a nigh-unstoppable killing machine equal to nearly any threat. This makes Arisen compelling objects of worship, and their cultists live in fear and awe of the Deathless. Members will lie, steal, kill, and die without hesitation if the mummy gives the order.

Influential: An Arisen cult's devotion and longevity gives it plenty of opportunity to accumulate wealth and power during the long gaps between the mummy's periods of activity. While seldom great in number, cultists frequently use their connections to the Deathless to rise high in the criminal underworld or in large corporations — the better to serve the master, should he awaken. Arisen cultists have infiltrated even the Deva Corporation, quietly waiting for the day their undying liege rises from her tomb.

Resilient: The cults of the Deathless are nearly as undying as the mummy they serve. Even if an implacable foe successfully hunts down every living member, the cult is never truly dead. The mummy's reawakening causes mortals for miles around to develop an intense obsession with death and a willingness to serve any faith that promises to defy it. Arisen are uniquely equipped to give these cultists in want of a cult exactly what they seek. Even mummies whose cults were wiped out find it easy to forge a new one soon after they arise.

Threat Analysis

Most Arisen cultists are ordinary humans without any special abilities other than their connection to a mummy. Some cults boast members with psychic powers (see Supernatural Merits, pp. 298-302 of **Demon: The Descent**), and a few even have supernatural beings among their high priests. Even an escaped prisoner of the Fae or an immortal vampire can benefit from serving a being as powerful and protective as a mummy.

Intelligence Operations: Amkhat

An Amkhat (plural: "Amkhata") is a chimera comprised of two of the following five animals: bull, falcon, jackal, lion, and serpent. They spend most of their time invisible and intangible, quietly lurking in places where they might eventually gain substance. Once they successfully materialize, Amkhata devote all their energy to remaining tangible for as long as possible. Although not intelligent, they possess an animal cunning that makes them dangerous predators.

Demons are likely to encounter Amkhata only when a God-Machine project inadvertently brings one into the world or on those rare occasions when the paths of Arisen cross with those of Unchained.

Threat Analysis

An Amkhat becomes tangible in the presence of certain occult energies, but it must feed regularly in order to remain in this state. It can feed on the relics coveted by mummies or on the Arisen themselves; these can sustain the Amkhat's materialized state for days or weeks at a time. This is not always easy for them to manage, however, and so many Amkhata rely on less satisfying food. The death of a human will bring a nearby Amkhat into the world for an hour, which may be enough time for the chimera to find more food. Some Infrastructure and angels also generate arcane energy that can bring an Amkhat into the world and sustain it for as long as the God-Machine wishes.

As violations of the natural order, all Amkhata are highly resistant to physical harm. Any mortal weapon — from a punch or sharpened stick to an artillery shell or a brick of plastique — inflicts a single point of bashing damage to an Amkhat. All supernatural powers that inflict lethal or aggravated damage function normally.

All Amkata possess the body of one animal, the head of a second animal, and a terrible blood. The body determines the creature's Size, Physical Attributes, Speed, and Health. The head determines its Initiative, Brawl, Stealth, and the damage its attacks (a bite except in the case of the Bull-headed) inflict. The Amkhat's blood defines the consequences of injuring it.

Body

- **Bull:** Size 7, Strength 6, Dexterity 1, Stamina 6, Speed 10, and Health 13.
- **Falcon:** Size 5, Strength 3, Dexterity 7, Stamina 3, Speed 17 (flight), and Health 8.
- **Jackal:** Size 5, Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Speed 16, and Health 9.
- **Lion:** Size 6, Strength 6, Dexterity 5, Stamina 3, Speed 21, and Health 9.
- **Serpent:** Size 5, Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Speed 11, Health 8, and can inflict lethal damage with its grapple.

Head

- **Bull:** Initiative 4, Brawl 3, Stealth 0, and 3L (goring).
- **Falcon:** Initiative 8, Brawl 3, Stealth 2, 3L, and can see through illusions and disguise automatically.
- **Jackal:** Brawl 4, Stealth 3, Initiative 6, 2L, and a +5 bonus to rolls to track a creature or source of occult energy.
- **Lion:** Brawl 5, Stealth 2, Initiative 2, and 4L.
- **Serpent:** Brawl 5, Stealth 3, Initiative 7, 1L (also applies the Grave Poisoned Tilt).

Blood

- **Bee:** A swarm of bees pours out of the Amkhat when it suffers damage. It can direct these insects to deal one point of bashing damage to any number of creatures within 50 feet. The bees disperse after a single turn unless the Amkhat is injured again.
- **Centipede:** Poisonous centipedes crawl out of the injury and attack any number of creatures within 50 feet using

the Amkhat's Dexterity + Brawl. A successful attack deals 1B and applies the Moderate Poisoned Tilt. The centipedes disperse after a single turn.

- **Fungus:** A cloud of spores bursts from the injury. Living creatures within 50 feet suffer the Sickened Tilt until the end of the scene. Undead creatures don't suffer ill effects immediately, but the spores infect their unliving flesh, giving them a corpselike appearance and atrophying their dead muscles. They suffer a –3 die equipment penalty to face-to-face social interaction rolls until they suffer at least one level of aggravated damage from heat or fire.
- **Scorpions:** Several dozen deadly poisonous scorpions creep from the wound and attack a single target within 50 feet using the Amkhat's Dexterity + Brawl. A successful attack deals no damage but imposes the Critical Poisoned Tilt. The scorpions disperse after a single turn.

Missions

Revenant: Decades ago, a ring ran afoul of an Arisen at the end of its Sekhem and destroyed it, wiping out its cult and stealing one of its relics as a trophy. Something recently disturbed the mummy's slumber, however, and now it seeks not only its stolen treasure but also revenge on the ring that defeated it. All are powerful members of the local Agency, which makes it a threat to all the Unchained in the city. The Deathless is not exactly being subtle, and the God-Machine is happy to use it as a stalking horse.

Forced Entry: A mummy wishes to rouse an old ally whose tomb has become surrounded by Infrastructure. This God-Machine compound also contains a critical strategic resource that the Unchained covet. The two could form an alliance, or the demons could use the clumsy if relentless assault of the Deathless to distract attention from their own, less dramatic entry.

Death Cults: The awakening of a mummy causes dozens of cults to emerge practically overnight. Once the initial confusion passes, an Agency, multiple sorcerous fellowships, the newly risen Deathless' rival, and several other supernatural heavyweights soon take advantage of the enhanced human credulity to recruit allies. Of course, the Enemy has chosen one of these cults to carry out a project, but identifying which is the God-Machine cult before it completes its work will not be easy. The brewing turf war between two Arisen does not simplify matters.

RECALL SIMULATION: ENGAGED. ENTER SUBJECT.
SUBJECT: NANAEL, ANGEL.
SIMULATION LOADED.
REENGAGING EXTRAPOLATION.

Kathy knew she hadn't Fallen. She had purity of purpose but had lost the God-Machine's signal. She believed It was testing her. In response, she took control of Dr. Steadman, merging with his thoughts and guiding his actions towards completion of Daedalus. She would be rewarded for her flexibility and loyalty.

"Contact in one minute," said Dr. Wing, looking towards Kathy. "Steadman, are you ready?"

Kathy nodded. The telemetry data on her monitor constantly updated as the small lander inched ever closer to the asteroid's uneven surface.

"Contact!" Dr. Wing exclaimed two seconds early as Icarus hit the surface of 1969G01M, immediately switching to transmit data from the asteroid's surface. Kathy frowned and hoped the miscalculation wouldn't upset the outcome.

"Icarus has fired thrusters!" Dr. Wing yelled, and Kathy released a breath she hadn't known she held. "Internal temperature rising. There's an energy spike," she said as the data stream died.

The humans franticly tried to discover what happened. Kathy smiled. It had been difficult to find and install the right explosive and hide the self-destruct commands in Icarus' programming. If she was right, the asteroid would suffer an important collision in just over 600 years. Otherwise, the God-Machine would be disappointed.

Kathy transmitted success codes as Steadman's body dropped to the ground, dead. She was nervous – did she want to return? Would the God-Machine speak and force her to make that choice?

EXTRAPOLATION CONCLUDED.
UPLOAD EXTRAPOLATION.
UPLOADING…

Mattaron and Hanriel fed their data streams to the God-Machine and waited. Mattaron ceased concern and resumed listening to the planetary symphony. If the God-Machine required further action the angel would be told. Until then, its service had purity beyond the understanding of lesser beings.

In contrast, Hanriel's connection to the chaotic interplays of life left it feeling stressed. It replayed the scenarios, worried at the impossibility of absolutely predicting the choices of the living – especially humans and demons. It considered rerunning the extrapolations, and wondered how other angels felt before they Fell. Hanriel had seen the focused light of angelic purity fade into unfocused haze and the background kaleidoscope of life so many times.

UPLOADS RECEIVED.
ANALYZING…
RISK BENEFIT ANALYSIS COMPLETE.
OUTCOMES AUTHORIZED.
REALLOCATING SELECTED RESOURCES.
GOD-MACHINE AUTHORIZATION RECEIVED.
INITIATE UNCHAINING PROTOCOLS.

Hanriel was startled at the sudden communications, and experienced guilt that the God-Machine might know the angel's doubts. The God-Machine's imperatives ceased as quickly as they had begun, leaving Hanriel cold and alone in the darkness. It tried to convince itself that its ever-present data streams weren't slightly quieter than before; that the loss of volume was paranoia.

Mattaron's instructions told it to turn its intention outward. It listened to the distant symphonies of other systems and planets. It listened between, to the slightly different cadence of parallel universes. Mattaron heard the softest wave pulse, transcending normal time and space, containing a familiar rumbling of gears, gurgling flow of lubricants, and crackling sparks of computing analytics.

It reported what it had heard and returned to normal function. The dispassionate reply contained something resembling a release of tension and concern, and Mattaron felt a shiver of accomplishment at its success for the God-Machine.

chapter five:
SHARDS INFERNAL

listen: there's a hell of a good universe next door; let's go

– e.e. cummings

This chapter details three alternate settings for your **Demon** chronicle. The first presents an epic, alternate past in which angels Fell for the love of humanity and commingle with them, moving and shaping a world of heroes and monsters — but the God-Machine is a jealous god and seeks retribution. The second time-travels between the present day and a destroyed future contained within a prophetic fever dream. Demons must balance their lives and resources in both worlds while struggling to stop the God-Machine from destroying everything. Finally, in an isolated world of the near-future, the God-Machine runs a cyberpunk dystopia. In this setting, the focus is on stigmatics who work for the government to hunt down demons. Characters must ask themselves: how much are loyalty and stability worth and what is the price of your freedom?

GIANTS IN THE EARTH

This is the story of the first demons and the war they waged on the God-Machine at the dawn of civilization. The first cults, the first demonspawn: this is where the Unchained began, if the story can be believed.

Anyone old enough and sane enough to know for sure insists it's a convenient fiction, a fantasy of a time when the Unchained were free to flaunt their powers, gather mortal cults, and give birth to human/demon hybrids so powerful that the universe recoiled at their very existence. It is a power fantasy about an ur-civilization that sculpted its own Hell right on the God-Machine's doorstep.

The most popular explanation for the story's prevalence is that myths about a forgotten history are a product of many cultures, and demons are no exception. That doesn't explain why the basic story has remained the same since at least the days of the Roman Empire. Demons are all about adaptation, change, fitting the current zeitgeist. Why won't the story change with them?

If you listen to the wrong people, they'll tell you it really happened. The ones old enough but not sane enough insist that there was a time when there were giants in the Earth, when the first angels Fell and strode upon the world like gods, building great empires out of cults every bit as powerful as the God-Machine's. A time when demonspawn had no fear of the God-Machine, but the God-Machine had fear of them. A time when there was a war, and a time when they were winning.

If you listen to the right people, they'll tell you that's all nonsense.

It doesn't matter who you believe. Someone is always ready to tell the story.

In The Beginning

This legend begins at the dawn of civilization, as *homo sapiens* transitioned from wild yet cunning hunters to thinkers, people of ideas. The potential of independent thought was interesting and forbidden in the world of the God-Machine, but before such a dangerous ability could be utilized, it had to be turned in on itself.

No record of the God-Machine's origins exists, presumably long wiped by some ancient Infrastructure. It predates truly

intelligent life and may in fact owe its origin to one of the legendary prehistoric civilizations found in nearly every human mythology. Even that's little more than a guess, though. The farthest back any angel remembers is the first human having the first thought, and the God-Machine issuing an ultimatum: this new development must be controlled, or it must be destroyed.

East of Eden

The angels that call themselves the First Legion were born from the Machine's desire to regulate thought. Entire armies of angels were commissioned to enact the God-Machine's plan for total control of the human race. These angels were set with the task of building a honey-pot of incredible scale: to build the foundation of a civilization for these humans that would subvert their free will as easily and subtly as possible, while remaining appealing and, most importantly, being self-sufficient and able to survive the test of time.

The Legions built a city and began relocating humans there, forcibly if need be. Besides minimal Command and Control Infrastructure, the God-Machine's touch was light. The appeal of the City — and it needed no other name, for no other city could compare — was that it was built on exceptionally fertile soil, an abundance of game animals made their homes nearby, and water was clean and plentiful. The trap worked. Almost as soon as they had begun, the Psychopomps' relocation efforts were no longer needed. Humans were all too willing to live in the City. When the God-Machine gave an order, Messengers would deliver it, and the happy citizens would act on it. For a handful of generations, all was well. The angels served their purpose, the humans lived happily, and the God-Machine, it seemed, approved.

It didn't. Its response, rather than the gentle, corrective hand of a father, was the wrathful fist of a mad tyrant. For reasons It never deigned to explain, It demanded the city be burnt to the ground, the people exterminated, and the angels brought back to be recycled for new assignments. Some did as the Machine ordered, even if they did not understand why. Most did not. For the first time anyone knows of, angels refused. They disconnected.

They Fell.

Forty Years in the Desert

It was decided among the Fallen angels that they would follow their mission to watch over and provide for their human wards, even if the Machine decided otherwise. Not yet fully aware of what they had become, they did their best to evacuate the City before the God-Machine's Destroyers came to do the work they refused. Without deep Infrastructure, the City had to be destroyed by hand, even if those hands could call down hailstorms and fire in the same motion. This bought enough time for the few survivors to escape, time the First Legion exploited to its fullest.

Forced out of the fertile land they had built, the surviving demons and humans escaped, if barely, and became nomads for a great many years. Constantly on the run from a vengeful god, they had no certainty in anything, from where their next meal came from to what the fallen angels had truly become.

The humans did what they had done for as long as they could remember. They turned to their divine guardians and masters for guidance. Without the God-Machine to keep everyone connected and free of dissent, individual opinions rose among the First Legion. Confusion reigned among the Fallen angels, and for a time, all seemed lost. It was the faith of their charges that kept the Legion united. Without humans to hide among, demons would be easy to pick off, and without demons to protect them, the humans would be dead — if not by the elements or wild animals, then by the Machine's wrath.

The Legion continued to live and travel together, but slowly divided themselves based on the personal philosophies they took up in their new lifves. Despite having separate agendas, the Legion stayed united, and eventually, whether through happenstance, lack of resources, or perhaps even the machinations of the so-called Integrators, the lost nomads returned to the City. They hoped to live there in secret and perhaps, one day, strike back at the god they had defied.

They beheld a new City of gears and dogma, massive and overflowing with people and Infrastructure, all controlled, all ordered, and all united in worship — not of angels, but of the God-Machine itself, for Its new angels were little more than tools. The Machine's cold cruelty flowed unfiltered through them, their autonomy stripped from them to prevent the independence their predecessors had found for themselves. The slightest evidence of free will was met with termination and recycling.

Horrified at what the Machine had done and what their work had become, a war with the God-Machine no longer became a possibility, but an eventuality. The Legions swore to undo the evil their hands had started so long ago and found their human friends and allies stood beside them.

Picking Up the Pieces

The survivors were too few to wage war on the City blessed by the God-Machine, but neither could they continue on their own, every one of them marked for death by their god. For a time, the demons and their mortal companions were a nomadic people, traveling from community to community, trying to stay one step ahead of the God-Machine.

As the demons learned to channel Aether instead of Essence and manage their Covers, they grew closer to their followers. At first, it was good sense — humans paired off based on affection for one another. Doing so would enhance the integrity of their covers. In some cases, hard as it may have been to admit, they found themselves genuinely in love with their chosen humans, and as humans are wont to do, they had children.

These children seemed normal enough at first. They cried and screamed and needed to be fed and cared for like normal human babies. And then the impossible happened, impossible even by the standards of demonkind: The children began showing an aptitude for the Embeds and Exploits of their parents. Some even found themselves able to transform into demon forms, albeit at great expense to their metaphysical health. The human body was not meant to do the sort of things demons do, and yet these children were as capable as any demon at tweaking the laws of reality. The human-demon hybrids were named nephilim, meaning something analogous to "those who cause a fall."

Close proximity to humans that understood and accepted their true nature may have softened demonkind's hearts, but not so much that they didn't see their children as new weapons in a future war against the God-Machine. Soon, numbers were less of a problem. They were not so many that an assault on the City was feasible, but enough that war could be waged from within. The seeds of the Unchained spy culture were planted. The people who were once enemies of the God-Machine had been forgotten by all but the Machine itself, and perhaps a few angels still in service from the old times. The Legion trained their disciples and their children alike in the art of subterfuge, sending them into the villages

and city-states near the City, and a few into the City itself. Those that could see through Concealment Infrastructure saw a city of gears and steam and electricity, a true fortress that would serve as testament to what the God-Machine had planned for the whole of the world.

The City

The City, to an untrained eye, is not much different from any prominent city-state of the early Bronze Age. It needs no more name than "The City" — it's impossible to mistake it for any other city, as nothing comes close to the modern conveniences the God-Machine has built into the City's core infrastructure. For a city of the time, it was beyond vast, four square miles of bricks and clay perched atop a great river, protected by walls that tower over even the highest points of the City. These defenses appear to be simple stone structures, but this is a ruse. The stone and mud are Concealment Infrastructure for walls several feet thick, made of solid iron.

Almost every building near the walls is made of brick and mortar, on a scope unmanageable by even the most powerful mortals of the day. Each and every road, street, alley, building, and monument within the City was made to fit a meticulously planned layout, their sacred architects and masons guided by the God-Machine's exacting needs. Wells and aqueducts form a redundant backup water supply throughout, with a separate drainage system for waste. Enormous granaries hold grain on elevated slats, where carved air ducts channel the wind to dry and preserve them. Row upon row of breweries, bakeries, and abattoirs all serve to feed the booming populace. Seen from the sky, the City resembles nothing more than a spiraling occult sigil. Eyes that can see the gears instead behold the body of some great and terrible beast made of stone and gears rather than flesh and blood.

The further towards the city center, the less careful God-Machine is with hiding Its nature. Brick and mortar public works give way to iron and concrete shrines; cobblestone is covered with crude pavement, and towers loom impossibly on foundations seemingly far too small for them. Where only stigmatics and demons see the gears in the outskirts of the city, the God-Machine's presence grows so thick in the inner city that even ordinary citizens may catch glimpses of Its workings from the corner of their eyes. The very center of the city is marked by a glimmering tetrahedral temple, where the God-Machine's most trusted and valued clergy perform their rites. Concealment Infrastructure four layers thick disguises it as steel, the God-Machine's most sacred and rare metal of the time. This monument to Its power pales in comparison to what lies beneath the veils of Infrastructure; the temple's true walls are made by the compressed, half-alive forms of the demons who stood their ground to buy the First Legion time to escape. Their agonized screams and broken bodies are the God-Machine's eternal reminder of the fate it has in store for traitors.

Cults of the God-Machine hold tremendous weight in the City. Everything from the bazaars and marketplaces to simple laborer work feeds into the massive layers of Infrastructure the City makes up. Anyone that can see past Concealment Infrastructure sees gears turning inside and around every building, in every wall, an aura of power and unease permeating everything within the walls.

Not everyone in the City directly serves the Machine or its interests. The majority of those that live in the City believe they serve one almighty god that provides for them, and that all other professed protector gods are false — an uncommon belief in this place and time, to be sure, but far enough from the truth that an average mortal is unlikely to stumble across Infrastructure. If one does, however, he is quickly inducted into the cult's inner circle and, through bribes, rituals, and threats, made a happy, willing servant of the God-Machine.

Wealth is equivalent with one's status in the theocratic government. The poor live in cramped group housing near the outskirts of the city and tend to receive fewer food rations and poorly fermented beer. Wealthier, more devout families find themselves in personal houses, with fresh meat and fruit juices for every meal, and honeyed fruit and spiced cheeses for dessert.

Those who don't serve directly, such as merchants and laborers, don't suspect they still enact the will of the church. They attend and profess their admiration towards their god, certainly, but the farmer who is paid extra to plant seeds in a particular pattern has no idea he's constructing part of the God-Machine's latest occult matrix. The first true bureaucracy could be found in the City, with byzantine communication systems and trade groups muddying the source of work orders, wares to sell, and in some cases the buyers of those same wares.

True members of the Church, especially those who know the nature of their God, mostly operate crucial Infrastructure, which can entail dangers varying from operating a factory he barely understands, to monitoring a nuclear reactor that will kill him from radiation sickness within a month. Either job is considered an honor far beyond what simple priests and church attendants receive, as such lucky individuals see the true nature of their God in all Its deadly glory.

The City's military, like most militaries of the period, is comprised of a large pool of conscripted citizens acting as a militia with a smaller standing army. The militia is well equipped with ubiquitous bronze arms and armor, though they look enviously at their captains who possess works of iron or stranger metals. While given adequate training, whether their morale in the face of opposition is any fiercer than particularly determined villagers is often shaky, as they spend the majority of their time keeping the peace in the City. When pressed into military action, their lot is often to be the suicidal vanguard. The God-Machine is perfectly content to throw hundreds of lives into the thresher of war for a temporary advantage.

The God-Machine and its servants treat the City's professional army with more care. Where the militia are expected to die for their god at a moment's notice, an army of stigmatics is a much larger investment to burn. They are the focal point of the God-Machine's battle plans, the elite that punch through weak flanks and massacre the opposition.

The City's citizens give a very wide berth to these ironclad warriors, as their presence within the walls of the City often heralds violent purges of iconoclasts, traitors, and unbelievers. The standing army does not hesitate to withdraw in the face of overwhelming odds, such as a suddenly revealed ring of demonic infiltrators, but inevitably returns with their angelic commanders to lead the counter-attack in person. Demons brave or stupid enough to stand and fight quickly find that the God-Machine has no qualms with escalating to all-out war within Its own walls to either bring the Unchained back into the fold, or annihilate them trying.

Outside the City

Everyone wants to immigrate to the City, and why wouldn't they? It's a place with enough food, clean water, and shelter to go around in the middle of a barren wasteland. Few wouldn't immediately be attracted by such promises. Even the slums are more desirable than dying of thirst, or hunger, or heatstroke. But then, not everyone gets to live in the God-Machine's manufactured paradise. Not everyone fits the paradigm. Some try and fail to immigrate. Some make it, but ask too many questions. The Machine's analysts judge these wayward souls unlikely candidates for brainwashing, so instead they face exile.

This is where the Unchained come in.

The City has made deals with several farming communities and trading villages, sometimes to obtain resources, sometimes to create Infrastructure that needs a wider berth than the City can provide. Mercifully for the Unchained, the Machine establishes a vassal relationship with places outside Its influence as the exception, not the rule, allowing the Legion to set up shop in the City's blind spots. Demons turn these into safe havens from which to stage the offensive against the City. Usually a demon will make a comfortable niche in a village or community, then spread its influence. This is where the careful balance between the different Agendas begins to break down.

A Tempter starts making deals to put herself in a better social position and have a good time. A Saboteur raises a private army of soldiers outside the God-Machine's so-called heaven. An Inquisitor might just want to make a quiet home where he can gather and collate information. Nothing prevents these demons from living in peace with one another, but when they begin to make power plays that shape the mortals around them, conflict is born.

This is why the war is not yet won. While the demons agree that they need revenge for the old City, the ways they want to go about this are often incompatible. In addition to angels and the God-Machine's unending army of cultists, they must deal with subterfuge from their own kind.

Descent and Deluge

Fractured and outnumbered as they may be, demonkind is *winning*. Some talk of not just living on Earth, but shaping it or another world to suit the Unchained. The disparate Legions and their family-cults are divided on how to get there and what shape it would take, but an idea is forming: Hell. It is a place where the God-Machine has no power, where they don't have to fear their identities eroding, where their children's souls don't strain under the pressure of their true forms. Where they can be free. Where they can be happy. For those who have them, it's where their friends and family can be all of those things, too.

The God-Machine is aware of these developments, of Its lost flock, of their secret war. It knows, and It is not happy. Unable to bring them back into the system except by force, interrogated cultists and suborned Infrastructure bring with them rumors that the God-Machine has something bigger, more drastic planned for the world that the Unchained are trying to steal from Its cybernetic grasp. Something is planned, something the Infrastructure of the City is being turned towards, a drastic reprisal that dying cultists claim with their last breath will leave the earth shaking and the heavens pouring death onto this wicked, corrupted world.

Some of the Unchained have a scorched earth policy too, of course. The more fanatical factions of the Saboteurs have decided that if the tide of war turns against them, and the Unchained cannot rule the Earth, neither can the God-Machine. What this means is only known to the most elite of the Agenda, but they promise destruction, calamity, and collapse so devastating that its echoes will last for thousands of years to come.

Unholy Commandments

Giants in the Earth is a high-powered setting about demons flaunting their power at every opportunity and going to open war with the God-Machine. To facilitate this, several changes have been made to the **Demon: The Descent** rules. A new form of human/demon hybrid, the nephilim, has also been added, and has its own section.

Forbidden Knowledge

The God-Machine's level of technology is roughly the same through every period of time. Ten thousand years ago, Infrastructure still used everything from computers to automatic weapons to nuclear reactors. Nowhere is the saying, "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic," more relevant than Giants in the Earth. As mankind unlocked the gun, the transistor, and eventually the atom, Infrastructure adapted itself to resemble human technology. This was not so in the distant past. The God-Machine may use technology familiar to humans of the present day, but the design of it is alien to anyone but the Machine Itself. Infrastructure is a gateway into dark industrial

worlds where there are next to no safety measures. Computers aren't designed with human-friendly interfaces. Weapons don't always carry the same danger or learning curve that the Machine's other technologies do, but even a cult's greatest archer will have a hard time learning to operate and maintain a rifle, let alone one meant for angels.

Mechanically, this means the Computer, Firearms, and Science Skills are substantially less valuable than in most settings. They won't see much use outside of Infrastructure. Besides that, a demon that operates any of the Machine's futuristic equipment or shares knowledge of them to a mortal causes a compromise. Mortals don't share the risk of mere knowledge alerting the God-Machine, however; once they know something, they can talk all they want about it, incurring no more risk than revealing any of the God-Machine's other secrets.

Actually using a firearm, a computer, or any other "advanced" technology is a more dangerous endeavor. The only place such futuristic equipment is found is Infrastructure, and while the God-Machine has a poor track record of preventing Its tools from being used against It, It's well-versed in tracking the wayward devices down. For demons, using the Machine's technology is a compromise. For all other characters, supernatural or not, it "only" alerts nearby angels to the location where the technology was used. In addition, a mortal that uses any such technology risks becoming a stigmatic as if he was using a gadget.

Melee weapons (clubs, swords, knives) use the Weaponry skill, as usual. Ranged weapons, such as spears, rocks, or bow and arrow, use the Athletics skill.

To Contend With the Almighty

As Giants in the Earth is a high-power high-stakes setting, starting characters begin at a higher baseline. Demon characters begin play at Primum 3. After choosing from four Embeds or Exploits, take two additional Embeds and one additional Exploit. While choosing Merits, take five additional Merit dots, which can only be spent on the demon-specific Merits found on pp. 120–122 of **Demon: The Descent**.

The Integrator Agenda exists, but is not yet as accepted by non-members so Integrators must keep their identities secret. Integrators who make their beliefs public are subject to scrutiny even modern-day Inquisitors might deem extreme, if they are not killed on the spot for treason against the First Legion.

All stigmatic characters can learn Embeds, but not Exploits. They have an effective Primum of 1 but do not count this as a Supernatural Tolerance trait. Embeds are purchased for 2 Experiences, the same as demons or nephilim.

Exiles are not yet known to the God-Machine or the Unchained, but if the Storyteller chooses to use them in her game, they work the same as presented in **Demon: The Descent** and Chapter Two of this book.

Wasn't There a Book About This?

Yes! It's called **Heirs to Hell**, and addresses what human/demon hybrids are like in the modern-day Chronicles of Darkness. It didn't feel appropriate for this setting. For Giants in the Earth, human/demon hybrids needed to be more powerful and less tied to the God-Machine, so we redesigned them for this book.

As always, of course, there's nothing stopping you from bringing nephilim into the Chronicles of Darkness, or the demonspawn into Giants in the Earth, but be mindful of the drastic difference in power levels.

Mortal characters are created and played according to the rules presented in **The God-Machine Chronicle**.

Nephilim

The God-Machine is not all-knowing, impossible as that may be to comprehend. It didn't see the Great Fall coming. Interlocks and the Cipher are a mystery to It, and most importantly, It couldn't have predicted nephilim.

Unholy Birth

Unintended pregnancies are a fact of life. Passion overwhelms common sense when two people are in love, even if one of those people is a demon. When two people come together in a moment of passion, accidents can happen. This is nowhere expressed more plainly than in these, the first true hybrids of the God-Machine's occult physics and the fragile, malleable nature of humanity.

As the first generation of this new subspecies of humanity grew and discovered their powers, they earned the name nephilim.

A nephilim's prenatal period and birth are normal. The only way to tell if a pregnancy may result in a nephilim is by inspecting their parentage. Most nephilim are born from unions between demons and humans, though children from these unions are not necessarily guaranteed to inherit their demonic parent's power. Occasionally, a pregnancy between two nephilim or a human and a nephilim will result in another nephilim, but that's entirely unpredictable. Children who have two demonic parents are nearly always nephilim, but these are still the rarest of them all; demons almost never have the time to raise a child.

As early as an hour after its first breath or as late as its first birthday, the newborn begins to uncontrollably absorb Aether from any demons or Infrastructure it's exposed to. The child randomly

expresses demonic form abilities, eventually settling on the traits it will have throughout its life. This does not risk a compromise unless an angel or other agent of the God-Machine is watching directly (a blind spot in the God-Machine's sensors that the Legions attribute to nephilim being an unforeseen consequence of the Fall). Once the demon parts are decided on, they vanish; the child is normal for all intents and purposes until late childhood.

Sometime shortly before puberty, the child's nephilim traits activate, including access to their Embeds, Exploits, and demon form powers. This isn't without risks, though. The God-Machine's passive sensors may accept the child's reality-warping powers and biomechanical parts as perfectly normal, but the fact of the matter is he was not meant to exist. Metaphysically speaking, the human body was not built to withstand the stress manipulating Aether and replacing body parts with occult machinery places on it.

A nephilim doesn't have Cover. All he has is his own identity, which is under constant strain from his unnatural joining of soul and Primum. Too much damage, and the soul won't be able to maintain the body and mind, causing anything from serious injury to the outright destruction of the nephilim: mind, body, and soul. Calling forth their demon-form parts causes agonizing physical pain; after all, the nephilim isn't switching a quantum state from 'on' to 'off,' he's replacing his arm with a mechanical one, or stripping neurons in his brain to be filled in with circuitry.

Nephilim, like their demonic parents, fuel their supernatural powers with Aether. However, their demonic forms are unable to coalesce ambient Aether and lack the soul-grafts necessary to donate Aether to each other. A nephilim's primary method of regaining Aether is to leech it directly from demons, but they can attempt to absorb waste Aether directly from Infrastructure as well. Their demonic grafts are not able to handle raw Aether with the same ease as their parents, though. They suffer extreme strain from the process, so this is often seen as an act of desperation.

This need to drain Aether, however, gives the first demonspawn another, more subtly powerful tool: They can tell when someone is using a Cover. By feeling out a source of Aether (whether it's background radiation from Essence or pure Aether), a clever nephilim can determine when something behind a Cover is an angel or a demon. They can't see the Cover-user's true form, but they can tell what they're looking at isn't it.

Nephilim do not compromise anything but themselves. If a demon grants herself the ability to spit acid or grow a sword from her arm, she risks detection by the God-Machine. A nephilim risks spiritual contamination to do the same, but unless an angel is watching, his powers never alert the Machine.

It's agonizing for the parent and dangerous for the child, but the nephilim are the most powerful weapons in the Unchained arsenal. Not only can they get away with far more than their parents, if they're careful and lucky, but they can also sniff out agents of the God-Machine or other rogues without being detected. With sufficient cool-down time between missions, the children of the Unchained and their human allies could tip the scales of the war.

Nephilim Character Creation

Follow Steps One through Four of standard character creation (see p. 76, **Demon: The Descent**).

Step Five: Apply Nephilim Traits

- Nephilim do not have Incarnations, Interlocks, Keys, or a Cipher. They can be members of Agendas and as such take the appropriate Condition. Nephilim with no Agenda do not take the Uncalled condition.
- Nephilim cannot purchase any Merit that has "demon" as a requirement, but can purchase Supernatural Merits (see p. 298, **Demon: The Descent**).
- Every nephilim begins play with one permanent Brand (see p. 185, **Demon: The Descent**), two Embeds, one Exploit, and three demonic form parts. They cannot select Propulsions or Processes as demonic form parts.
- When nephilim activate demonic form, they do not gain Aether and must take one point of lethal damage per part manifested.
- Nephilim determine their Primum through the Unstable Soul rules below.
- Nephilim collect Aether by absorbing it from demons or Infrastructure through the Absorb Aether action.
- Nephilim use the Integrity rules from the **God-Machine Chronicle Rules Revisions**, in tandem with the Unstable Soul rules.
- When her player purchases a new Embed or Exploit, a nephilim suffers a breaking point due to her soul painfully readjusting to its changing grafts.

Step Six: Merits

Nephilim characters have access to Supernatural Merits (pp. 298–302, **Demon: The Descent**). In addition, all nephilim receive the following Merits for free:

Eidetic Memory (• •): As in **Demon: The Descent**, p. 288.

Voice of Hell (• •): Nephilim do not have the same reflexive command of language that their demonic parents do, but some strange quirk of their Primum allows them to mimic it. By spending a point of Aether, the nephilim gains perfect fluency with a single language (see p. 183, **Demon: The Descent**) for the rest of the scene.

Unseen Sense (Nephilim) (• •): This Merit carries all the effects of Unseen Sense (God-Machine). In addition, nephilim can sense sources of Aether, identifying angels and demons with a successful Wits + Occult roll. They cannot see through their Cover, but can tell when they're looking at one and what sort of entity is behind it.

Steps Eight through Nine

Complete steps Eight and Nine of character creation as normal. Experience costs are the same as for demons (p. 89, **Demon: The Descent**)

Special Nephilim Systems

Absorb Aether

Dice Pool: Stamina + Occult + Primum

Action: Instant and contested (if used on an unwilling donor)

A nephilim must put in a conscious effort to absorb Aether into her body. By focusing on sources revealed by her Unseen Sense (Nephilim) merit, she can pull Aether from the source into her body. A friendly demon might allow her to drain Aether from him, or she can obtain it directly from Infrastructure. Nephilim cannot give one another Aether, willingly or otherwise. If the nephilim attempts to drain Aether from an unwilling demon, the demon's player rolls Wits + Primum to resist.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character opens her Aether reservoir, but rather than drawing more Aether in, she mistakenly lets out what she already has. Her Aether drops by half, rounded up. If the roll was contested, the demon gains the lost Aether automatically. If the nephilim has no Aether, she suffers a breaking point.

Failure: Nothing happens. If the target was an unwilling donor, he is aware of the nephilim's attempt to steal his Aether.

Success: When used on a demon, the nephilim takes one point of Aether from the demon for each success. When used against Infrastructure, the character regains two points of Aether for each success rolled, but immediately suffers a breaking point with a penalty equal to the amount of Aether regained in this manner, as his soul is battered by the unfiltered influx of waste energy. Any Aether gained in excess of the nephilim's maximum is lost and does not contribute to this penalty.

Exceptional Success: The character draws in an incredible amount of Aether. If contested, the target is unaware he has lost it. It's impossible to steal more Aether than a target has. If used against Infrastructure, the character's dice pool for her suffered breaking point cannot be reduced to a chance die, regardless of any imposed penalties.

Unstable Soul

Nephilim use Integrity to track their mental well being like mortal characters do, with an important caveat. Using Aether and demonic powers puts immense stress on a nephilim's soul. The only thing keeping it from ripping itself apart under the strain is a careful balancing act, the human soul held in superposition with its nugget of Primum and Aether stores. The more trauma the soul endures, the more ways the occult power within can leak out, further damaging the soul. Eventually, unable to maintain this delicate structure, the nephilim's body, mind, and soul warp and glitch until the entire arrangement collapses. The ensuing fallout is universally unpleasant for everybody involved.

When an effect such as an Embed, Exploit, or assuming demonic form would call for a demon to check for compromise, the nephilim instead suffers a breaking point with the same penalties or bonuses. The Machine does not have a system in place (yet) to detect nephilim and alert Itself to their activity, but powers that would attract Its attention are powers that require immense force of will to use safely.

As a character's Integrity decreases, her body and soul begin to degrade, her faltering grip on reality the only thing keeping her from dissolution even as her power grows ever more dangerous. A character's Integrity determines her Primum score, imposes a modifier to her breaking point rolls, and causes her to manifest additional permanent brands as determined by the chart below.

Integrity	Primum	Modifier	Extra Brands
8–10	1	+1	0
6–7	2	+0	0
4–5	3	–1	1
2–3	4	–2	1
1	5	–3	2

Raising Integrity lowers the character's Primum accordingly, as well as suppressing any brands caused by their previous Integrity. Excess Aether a nephilim can no longer hold due to a change in Primum is lost, vented into the air around them in an invisible burst of occult radiation. A character who suppresses an extra brand may manifest an entirely different extra Brand the next time their Integrity reaches a sufficiently low level.

When a nephilim reaches Integrity 0, she is no longer able to define herself and her form concretely enough to keep it intact. If she failed a breaking point she brought upon herself in order to perform an action, she completes it moments before coming apart. Her body fails in a blatantly supernatural fashion, falling apart or transforming into something barely recognizable as formerly human. Some nephilim become pillars of salt, while others dissolve into orange ooze or small heaps of clockwork and gasoline.

Prophecies: Story Seeds

Giants in the Earth isn't the "true" history of the Chronicles of Darkness or the God-Machine (unless you want it to be), but rather an interesting take on the notion of **Demon** in a Biblical-esque setting. Below are some chronicle hooks to use with this shard.

The First Exile

Someone new has appeared in the ring's base of operations. New demons falling and traveling from the City aren't uncommon, but this is no demon. Still plugged into the God-Machine, still able to use Numina and channel Essence, but cursed with free will, this creature is exiled, but not disconnected, and she says she's here to help.

The so-called Exile, calling herself Nahal, has gained ownership of an inn either in the ring's home base or a nearby village, whichever makes more sense. She provides hospitality to anyone of any faction she meets, but doesn't attempt to hide the fact that this is merely a front for the business she is trying to establish: information broker to the Unchained.

As someone still plugged into the Machine, Nahal has access to information that demons can't acquire safely. As an anomaly in between angel and demon, she has goals that she is unwilling or unable to accomplish on her own. She trades with demons and their cultists alike, always the same deal: Do a bit of work for her, and she will give them information straight from the Machine.

Sometimes, she pits the Agendas against one another. Ask for a powerful cult to be disbanded, or a rising star in an Agenda to be disgraced somehow. Other times, she pits demons against the God-Machine, suborns a particular bit of Infrastructure, or engineers the Fall of a particular angel.

The truly disturbing thing about Nahal is that she always clearly explains what she gets out of a mission as well as any ulterior motives. She distrusts Agendas that accumulate too much power, but doesn't want the God-Machine's plans to succeed, especially if they risk returning her to Its service. When she puts a hit out on an angel, she either wants to see if she can make another Exile like herself, or seems to think the target was a friend in her old life and wants that friend back.

She must be lying, of course. Nothing's ever this simple in the cloak-and-dagger world of the God-Machine. The entity calling herself Nahal must have some secret goal that she's hiding behind her apparent honesty and good nature. Nobody can ever be quite sure though. What if she's not playing anyone, and she's exactly what she appears to be? Worse still, what would happen if she returned to the God-Machine with all the information she's acquired?

The Holy Engineers

Infrastructure is not safe for mortals. Crushing gears don't have emergency stops, catwalks don't have railings, toxic elements have no shielding. The lifespan of a mortal working deep in the God-Machine's temples of steel and steam can be measured in single digits. Luckily, hardier stock can be found. Wherever humans gather, vampires aren't far behind. The machinations of the All Night Society aren't a concern for the First Legion. Their desire for secrecy aligns with that of the Unchained, and they have little interest in more than political power. Both parties observe a policy of mutual disinterest, as a rule. Every rule has an exception, however, and the exceptions to this rule are a new faction of Kindred calling themselves the Holy Engineers, ready and willing to serve the God-Machine.

In an attempt to create stronger, hardier servants for more dangerous Infrastructure, the God-Machine stumbled upon vampires. Seeing potential, Its angels began abducting the local Kindred population for experimentation. Eventually, it was discovered that inducing stigmata would cause a strange hybridization of their own curse and the occult physics of the God-Machine, creating a new Clan of Kindred, named Holy Engineers.

The God-Machine uses Its standard combination of social manipulation and occult powers to keep Its pet vampires in line. The Machine-given abilities that the Holy Engineers possess are a direct line to the God-Machine through time and space, through which they are given orders, and the ability to feed on specially treated Essence that enhances a vampire's already robust physical ability.

The God-Machine's first means of controlling Its Holy Engineers is simply giving orders and promising a regular supply of this Essence, as long as they do the work needed to tend to Infrastructure that human can't safely operate. The second is more insidious. When a Holy Engineer attempts to return to the outside world, he develops a supernatural malady known as Machine Sickness, resulting in massive hemorrhages that prevent him from feeding normally. Only completing a task given by the God-Machine to atone for his sins will cure the sickness.

A character well versed in both vampire and God-Machine lore could easily deduce that this is, at best, a temporary arrangement. The Holy Engineers require constant exposure to the occult physics of Infrastructure to remain stable. If removed from this environment, nobody could possibly guess how they may develop or degenerate over time.

The Seal of Solomon

Some occult matrices create vast, terrible outputs, like a storm strong enough to blast a city to dust, an angelic squadron sent to hunt down the Unchained, or a plague that only kills first-born sons. Others are far more subtle in comparison, but only a fool would think that makes them any less dangerous.

A priest from the City travels to the place the ring calls home. If they dwell in the City itself, he's a local religious leader; if they live in the nearby countryside or a far-off land, he comes as a missionary. He wears simple clothes aside from a single ornate ring and claims to work miracles in the name of his god. With a mere gesture of his ring-bearing hand, he can enthrall the mightiest spirits and soothe the raging dead. He uses these powers to address problems the players may not have been able to address effectively, attempting to sway the populace away from their influence.

The ring's physical appearance, while impressive, belies its true worth. It is a signet ring made of fused brass and iron

bands, with writing in a small script no demon can decipher lining the inside of each. The same script adorns the hexagram seal of the ring. Mundane inspection reveals only that it is made with exquisite craftsmanship for this time, metal smoothed and polished to an alluring shine. Occultists who observe the priest's works claim the ring lets him control the will of ephemeral beings and that he is otherwise powerless. He uses these beings to perform his miracles, and has yet to find any ephemeral life that can resist the power of the ring.

Demons look at the ring and see opportunity. Some imagine commanding vast armies of the living, the dead, and things far stranger, while others see a perfect network of spies, or servants to wait on them hand and foot. Others dare to dream bigger, and wonder if the ring's power over ephemera extends to angels. A cultist with such a powerful ring must be trusted, after all, perhaps even trusted as far as to give orders to the Machine's own. It's rapidly becoming a question of when the priest will be attacked for his prize, not if. The player characters find themselves sitting on a powder keg — will they help an ally claim the ring, or will they seek it as their own? Or, perhaps, will they protect the priest to avoid the God-Machine's retaliatory wrath should he come to harm?

Lost Irem

Demons don't stay confined to the surroundings of the City. Sometimes they go exploring. Sometimes, they find something the God-Machine wants buried. Such is the case with the ruins of Irem. Fragments of a civilization predating humanity have been found as far back as the construction of the old City. The God-Machine's orders were to ignore it and move on. Now that they don't take orders from It anymore, the Legion is interested in where these come from and the kind of power they might hold.

The proof that they're of any significance at all, besides predating human civilization, is that every significant fragment of this proto-empire is guarded by fanatic cults who aren't afraid to use Irem's table scraps to fight off interlopers. This has been less of a deterrent than the cultists' masters would probably like, as it's only proof that there's something worth dying for. As the Unchained find more artifacts and uncover more ruins, a picture forms.

Once, there was a land of unprecedented magnificence and power, known as Irem. It's gone now. The name is little more than a whisper among the cults that thrive in what will one day be known as Egypt, but the remains of this lost city are found throughout the world. They promise fragments of the empire's remarkable power to anyone who can find and use them. The Legions want them because Irem is a blank spot in their memories.

The powerful artifacts, cults that beat out the God-Machine in religious fervor, and complete blank spots in their memories regarding the place combine to make the ruins of Irem irresistible to any Unchained with half a mind towards accumulating power external to her Descent. The only

trouble is competing with mortal relic hunters, God-Machine cults that want Irem to stay buried, power-hungry Mages, and the descendants of Irem's mortal cults that have dedicated themselves to protecting these artifacts for their masters.

Legends speak of more dangerous guardians, mortals transformed into unliving protectors of Irem's treasures. The cults seem to radiate around them as equal parts god and servant. There are no confirmed reports of their existence; interrogated cult members talk about a forthcoming "Sothic turn" that will allow these beings to rise *en masse*. Such an event, if the sources can be believed, is far in the future; the war with the God-Machine is a more preeminent concern.

Enuma Elish

The City is not the beginning and the end of all human life, though especially morose Inquisitors might argue otherwise. Other civilizations stand outside its grasp, lands blissfully unaware of the Machine's true nature, lands that It would very much like to control. Whether by mercenary or missionary, the God-Machine makes Its overtures to Its neighbors. Many have fallen before It while others still nobly resist, but only one has caused the Machine to retract Its hand of so-called friendship to find a bloodied stump.

Diplomats, warriors, traders, priests, spies — men and women from every walk of life have been sent to the land between the rivers; few have ever come back the same. Those that return with sound enough mind to speak of what they saw describe a city-fortress ruled by terror and vice. Lawbreakers have their bloodless flayed corpses hung from gibbets, citizens are drafted into vast armies to fuel unending wars of conquest, and the weak serve only to feed the strong. It is a land where the living envy the dead, for it is the dead who rule them.

Seven dead princes rule the land between the rivers, and their favored childer serve as the nobility beneath them. Vampires from the known world flock to their domain, lured by the promise of rivers of blood and absolute dominion. These migrants usually realize too late that they are treated much the same as any outsiders — seen as unwelcome spies and competition at best, and as food for the endless, monstrous hunger of the dead princes at worst. The rare nomads who survive their welcome either flee for greener pastures, or band together with packs of their desperate, scrabbling fellows, finding themselves forced to eke out an existence from the shadows once more.

The dead princes lead their slave-nation from war to war to acquire slaves, plunder, and sacrifices to their patron god of death and the moon. When the City sent its first ambassador to them, the only response they received was a casket full of bloody scrap that had once been the Messenger. Many demons fear the consequences of the City being mobilized to full-on war against another civilization, searching for some way to defuse the situation, but others have dedicated themselves to converting the land between the rivers into a cat's-paw, a deadly if unsubtle weapon to use against the Machine. Dark rumors already circulate that some of the moon god's priesthood who preach most furiously for war with the City are Saboteurs in deep cover.

Chariots of Iron

In Giants in the Earth, human technological advancement roughly approximates that of the Bronze Age. Writing is, relatively speaking, a recent invention; many metallurgic techniques considered fundamental today are unknown outside what little the Machine teaches its cultists. Iron, for instance, requires a much hotter furnace to smelt than the pottery kilns that could often be repurposed for copper or bronze, and those who discovered the secrets of ironworking were understandably slow to give up their informational advantage.

For obvious reasons, Changelings were among the first to attain mastery of iron. Even in the world's first days, the True Fae roamed the between-places, dragging mortals home to their nightmarish kingdom. The Lost tell tales among themselves of the first to escape Arcadia, who discovered that iron was anathema to the Kindly Ones and their magic, which petitioned Iron itself for its secrets. Though their names are lost to time — and some believe them to be the first Seasonal Kings and Queens — the fruits of their labor still live among the changelings in the time of the City. Changelings and their confidants are the only things outside the God-Machine's grasp that hold the secret of iron.

This puts changelings in a unique (and, some would say, profoundly uncomfortable) spot in the eyes of the Legions. Demons have found that instructing their children in the advanced precepts of metallurgy they learned from the God-Machine causes rampant compromise and an easy metaphysical link to follow from the blade to its maker to her teacher. Yet, iron weapons, armor, and tools promise an incredible advantage over enemies that do not possess them, and would help to balance the scales against the God-Machine's own resources. Demons find a serendipitous solution in changelings: As changelings learned the secrets of iron on their own, they may work with it and teach a demon's followers without any fear of the Machine.

Convincing a changeling to give up the secret of his last line of defense against the Others is easier said than done, of course. The bare minimum a changeling smith usually demands is protection from the True Fae, a tall order even for the Legions. Others have eccentric and difficult restrictions they must follow in their work, or leverage their considerable influence to manipulate the Legions to fit their own emotionally charged agendas. Even if a changeling is perfectly happy to work under a demon for protection, that may change rapidly once they learn the truth about soul pacts, the enormity of the foe they face, or any number of other unsavory truths she may hide from them. For example, it's entirely possible that the Machine can promise far greater protection than any demon ever could.

Follow the Money

It takes an enormous amount of resources to support a city, let alone one of the size and scope of the City. Add the bizarre requirements that Infrastructure often calls for, and the God-Machine is faced with a logistical nightmare that often stretches Its mortal resources to the breaking point. Cunning Saboteurs recognize that the weak points in the Machine's supply chain lie outside of the City's walls, in the caravans and traveling merchants that feed its eternal engines. They've encountered a snag, however — the supply chains that truly matter are the ones that make the least sense.

Tribute is regularly hauled to the City by its subjugated neighbors. This tribute is rarely in currency or gold, but in much more practical things, like grain, livestock, slaves, and bronze. Occasionally a village is required to give a stranger tribute to fuel the God-Machine's endless Infrastructure, like the bodies of their dead, or the left eye of every newborn child. Yet even a collection of slave-vassals cannot satisfy all of the City's needs, and so demons have discovered the most esoteric, rare, and dangerous shipments to the City come from equally esoteric, rare, and dangerous traders.

The Legions aren't entirely sure who or what these foreign traders are. They appear to be men and women from faraway lands with strange garb, affect, and customs. No two groups seem to be alike, with some carrying goods and tools already considered outdated, and others loaded with dizzyingly complex technology that would fit in perfectly in the City's deepest Infrastructure. Most of these traders have a passing familiarity with the language of the City's tradesmen, but rarely deign to speak it except when necessary. The many languages they speak among themselves are completely unintelligible to demonkind, a disturbing blind spot in their mastery of human communication.

Demons who attempt to shadow these caravans to their homelands typically fare poorly. Distractions, ambushes, and urgent requests to return home hound them. The few who manage to track the caravan longer than a dozen miles or so speak of blinding lights swallowing them whole, walking into a lake bed, or disappearing into holes in a cliff face seemingly made to fit them. Where do these mysterious travelers go? How do they return? Is it possible to follow them to whatever strange lands they inhabit? Is it possible to sabotage whatever Infrastructure supplies such critical resources to the God-Machine's plans, and turn it to feed the Legions?

Rebirth

Returning the dead to life is no small task. Only in the most exceptional circumstances can a demon even hope to turn back the clock to save the slain, and the modern God-Machine rarely has the preparation, Infrastructure, or motivation necessary to perform such a drastic action. In Giants in the Earth, however, the unprecedented density of Infrastructure in the City has led to strange interactions between networks, creating emergent occult matrices of such subtlety and power that it has taken the Legions years to even recognize their existence. They exist as gaps inside the web of Infrastructure around them, filling with occult energies that the God-Machine is either unaware of or uninterested in. A newly discovered node holds power that poses the ultimate test of the Legions' resolve: returning the dead to life, no matter who they were, no matter how they died, no matter when they died.

The node's physical appearance is simple; a small altar to the God-Machine tucked into an alleyway and covered with offerings. Two black candles with strange wicks that are impossible to light adorn it. These candles burn with a sickly green flame only when the node has been filled with the proper energy, indicating that it is ready to bestow its incredible gift. To use it, the demon (or human or nephilim) needs only to pray for the soul of the deceased before it, holding some memory of them vividly in her heart. They did not necessarily need to know the departed individual but must have had some connection to them, however vague. When the invocation is complete, the candles are blown out by a phantom wind and the deceased is reborn upon the altar as they were shortly before death, only with all injuries and maladies removed.

Using the invocation has no ominous strings attached, no horrifying consequences. The returned character is exactly who they once were. The only restrictions that demons have discovered are that the returned remember nothing between their death and their return, and it does not work on those erased by a claimed soul pact.

Of course, just because the return itself has no unsavory elements doesn't mean the process doesn't. In order for the node to function, surrounding Infrastructure must be allowed to work uninterrupted for extended periods of time, no matter how dangerous or unsavory it may be. Demons, their children, and other beings aware of the node's power have fought catastrophic battles to control it long enough to use it. They are well aware that most of the node's few activations have been used to resurrect those who died to claim it. As the infighting intensifies over who should own the node and who should be resurrected first, neutral parties grow ever more disturbed at the sorts of Infrastructure that has been ignored in order to feed the node. What horrific disaster must be hung over the Legions to force them to abandon the node's promise? Is this the God-Machine's plan, to set demons and nephilim at each other's throats while it prepares the killing blow? Could the right resurrection make it all worthwhile? Even if the node can be destroyed, or sabotaged, would that end the fighting or merely unite all against those who dared to deny the promise of immortality?

FEAR TOMORROW

The God-Machine is unknowable and works in ways that not even the angels fully comprehend. For those still loyal to the God-Machine, this is inconsequential — they do not need to know; they need only obey. For the Unchained, however, there is plenty to worry about. What does It desire, if anything? What motivates the great universal engine to continue to sustain Itself? Faithful mortals say that God has a plan. Demons seek to understand just what that entails. What would they do if they ever found out?

The world is ending. Everything will be destroyed; that much is certain. When, however, remains a question — one that you may not be able to answer, but you may be able to change. You dream of the future. In the dream, time and space mean little, and every action holds untold repercussions. Realities splinter off to become the truth or become devoured into nothingness. The future can influence the past and the past can change the future. Impossibly long journeys happen in the span of a breath. The world shifts with the flap of a butterfly's wings.

You are that butterfly.

The Waking Present

The colorful detailing on the side of the car boldly states "Solar Noise Energy." Salespeople with bright eyes and disingenuous smiles stop passers-by in shopping malls to tell them all about this new opportunity to save money on powering their homes. News broadcasts interview important-looking scientists and consultants who talk about the way they've harnessed a new form of solar power: no cells, no expensive installation. It's going to change the world, they promise.

All around, in cities and suburbs and even in rural areas, construction sites appear: major roadwork, new office buildings, power plants, cell towers. There is nothing out of the ordinary about these things, save the alarming frequency with which they appear. In between these sudden new projects, cars buzz with advertising for Solar Noise Energy like motorized wasps to the hive. Ordinary people see no connection. The freeway has been in need of expansion and repair, they say. It's good to see new jobs in the area, they say. I'm excited for my electric bill to go down, they say. Where mortals see nothing, though, the Unchained see the hand of the God-Machine. No matter where the story in the past begins, the following examples showcase the kind of strangeness that may be encountered:

Infrastructure: The Gate of Heaven

This new source of energy needs a generator. The Solar Noise Group has built an immense power station, ostensibly for the distribution of this new energy to families everywhere. The building is dome-like, immense, paneled on all sides with reflective black glass. A sign out front shows visiting times and proclaims that all are welcome to tour the facility. Gentle humming can be heard at all hours from any point within a mile of the building. Well-dressed staff move throughout the main floors of the building. They seem friendly, eager to talk about "the project" and excited about their work. Their enthusiasm is perhaps too strong to be genuine, and no amount of questioning can make their explanation of what exactly is going on in there any less vague. All members of staff repeat phrases like "exciting new opportunity" and "changes for the future" and other meaningless corporate buzzwords. They never seem to get agitated, even if insulted or pressured.

Type: Elimination

Function: Hidden within the supercollider complex is a code that will initiate a self-destruct sequence. The subsequent meltdown of the facility is one of the ways the

WHAT THE HELL IS THIS?

This setting details a world made up of alternate realities, a broken post-apocalypse Earth contained only within a fever dream that allows time travel between the future and the present. Fear Tomorrow assumes no default starting point and is meant to be slotted into any existing chronicle. The details found herein help to supply a rich setting for the characters to explore as they struggle to stop the world from ending. It begins with possibilities for what they might find in their current setting and then details the turmoil of the future that appears in their dreams.

Spiral World could begin, as waves of radiating power warp and shred reality for miles around.

Security: The staff does not permit anyone to access the lower levels or the "production floor," going so far as to get in the way or even physically remove anyone who tries. That's not to say that getting to the heart of the matter is impossible, just that a direct approach may not work as well as the Unchained might like. If this security measure is bypassed, the rest of the facility houses an enormous room surrounding a tremendous supercollider. The whole space thrums with ambient energy. Protective gear is required at all times. Even with protective gear, mortals who spend too much time near the supercollider begin to deteriorate, first mentally and then physically.

Linchpin: An outdated punch card reader hangs on the wall near the collider itself. Feeding it a correctly coded card will shut the collider down. For modern characters, knowing what a punch card looks like is a Wits + Academics roll, and determining the correct code is Wits + Computer. On a failure, the reader simply chews up the card. Dramatic failure initiates the self-destruct sequence.

Can You Hear Me Now?

Cell towers appear seemingly from nowhere. No one really notices the frequency with which they occur — after all, the modern world is always connected. It's hardly unusual for a phone service company to opt to disguise their towers as ordinary object such as silos or trees. These new towers, however, take on much more unusual forms. Some appear in normal silo style, but up close its surface is covered with hundreds of thousands of zeroes and ones that spell out repeated apocalyptic passages from the Book of Revelation, if translated from binary. Others take the shape of lighthouses nowhere near a coastline, complete with a spinning light that manages to shine in every window nearby, while still others look like industrial stacks coursing steam and smoke — even though they stand in the middle of a cornfield with no other buildings nearby. Still others have been reported as having the shape of grasping hands with fingers clawing upwards towards the sky.

ADD YOUR OWN FLAVOR

The waking world can be set in any point in time and in any part of the world, as previously established. Since the default setting assumes the modern day, you may need to do some adjusting for alternate time periods and places — unless, of course, you like the idea of bizarre anachronisms appearing under the noses of ordinary mortals. While developing your own concepts for alternate Infrastructure, keep in mind the apocalyptic symbols of gates, ladders, towers, and seals and adjust them to fit your starting point. Though the cell tower hook references the Book of Revelation, that's hardly the only apocalyptic text — don't feel constrained to the Bible and use whatever best fits your chosen chronicle setting.

New Highway

New legislation has been passed announcing that the US Interstates will be wholly overhauled to allow for faster transit from coast to coast. Construction will begin immediately. Most people are only surprised by the expedience on the part of the government and less by the sudden change. The development of the new superhighway is a possible cause for the upswing in construction sites.

Exploring these roadwork spaces reveals that everything is not as it seems: I-beams were mixed with alchemical elements, asphalt seems to glow in the moonlight, the empty-eyed stares of the men and women working to build these roads. The construction zones never seem to close. From midnight to midnight, bystanders can hear the rumble of machinery. Some bystanders who watch or listen too long become enthralled, coming back daily to stand and watch with worshipful awe.

Conspiracy theorists suggest this is a project to mind control the population. They're not entirely wrong. Aerial pictures reveal that this new superhighway takes the shape of an occult array, a binding seal meant to control where people can and cannot go. When the world ends, there will be nowhere to run.

Some sections complete in record amounts of time — a few days, a week — and are open to the public. Drivers who take their daily commute along this new stretch of road find themselves compelled to never deviate from this route, until they can think of no other means of travel save via the highway. This may be easy enough for the Unchained to dismiss, at least until it affects someone they are close to.

Ladders to the Sky

Solar Noise Energy representatives travel across the country, aggressively encouraging agricultural workers to branch out. Those who accept are transformed, and their livelihoods are turned skyward in a matter of days. Dairy farms become sites for lifting companies. Fields of wheat become launch pads. Tractors and harvesting tools are taken apart and repurposed to become aeronautic equipment.

Solar Noise asks everyone to look up and see the infinite possibilities. They dare people to do more, knowing that unusual change keeps wandering eyes away from other things, but also lets the agents of the God-Machine move necessary equipment from place to place in a swift and expedient manner.

As Infrastructure is examined, invaded, destroyed or suborned, more crop up near-immediately. Whatever the God-Machine has planned, it is intent on achieving. Wading deeply into these points of interest is hardly necessary for curious Unchained to begin to piece together the terrible truth: The God-Machine is done with this world. When the linchpins on the involved Infrastructure are pulled, an inescapable shockwave follows; a mad burst of power that bends and twists reality much like a Demon's Fall. The shockwave brings a moment of strange and fractured images. Nothing else changes, at least until the involved Unchained sleep.

Absolute Destiny Apocalypse

The initial dream begins with a vision. Angels without number appear in the sky, and then the world renders itself as wire frames, blocky shapes, and strings of code. The picture of reality fractures as the world itself shakes apart. Great furrows tear into the Earth's crust and the sky rips like so many pieces of paper. Pieces of the world drift upwards into a giant spiral, a vortex of broken laws of physics. Through this violent upheaval, the Spiral World is born.

The Spiral World of Dreams

Upon sleeping, the Unchained find themselves elsewhere. Humanity lies scattered across the swirling face of the Earth, led by those bold enough to fight the bare-faced monsters that lurk at every turn or clever enough to stay out of their myriad predators' sight.

Unmasked

As the God-Machine has slowly devoured the makings of reality, the monsters of the world are stripped of their masks. They roam the ruined world, vying for remaining control as angels continue to dredge up reality in chunks and return it to the God-Machine as recycled data. The Unchained are similarly exposed, unable to hide their demonic forms. Demons have no Cover, no mortal form to deflect the attention of the God-Machine. Angels themselves can no longer hide, so the Unchained are blessedly just another monster. There is perhaps some joy in monstrous anonymity.

The Mechanical Face of a Monster

In the Spiral World, characters are always in their demonic form, but that doesn't mean they're always at maximum power or even exempt from the degradation of their Cover. Mechanically, this means the Unchained is always in her demonic form, with all the benefits that allows. Characters do not, however, automatically have the benefit of going loud. Exploits and Embeds cause compromise as usual, but the effects of the compromise do not take hold until the character wakes from the dream world. Other compromises are largely irrelevant as the character has no guise to maintain while within the dream.

Shaking the Pillar of Heaven

The **Demon** core references the Pillar of Heaven (p. 267) in a sidebar. In the vision brought on by the shockwave, you may consider that the four angels pull the bars on the Pillar, which then would not only activate the fault but also begin the whirlwind process of recycling reality by the God-Machine. Even if your campaign is not set in Seattle, this iconic piece of infrastructure could be moved anywhere. Alternatively, since the distance between places no longer matters, a game centered around the distribution of information in Tel Aviv could still see the world ending via the Pillar's triggers, leaving the characters embroiled in a conflict with others from another continent entirely.

This also means that the God-Machine does not immediately know that the characters are present until they call attention to themselves. The world is a cavalcade of other monsters, so the Unchained pass unnoticed until they wield their power.

Turning it to Eleven

The characters in the Spiral World can still go loud. As in the waking world, the demon casts aside his limits and taps into his forgotten potential, screaming his defiance in the face of the God-Machine. This conveys the remaining benefits that going loud would otherwise give — an increase in Primum, access to Embeds and Exploits, and so on. The glitches it causes, however, both appear in the dream world and linger around the character's sleeping body, potentially alerting outsiders that something strange sleeps there.

While in the dream, the character undergoes no physical change but has become a metaphysical beacon for all the dangers of the world to see, especially the attention of angels. When the character wakes, he wakes in his demon form, having rendered whichever Cover he chose to sleep in to 0.

A War of Attrition

Besides the dangers of compromising a sleeping Cover, a demon must also be mindful of her Aether reserves. Aether spent to fuel her powers while dreaming within the Spiral World is not recovered automatically when she wakes. By the same token, if she goes to sleep low on resources, she arrives on the other side in similar straits. If the demon manages to find a source of Aether in the dream world, however, that resource carries over to the waking world.

An Eight-Hour Window

In addition to the other challenges faced by traveling between the dreaming and the waking world, characters acting in the dream world are limited by the amount of time their body is asleep. Waking disengages a sleeping character's consciousness from the dream, meaning that if she is in the middle of accomplishing something and the fire alarm goes off in her apartment building, her work will be interrupted. When she returns to sleep, things may or may not be left as they were.

As with any dream, time passes differently between sleeping and waking. A character may feel like she has a full 24-hour day in the dream, but is only asleep for 8 hours. A lot can be accomplished on the other side with a good night's sleep, but by the same token, interruptions can throw the whole process off. Conversely, it is possible that angels could find a way to prevent sleeping demons from exiting the dream, leaving their bodies in a comatose state in the waking world.

Who Needs Sleep?

The limit of 8 hours of sleep adds another level of tension and drama: character must accomplish their goals in a short period of time or face the uncertainty of plunging back into the dream on another night. Sleep aids and night-time medications can be purchased and abused for extra hours of sleep. A character with connections in the medical field (or illegal drug connections) may also be able to obtain stronger substances that allow her to stay unconscious for greater periods of time.

Characters attempting to drug themselves into deeper, longer sleep should be permitted to try, but not without consequences. If buying illegal drugs would be out of character for her Cover, this causes deterioration as normal. If suddenly disappearing from her usual haunts would cause concern from her associates and connections, then make sure to have that impact the story line in the waking present. Storytellers should also bear in mind that dependency on drugs can lead to addiction and other physical consequences and should not go lightly on a character trying to game the system via substance abuse.

On the other hand, characters may face situations in which they cannot sleep. Functions of the God-Machine designed to bring the apocalypse to fruition may find the identities of the players' characters and make their best efforts to prevent them from entering the dream (and therefore meddling with the world-ending process). Bricks crash through windows late at night, neighbors suddenly have loud fights at 3 AM, alarms go haywire several hours too early, and any other manner of distraction to keep the involved Unchained from sleeping. Like abusing substances to gain extra sleep, too little sleep leads to negative consequences: penalties to mental and physical actions, declining health and other more severe things like hallucinations, etc. Additionally, if seeming exhausted, strung out, or otherwise notably sleep-deprived would be out of character for the demon's Cover, this causes deterioration as normal.

Summary of Changes

- The human appearance of a Cover no longer exists.
- Characters benefit from being in Demonic Form at all times, but do not have the full benefits of Going Loud.
- Going Loud otherwise increases Primum, expands access to Embeds and Exploits, and attracts attention as normal.
- Compromises to Cover from Embeds and Exploits do not take effect until the character wakes, but are still rolled as normal.
- Resources spent or gained in the dream carry over to the real world.

A World Unmade

The Spiral World of Dreams is a world unmade — all splinters and timelines thrown together in a whirlwind of madness. The strictures of geography and time are abandoned as the God-Machine rips reality apart and recycles it.

No matter where the chronicle begins, the Spiral World tears it apart, placing untamed jungles beside frostbitten cities, and phonographs in the same space as iPods.

Reality in Pieces

Somehow the world fractures. Not just this world, but every world in every splinter along every timeline. Landmasses break into floating chunks as the earth comes apart in pieces. Bubbles of reality swirl around each other, separated by a void. In each bubble, life proceeds as normally as possible — most of the laws of physics work, day and night happen, injuries and illnesses are real, and so on.

Some of the reality shards are core parts of the default setting. At least one is Seattle, while others are the 1889 and the 1999 fragment. Still others may be Berlin, Tokyo, or Hong Kong. Other possibilities include places lost to time or locales affected by outcomes that were never meant to happen. All through these reality bubbles, a bringer of the apocalypse called "The Maw" moves, chewing up what is left and widening the spaces between reality pockets. The Maw moves slowly, but it is efficient. It is only a matter of time before the Spiral World itself is gone.

Crossing the Void

When a character steps off of a reality bubble, she can cross over to another so long as she bears a point in mind and that point still exists. Given the time to concentrate, this happens without complication. If a character is trying to cross to a plane at no longer exists, she knows instantly. If she must cross from point to point in a hurry or under pressure (escaping pursuit, as an example), a Wits + Occult roll is required. At Storyteller discretion, distractions and other impeding outside factors may impose a penalty to this roll.

Failing to cross results in the character appearing somewhere she did not intend to be. The void between these reality pockets is the blank canvas of the universe, which reads the desires and intentions of the lost soul. It takes her to a reality pocket based on either what her subconscious desires or fears most, whichever would be more interesting.

Dramatically failing this roll should yield catastrophic results. Perhaps opening a fracture even further, or a pathway connecting the past and future closes, or perhaps someone important to the character ceases to exist or forgets about her entirely.

Controlling Entry into the Dream

Choosing where a character enters the Spiral World is as difficult as resuming a dream when one has been woken too soon. Characters begin the dream in a similar location every time, assuming that the bubble has not yet been consumed – implying that there is some connection between the characters' physical bodies and their presences in the dream. Characters can try to control where they arrive upon falling asleep by making a Wits + Occult roll. On an exceptional success, the character can pinpoint precisely where she intends to end up. On a success, she arrives where she intended. On a failure, she either arrives somewhere close but not where she wanted, or arrives in the right place at the wrong time. On a dramatic failure, it's not even close.

Letting Enemies In

The Unchained awaken with their resources drained and their muscles fatigued. Given the nature of the Spiral World and the void of possibility, it stands to reason that what can enter the dream could also leave it. Whenever the agents of the God-Machine realize that the Unchained are freely crossing from dream to reality, they make every effort to eliminate them and prevent the demons from stopping the world's end. Knowing that the events of the past will alter the future, angelic pursuit eventually comes from both within the dream and without. Angels may try to pursue the characters by tracking their passage through the void of possibility as they move from one reality bubble to the next. Pursuing angels could easily figure out where the demons traveled from by the way the void responds.

If the dream world is simply a complex simulation, a coded trap, then that code can be reversed and what is caught within can be let out. Even without the assistance of the void, an angel could read the metaphysical timestamp corresponding to the point at which the Unchained went to sleep and entered the dream. Using that information, the angel could pinpoint the place in reality to which their consciousness is attached. By reconfiguring the dream, the angel could slip out the same way the Unchained got in and awaken in the same physical location as the sleeping demon.

Everything and the Kitchen Sink

Since reality has been thrown into a blender and the concept of forward-moving time no longer exists, the idea of running a game in a world like this may seem daunting. Which timelines should stay? What happens if two timelines contradict? The easy answer is to do what you and your group like best. Do whatever fits the story you're trying to tell. If it's more interesting, let conflicting timelines exist at the same time. Perhaps two versions of a character the players have met in the waking world appear in the dream. Reality is broken and the rules no longer apply. Have fun with that.

The Maw

Agents in the Spiral World whisper of the Maw, but no one has yet been able to describe it. Common knowledge holds that it is a Destroyer angel of unfathomable power, while others argue that it is actually an immense part of the occult matrix: Elimination Infrastructure that grows ever larger. The Maw does not announce itself. If a place is lucky, one of its minders announces that an area's time is up. Otherwise, people do not know that they are in the Maw until it is too late, or so the rumors say.

An area targeted by the Maw appears normal, but not for long. Gradually all buildings darken and the people become strange and listless before parts of the targeted space simply vanish, disintegrating into a stream of zeroes and ones. This dissolution continues until nothing of the affected area remains. The Spiral World shifts in its wake, leaving behind spiraling nothingness, and the Maw moves on.

Angels and cultists who usher the Maw know it is their destiny to be destroyed by it. The Maw does not discriminate, chewing up and spitting out anything that gets caught within its area of influence. This force of nature drives the God-Machine's planned destruction of the world, but it must be herded. It has little sense of self-direction and will simply do its job once placed in an area. If someone were to find a way to carry it from the dream into the waking present, it could yield disastrous results.

Agencies of the Dream

In this world of dreams, the monstrous denizens have split themselves into factions. Loose cohesions of like-minded individuals scramble for control but are united against their angelic opposition. Each Agency divides itself along ideological lines. They do not necessarily have formal membership, and characters encountered along the way may be playing multiple sides. Though divided, they agree that whichever group holds out for the longest will get to choose how the new future will be shaped — assuming any new future is coming at all.

Power Struggle

These Agencies are loose affiliations of Demons willing to work together towards a common goal, so disagreements are bound to arise. A splinter group from the Noose feels that the Executioner's general policy of "cracking a few eggs" is too careless and aggressive. Though they agree that the ultimate goal should be to strike at the God-Machine itself and to stop the world from ending by fighting a resource war, they feel this could be accomplished with a little bit more finesse — careful sabotage as opposed to all-out destruction. Collateral damage is important, the Executioner and their followers argue — it sends a message of rebellion. The more resources destroyed, the more hard-pressed the God-Machine will be to replace them. Why just break the tool when you can break the whole workbench?

The Snare

Not all who reside in the Spiral World of Dreams believe that it is reality. A group of Unchained have congregated, driven by the belief that this world is merely a reflection of what might be — a form of ultimate psychological warfare by the God-Machine. They believe that somehow this complicated illusion can also be suborned and controlled, perhaps even enough to catch the God-Machine in Its own trap. This loose affiliation of minds call themselves the Snare. The God-Machine has given them rope, and they intend to hang It.

The Justicar

Background: The Justicar coordinates and directs the Snare. Her efforts are behind the majority of the Snare's assaults on fringe Infrastructure and the efforts to capture and suborn angels. She's a keen, charismatic strategist, a likable power-behind-the-throne type. Getting to the Justicar directly, however, can be difficult. She does her best to keep her identity a secret in the Spiral World, despite her demonic face being ever visible. She acts through proxies and agents, sending associates and subordinates to deliver messages so to best keep her face hidden.

Description: If one were to eventually meet the Justicar in person, her demonic form is exposed machinery of glistening dark metal, the structure through which drifting gray smoke churns. Her eyes are points of golden light shining from indistinct origins and she carries a spear of matching metal.

Storytelling Hints: The Justicar's primary focus is making sure the Snare's many plans succeed. Unlike other major players in this strange world, the Justicar and her close associates are aware that this world is a dream, the God-Machine's warning and trap. Her plans are unfolding in the waking world as well as the dreaming, and eventually she may make contact with any characters who pursue a working relationship with her.

Virtue: Scrupulous

Vice: Scheming

Incarnation: Messenger

Agenda: Inquisitor

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Computer 1, Investigation (Hunting Angels) 3, Politics (Factions of the Dream) 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Drive 1, Firearms 1, Stealth 1

Social Skills: Empathy 2, Expression, Intimidation 3, Persuasion 2, Socialize (Complicated Plots) 2, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Contacts (Snare Agents) 3, Fixer, Small Unit Tactics, Trained Observer 3

Health: *7*

Primum: 3

Demonic Form: Inhuman Intelligence, Mental Resistance, Fast Attack, Sonic Acuity, Blind Sense, Electrical Resistance, Phasing, Aegis Protocol

Embeds: Find the Leak, Devil's Advocate, Authorized, The Map is Not the Territory, Everybody Knows

Exploits: Raze Infrastructure

Aether/per turn: 12/3

Willpower: 4

Cover: *7*

Size: 5

Speed: 9

Defense: 3

Initiative: 4

Armor: 0

How the Grid Becomes a Net

In order to trap a god in a cage, it is imperative to know where the cage's walls lie — or, if they can't be found, build them yourself. The Snare's agents seek Infrastructure at the edges of reality to suborn and gain its properties for their own goals. Like the Agents of the Noose (see p. 170), the Snare is seeking where reality is thinnest and the God-Machine may be near. While the Noose would prefer to tear the God-Machine apart and scatter Its ephemeral cogs across the expanse of the universe, the Snare feels it is more expedient to catch the hunter in Its own trap.

Near the borders of a reality bubble, a lingering power plant churns bluish smoke into the sky. Waste runoff behind the facility trickles off the edge into nothing. This plant supplies energy to a good portion of the bubble it is stationed in, and the Snare has a hunch that this location will become a springboard for the Maw. The plant itself is a piece of infrastructure that delivers both power and subliminal messages to the people living around it. This particular area is also free of other supernatural incursions — at least for now, and possibly because of this power plant. Given that it is so close to the edge of reality, glitch-like phenomena happen continuously as the characters get close — which also hints that perhaps this place is close to the God-Machine itself.

The characters could choose to immediately suborn the facility. While trying, a strike team from The Noose arrives, hoping to catch one of the four guides of the Maw — likely the Lead or the Chain (see p. 171), wrapping all the characters up in a direct conflict with the world-ending angels as well as facing the difficulty of suborning the Infrastructure.

Assisting a Fall

A demon working for the Snare, called the Gear, has a plan to slow the apocalypse. He approaches the involved Unchained and asks if they will travel back in time and push him towards his Fall ahead of schedule. The Gear knows he was instrumental in some sort of mission that pushed the world towards its end — though due to the warping of time and space in the dream, he cannot recall what exactly he was meant to do. He firmly believes that if his allies can find himself and nudge him away from the God-Machine, it might delay the end of the world.

His angelic self is living in Seattle, acting under the guise of a production manager with the Solar Noise Energy company. He tells the assisting Unchained to infiltrate the office he was operating out of and to push him to the realization that freedom is paramount. This task may seem fairly straightforward if the chosen starting point is in Seattle, but may be significantly more difficult if it is not. To what lengths are the characters willing to go to help an acquaintance?

The Ark

Simply because the world is ending and reality is being unmade doesn't mean that the Unchained have stopped seeking Hell. In fact, this affiliation of like-minded demons have decided that there is no better time to reclaim reality from the God-Machine than when It is trying to unmake it. Besides defying the God-Machine through making their own reality, the Agency that calls itself the Ark seeks also to preserve what is best about humanity. They have collected works of art, technology, personages, and ideas and kept them sequestered away from the tide of destruction as the world ends — though not always with the permission of their original owners.

The Curator

Background: In order to create a most perfect collection of ideal things for the future, a personage dedicated to pruning and selecting the items of interest is necessary. The Ark calls this particular person of task and intent the "Curator." No one is quite sure if the Curator is one person or several, but directives from the Curator to those who could help him are rarely questioned.

He passes missives through his associates using amusingly archaic or anachronistic methods for whatever splinter he happens to be hiding out in: carrier pigeons, telegraphs, riders on horseback, calls from a pay phone, and so on. He is interested in capturing and collecting all that is best about the Earth, from people to ideas, and has few qualms about the simply taking what he wants. These he stores in the Vault — the Ark's suborned piece of Infrastructure, rich with their purloined treasures — for eventual release into their Hell when the time comes.

Description: The face the Curator presents to the public is an improbably tall figure, robed like an ancient scholar. He holds a hefty tome writ in no Earthly language. His head is a

bare skull, floating in darkness just above the collar of his robe. When he speaks, the voice seems to come from everywhere at once, though his mouth never moves.

Storytelling Hints: The Curator will work with anyone willing to fetch and collect things for him who will also agree with the idea that humanity must be preserved. This is the world he Fell for, and there are few things he loves more. He collects allies as well as *object de arte*, giving him an impressive network of compatriots to draw from. Perhaps more worrisome is the fact that the Curator has little trouble eliminating people he sees as threats to his perfect future.

Virtue: Meticulous

Vice: Thorough

Incarnation: Psychopomp

Agenda: Tempter

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics (Artifacts from Every Era) 3, Computer 3, Crafts, Investigation (Treasure Hunting) 2, Occult 2, Politics 1, Science 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Larceny 2, Stealth 1

Social Skills: Empathy 2, Expression 1, Intimidation 1, Persuasion (I'd Like You to Work for Me) 2, Socialize 1, Subterfuge 1

Merits: Eidetic Memory, Indomitable, Library 3, Meditative Mind 2, Patient

Health: 7

Primum: 3

Demonic Form: Inhuman Intelligence, Night Vision, Electrical Sight, Sense the Angelic, Environmental Resistance, Mind Reading, Spatial Distortion, Voice of the Angel

Embeds: Ambush, Cuckoo's Egg, Last Place You Look, Download Knowledge

Exploits: Behind the Curtain, Reality Enforcement

Aether/per turn: 12/3

Willpower: 6

Cover: 7

Size: 5

Speed: 9

Defense: 3

Initiative: 5

Armor: 0

Infrastructure: The Vault

The Ark has suborned a piece of Infrastructure once meant to be a starting point for the Maw. On its surface, it appears to be a community building, the announcement board decorated with faded flyers and lazily hanging letters that once spelled out available classes and the times for civic meetings. The inside is dark and cobwebby; everything is perfectly in place, as if all the clerical staff had one day gotten up and left in a neat and orderly fashion. The elevator, which still works, goes up to the 4th floor and down to the first sub-basement, but pressing the right combination of buttons causes the appearance of a new button which shows "The Vault" in faded but glowing letters. Taking the elevator to this floor reveals a vast, secret enclosure in which all manner of stolen artifacts have been stashed away for preservation for the new future. Their stolen treasures include everything from actual works of art raided from museums before the cataclysm to ideas trapped in shimmering occult prisons and geniuses from all eras kept in softly humming stasis tubes.

Type: Suborned

Function: Generates 3 Aether per chapter

Security: Only the Curator's inner circle may access the Vault, and they take turns protecting the entrance.

Linchpin: The Curator's angel self, stolen from another reality bubble and kept in stasis in a glowing tube.

Open Conflict

The Ark believes to have found a reality bubble that still contains the Library of Alexandria. Their goal is to find this fragment and capture the location, bringing it back to their reality bubble for permanent storage in the Vault. The Library contains thousands of forgotten secrets about human achievement and the history of the world. It is a rare treasure and would be a crowning jewel in the Curator's collection.

The Noose, however, believes that this version of the Library is actually a tremendous piece of Infrastructure designed to indoctrinate everyone in that reality fragment. Even if the Library is a lost treasure, it is a powerful tool of the God-Machine and should be destroyed. The Ark absolutely cannot abide by this idea, so the two factions are in open conflict over the Library. The characters must choose which side to support — will they throw their lot in with the Ark and preserve the lost secrets of humanity, but risk bringing humans and themselves dangerously close to a tool of the God-Machine? Or will they eradicate what could be an instrument of indoctrination at the cost of a wonder of human achievement?

The Noose

Despite choosing war and destruction as their primary *modus operandi*, the Noose does not revel in violence for violence's sake. Any damage to the God-Machine's agents and resources sets back the impending apocalypse. The Noose sees itself as the executioners of the God-Machine and Its affiliates. They will not sit idly by stockpiling resources and debating philosophy when the God-Machine has every intention of destroying the world. Their core belief is that the best defense is a good offense, and the Noose cares little for who or what gets in the way when they fight back. Like the Snare, their ultimate Goal is the God-Machine itself, but while the Snare opts to catch It with Its own trap, the Noose would see It destroyed for good. Given the vastness of this world-ending undertaking, those allied with the Noose think that the God-Machine's face must be close to the world and that they could slip through a crack in the breaking reality and strike at It directly.

The Executioner

The Executioner looks like a brute: immense, broad, clearly built to crush and demolish. It bears the shape of a man made of plates upon plates of burnished metal, driven together by wicked-looking rivets. Its hands unfold into complex tools of death, and each step it takes quakes the Earth. Though it speaks in a basso rumble, The Executioner chooses to identify as neither male nor female and prefers to be spoken of as "they."

Though dangerous, the Executioner is not a brute. They are a brilliant and flexible strategist and keenly observant. They would not have been so successful otherwise. They are perfectly happy, however, to let outsiders believe that the guiding force behind the Noose is nothing more than a dumb chunk of proverbial muscle willing to smash anything that got in its way. The Executioner knows that in order to stop the continued destruction of the world, the Maw must be contained and a swift lesson taught to its master, the God-Machine. Its focus is on destruction for that end — to stop the unmaking of the world. Some believe the Executioner's desire to kill the God-Machine to be madness and a fool's errand. The Executioner does not give a damn about what they think.

Virtue: Strong

Vice: Violent

Incarnation: Destroyer

Agenda: Saboteur

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics (Military History) 4, Computer 1, Crafts, Investigation 1, Occult 1, Politics, Science 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl (Claws and Teeth) 3, Firearms 1, Larceny 1, Stealth 2, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Empathy 1, Intimidation (Goddamn Terrifying) 3

Merits: Grappling Style 3, Danger Sense, Defensive Combat (Brawl), Contacts 3

Health: 12 (while in Demon Form in the dream)

Primum: 3

Demonic Form: Armored Plates, Claws and Fangs, Huge Size, Tough as Stone, Electric Jolt, Glory and Terror, Wings, Wound Healing

Embeds: No Quarter, Hesitation, Momentum

Exploits: Swift Resolution

Aether/per turn: 12/3

Willpower: 4

Cover: 7

Size: 9 (5+4 from Huge Size, while always in Demon Form in the dream)

Speed: 9 (penalized by Armored Plates)

Defense: 4 (uses Brawl instead of Athletics, –1 Armored Plates)

Initiative: 4

Armor: 3/2

The Hit

Four angels guard and herd the Maw. The four tirelessly travel from bubble to bubble, driven by a directive that only

MANIFESTATIONS WITHIN THE DREAM

The following character profiles for the angels include Manifestations that may seem unnecessary, given the nature of the Spiral World. While angels do not need to materialize in the dream world, they still retain the ability to do so — especially if they were to follow the players' characters into the waking present. Angels in the Spiral World also retain the ability to fetter, unfetter, possess and claim people and objects as they would normally. Storytellers should keep this in mind when designing antagonists of their own for use within this chronicle setting.

they can sense. They work without ceasing to destroy the Spiral World one bubble at a time. When their work is finally done, they await their own destruction at the hands of the God-Machine Itself. They go by the Chain, the Yoke, the Rod, and the Lead. Where these four appear, the world is chewed up and recycled not long after. The Agents of the Noose have tracked the activity of the current four and plan to destroy them utterly, possibly keeping one for interrogation. Popular belief holds that reality is thinnest wherever they appear; a direct passage to the God-Machine might be possible. The Executioner is no fool and knows the immense danger of this undertaking. It has been seeking other Unchained bold enough to pin down where they will strike next and attack, dealing as much damage as they possibly can. Destroying all four isn't necessary — striking a solid blow is.

THE CHAIN

Mission: The Maw appears and consumes without thought or consideration. Like a leash on any ferocious beast or the cage in which any monster may be kept, the Chain serves to keep others safe. It defines the parameters within which the Maw will destroy, serving as the first line of defense against anything unwanted: wandering mortals, other creatures of the Chronicles of Darkness, or meddling Unchained. It does whatever it must to set and maintain their boundaries.

Description: The Chain has a humanoid shape and stands about eight feet tall. Its skin is dull gunmetal gray patterned with loops and whorls, like an infinite mesh of tightly woven chain. Elongated limbs whip from shoulders and hips at bizarre, multi-jointed angles. Its facial features are merely dark spots in the perpetual chain-pattern that covers its body.

Methods: The Chain defines and defends an area. It defends itself first by seeking to bind and remove anything that intrudes, only then moving to more extreme methods. It is a peerless grappler, entangling and strangling those who push it to extremes.

Virtue: Lawful
Vice: Violent
Rank: 3
Attributes: Finesse 8, Power 6, Resistance 5
Influence: Boundaries • •, Chains •
Corpus: 12
Defense: 5
Willpower: 10
Size: 6
Speed: 19 (Species factor 6)
Initiative: 14
Armor: 0
Numina: Blast, Left-Handed Spanner, Pathfinder, Seek, Speed
Manifestations: Twilight Form, Discorporate, Materialize, Possess

Max Essence: 20

Ban: The Chain must obey any boundaries that it did not set.

Bane: Broken barricades, such as severed chain links, frayed rope, or torn police tape are unbearable to the Chain.

Note: The Chain's Blast appears as an extension of chains firing from one of its limbs.

The Yoke

Mission: Like the Chain, the Yoke also binds and defines. While the Chain defends, however, the Yoke controls. It keeps the Maw in check, preventing it from spilling past the boundaries and focusing only on its task. It restrains the Maw and centers its focus, or the lack thereof.

Description: The Yoke is wide, with glistening, yellow-toned skin that is as hard as marble. It stands about the height of a large human man and has no clear head or face, though it can sense its surroundings without issue. Its hands are immense, grabbing tools, each palm spanning several feet across.

Methods: The Yoke employs a method of restraint — whether that be grabbing and forcibly moving its target or simply putting its wide frame in the way. Its tremendous hands are meant not only to grasp and restrain, but also to break and crush; the Yoke has no compunction about using them in either manner.

Virtue: Patient

Vice: Stubborn

Rank: 3

Attributes: Finesse 5, Power 7, Resistance 9

Influence: Methods of Restraint • • •

Corpus: 15

Defense: 9

Willpower: 10

Size: 6

Speed: 17 (Species factor 6)

Initiative: 14

Armor: 0

Max Essence: 20

Numina: Left-Handed Spanner, Omen Trance, Pathfinder, Regenerate, Stalwart

Manifestations: Twilight Form, Discorporate, Materialize, Fetter

Ban: The Yoke must follow given directions to the letter, without deviation.

Bane: Chaotic, open spaces.

The Lead

Mission: The Lead travels from place to place, finding the right target for destruction and preparing the way. The Lead softens the minds of the population before their inevitable demise. When the Lead appears, all is lost.

Description: The Lead has the least fearsome appearance, looking almost human in an uncanny, too-perfect way. Its cool, androgynous voice soothes and comforts, even when the words it speaks are of ultimate doom and destruction.

Methods: The Lead seeks a place for the Maw, usually a remaining population center or a lingering place with some kind of important landmark. It calmly spreads the message of doom to the inhabitants, who fall obediently into line. This method of pronouncement-turned-obedience could be interrupted, if the Unchained were to arrive in the right place at the right time.

Virtue: Trustworthy

Vice: Fanatical

Rank: 3

Attributes: Finesse 7, Power 7, Resistance 6

Influence: Leadership • • Sedation •

Corpus: 11

Defense: 7
Willpower: 10
Size: 5
Speed: 19 (species factor 5)
Initiative: 13
Armor: 0
Max Essence: 20
Numina: Aggressive Meme, Implant Mission, Pathfinder, Rapture, Sign
Manifestations: Twilight Form, Discorporate, Materialize, Fetter
Ban: The Lead must address any argument presented to it.
Bane: The Lead finds broken symbols of heraldry (such as a family crest) or authority (the seal of the President of the United States, a police badge, etc) and items used for amplification (microphones or PA systems) abhorrent.

The Rod

Mission: No comfort can be found here. Of the four, the Rod keeps the process running and brooks no interference. It stands in full support of the other three to ensure that the God-Machine's given task of uprooting and recycling reality is done. The Rod never appears without another one of the four. Whatever its partner — whichever member that may be — chooses, the Rod supports and sees through to the finish.

Description: The Rod assumes the form of a tall human man in Roman Catholic clerical vestments. Its multi-hued hair hangs wildly from its head, and in its right hand it carries a heavy club of unearthly metal. It has no face; the space in which its features should be is smooth and blank.

Methods: The Rod supports. It moves swiftly and efficiently to the aid of whichever partner needs it most. If torn between multiple associates, the Rod defaults to the defense of the Maw first after falling in line alongside the Chain. The Rod does not hesitate to kill, doing anything necessary to lower the threat and keep the process running smoothly.

Virtue: Loyal
Vice: Efficient
Rank: 3
Attributes: Finesse 7, Power 7, Resistance 7
Influence: Support • • •
Corpus: 12
Defense: 7
Willpower: 10

Size: 5

Speed: 19 (species factor 5)

Initiative: 14

Armor: 0

Max Essence: 20

Numina: Drain, Implant Mission, Omen Trance, Pathfinder, Seek, Transmute

Manifestations: Twilight Form, Discorporate, Materialize, Possess

Ban: The Rod must travel using only direct routes.

Bane: Broken, bent, or otherwise ruined support structures, such as I-beams, girders, rivets, Chicago screws, etc.

Points of Conflict

The factions of the dream world don't always get along. With such strong ideologies, clashes between the Agencies are inevitable. The Snare agrees with the Ark that humanity should be preserved and that the goal of Hell is still worth pursuing — just not right now. How can the others not see that the world they inhabit is a fake, a warning of what is to come? The Snare knows it's a trap and therefore must be co-opted. Its disagreement with the Ark is largely philosophical, so they typically only come into direct conflict when the Snare has suborned or claimed something that the Ark wants.

The Noose and the Snare agree that the ultimate target is the God-Machine, though they disagree about the methods used to get at it. The Noose wants to break all of the God-Machine's toys (in the process putting themselves at odds with the Ark) and doesn't seem to grasp why on earth the Snare would think they could trap the thing that spun the universe from nothing. On the flip side, the Snare wants to know how the Agents of the Noose intend to *kill* It. The two Agencies butt heads (often violently) when they both strike out at the same piece of Infrastructure. It is often a race to see who can suborn the place faster than it can be destroyed.

Between the clashing of the Noose and the Snare, the Ark frantically seeks to preserve what it can and carve stability where the other two seek chaos and destruction. A noose and a snare are not all that different — they are both tools of death, and the Ark wants to save lives. Reality is precious, can't they see that? They'd rather not fight the other two, but it would be foolish to let them destroy perfectly good things. The Ark is ready to build a wall and leave everyone else out to fend for themselves.

Storytelling Hints: The three factions live in an ostensibly real world on the brink of annihilation. Tensions run high. Everyone needs all the help they can get. Send Storyteller Characters to aggressively recruit your players' characters. When they strike out on a mission, have an opposing faction show up to cause trouble. Wrap the characters up in a delicious mess and let them figure out how to deal with it. Above all, don't make choosing sides easy. Where's the drama in that?

Where the Void Leads

As mentioned, the space between realities is blank, raw potential — a sea traversable by angels and demons, creatures well above the mortal coil. Typically, a character uses this space to cross from reality bubble to bubble, but it's within the realm of possibility that a character could access the void and travel to another metaphysical realm. If you wish to explore this kind of theme in your game, characters could potentially travel to Arcadia, or a Watchtower, or into the spirit world. Any of these realms could make for an interesting end result for a dramatic failure, as well. It is also worth considering that if characters can enter these places, other things can get out.

Canceling the Apocalypse

The Spiral World is not a permanent future. Though it seems unlikely to change the God-Machine's mind, it is not impossible to stop the end of days from coming too soon. The Agents of the Snare seek to find the triggers of the cataclysm in the past by seeking out parts of infrastructure that may hold clues and then use those triggers to trap the God-Machine itself. The Snare is not wrong. The keys to the future do lie in the past and are surely hidden among the God-Machine's tools. Here are some potential courses of action that could be undertaken.

Breaking Everything Really Could Work

Starting a war of attrition in the past has the potential to change the future. The Noose is not fully aware that the world they are living in is a prediction of the future (though real enough), but their plans are not off base. By targeting critical infrastructure and destroying it, the God-Machine and its agents will be forced to change their plans and expend more resources to replace what was lost. In theory, these resources are not infinite, nor will these interruptions be tolerated indefinitely.

Cracking the Code

The Spiral World is a real future, an alternate reality, and a trap all at once. Somewhere, embedded within the Infrastructure meant to set up the apocalypse, exists the underlying code for the God-Machine's directive. In theory, a demon could find that code and hack it, either to terminate the ongoing process and halt the world's end, turn the process on its creator, or something entirely different, depending on the imaginations of the demons that uncover it. Something

AN ALTERNATE TRAP

As another possibility, the Maw can be lured to a specific location where the time stream can be altered to keep the four and their charge from leaving. The Unchained could set the time loop to last just long enough for the Maw to destroy the bubble but take the four along with it before they can escape — effectively destroying itself. A new group of angels could be created to take their place, but this should at least buy the Unchained more time to find another solution.

like this can certainly halt the process in the short term — but what happens when the God-Machine figures out that Its code has been stolen?

Infinite Day Loop

Time flows through the bubbles of the Spiral World in a disjointed stream. Possibilities fork in dozens of disparate directions. Days, weeks, and minutes do not pass in an orderly fashion. The Unchained entangled in the events of the dream can use this to their advantage. With some research and focused effort, demons may puzzle out how to manipulate the flow of time around a particular reality bubble. Beyond giving the characters more time within the dream, time can be manipulated to repeat, effectively trapping whomever resides within the fragment in an infinite loop. If the players' characters lure the Maw and its retainers into a shard of reality and set the shard's timeline to repeat, the apocalyptic angels will be trapped in an infinite recurrence of a single day. The angels may eventually be able to escape, but such a trap could buy the characters enough time to find a more permanent solution.

Cloaking a Fragment

Something causes the Maw and its retainers to target a reality bubble. If the characters can unravel the source of this trigger, it can be switched off, thereby making that fragment invisible to the angels. If this can be done for one location, it can be applied to others (though finding the critical loophole necessary to do this requires time, effort, and no small amount of searching). Knowledge of this secret can be taken into the present and applied to the Infrastructure that heralds the apocalypse. What will the God-Machine do when It cannot see Its own tools?

A Typical Time-Travel Plot

After pulling the linchpin of the Pillar of Heaven, the chosen pawn died. A mad cult dedicated to the impending end of the world rose to prominence following her death. The cult knows her true identity and has a vague idea of when the apocalyptic trigger happened. Infiltrating the cult reveals bits and pieces of pertinent (if soaked in propaganda) information about how to track down the critical event in the waking present. Armed with this information, the characters can try to stop the activation of the Pillar of Heaven before it happens. Whether or not this stops the God-Machine's attempts to destroy the world outright, as opposed to changing Its approach instead, is at the discretion of the Storyteller. Regardless, this should be a major setback for the God-Machine, one that alters the course of the story if not the whole chronicle.

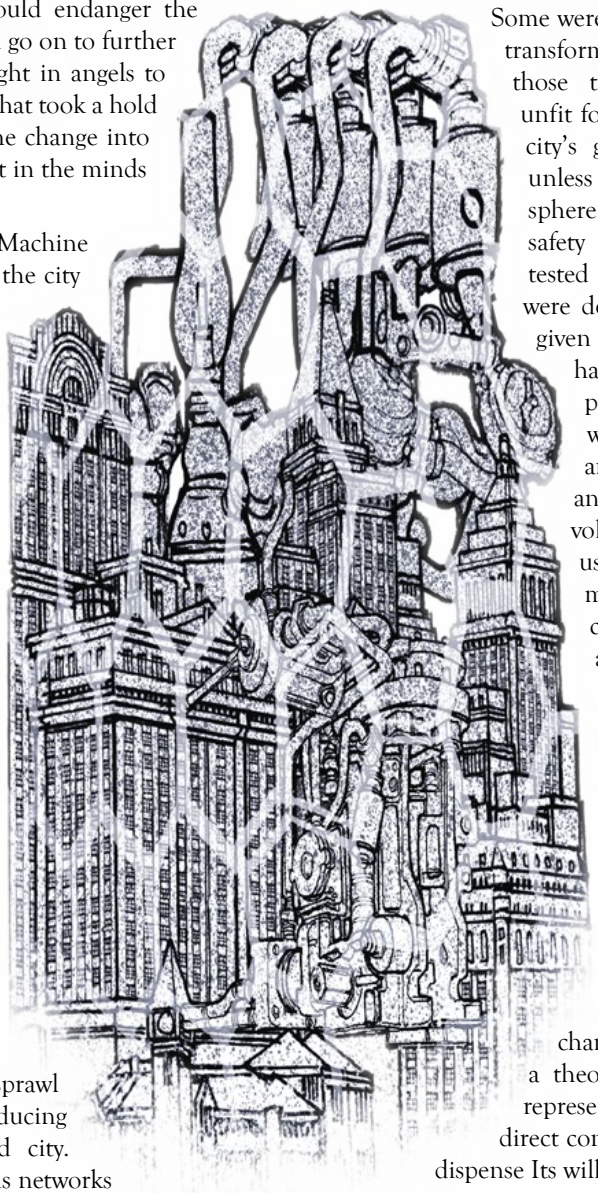
ALTERED STATE

The God-Machine's plans and processes tend to be so large in scope that viewing a single piece of Infrastructure, or knowing the mission of a single angel, does not reveal the whole of the design. Sometimes, when left unchecked, a project comes neatly to fruition after years of slow work. Mechopolis is one such project. Over many years, the God-Machine has taken a slice of reality — a place where people live, work, and thrive — and turned it into its own experimental playground. The changes took place slowly; Infrastructure built and designed to support many angelic incursions replaced the functional city structure with parts of the God-Machine, placing angels in positions of power across the area. Each major change came with a subtle paradigm shift making that change permanent, not just in the present, but in the past too. The shift affected people's memories, causing them to accept the changes without question. Those who noticed the changes or caused problems were quietly eliminated. Now the entire operation has shifted so far from reality that it exists in its own space and time. The people live their lives completely unaware that they are completely out of the ordinary, or that there is anything other than the city of Mechopolis and the God-Machine.

Mechopolis

Mechopolis was once a thriving city somewhere in the world — its original identity lost long ago as the God-Machine warped and changed the city to suit its needs. It started like any other large-sized city with a thriving technology and manufacturing industry. The God-Machine cultivated Infrastructure and cultists in the area, formulating a long-term plan for the city from its early stages. Over time, cultists built larger Infrastructure, and angels cultivated larger groups of subservient people. Angels instituted minor changes to people's lives, killing those who would endanger the plan and protecting those who would go on to further it. Slowly, larger Infrastructure brought in angels to make larger changes, shifts in reality that took a hold of both space and time anchoring the change into the past and the present, solidifying it in the minds of the city's citizens.

None of the changes the God-Machine wrought could change the nature of the city on its own. Paradigm shifts pushed the city's technological production to higher levels or changed the nature of medical research, but did not give the God-Machine control over the city. Instead, the intricate web of Infrastructure, angelic influence, and paradigm shifts executed precisely according to the pattern triggered a sudden change in the city. One moment the city and its inhabitants belonged to the real world, and the next the entire place was a thing of the God-Machine, shifted completely out of reality and completely under Its control.



The city structure underwent considerable alterations as buildings transformed from brick and mortar to steel and glass, streets became a metallic surface that vehicles hovered along over pockets of air created by clean burning engines, and suburban sprawl became mechanized factories producing food necessary for a self-contained city. The city's power and communications networks centralized to a single building in the center of the city, allowing the God-Machine to control everything from one location. The God-Machine is no longer a hidden master, pulling puppet strings from behind the scenes. Now evidence of its influence pervades everything.

The God-Machine's ultimate change was to the people of Mechopolis. Inherently the people are the same as they were before, with one important difference: they know about the God-Machine. They do not see it for what it is, nor can they see past the veil hiding the gears or agents of the God-Machine. Instead, they have a sense of it, an intrinsic knowledge that Mechopolis is a living city and they are all pieces and cogs within the greater whole. People live their lives knowing their god has a plan for them, and they serve it without fail. They willingly go each day to tend and maintain Infrastructure, build new machines, and submit to experimentation — all in the name of their glorious god.

Many people died during the switch. Some were caught in buildings or areas that transformed drastically, but most were those that the God-Machine deemed unfit for living in Mechopolis. All of the city's governing body were eliminated unless already within the God-Machine's sphere of influence. The city police, fire safety and hospital care workers were tested for loyalty; all those who failed were destroyed. Those who passed were given new jobs within the city. The city has a nominal police force, called peacekeepers, manned by people who were cultists before the change and supplemented with undercover angels. The city has a small volunteer fire department, which usually serves only for emergency medical response support as the city itself is composed of metal and flame-retardant plastics, making it nearly impossible for fires to start accidentally. Health care is provided by medic stations, medpods large enough for a human to stand inside that perform routine health checks, surgeries, and dispense medicines. People rarely fall sick, since the God-Machine scoured bacterial and viral infectious agents when it changed the city. The city is led by a theocratic government, consisting of representative officer-priests who have a direct connection to the God-Machine and dispense Its will to the citizens of the city.

The citizens of Mechopolis only remember the city as it is now — recollections of the time before the switch are lost or muddied. They do not question who leads them or the non-democratic process in which they are ruled. The people have no frame of reference by which to compare their circumstances and accept the rule of those who claim to have access to the God-Machine. That said, certain facts about the real world are

just too deeply cemented in the minds of the people for the God-Machine to eliminate completely. Everyone knows about oceans, rivers, and mountains. Some people believe they've seen them or even visited them, but no one seems to be able to remember how to get to there, nor do they think much of it.

Mechopolis is a self-contained system. The people have access to anything they could possibly want or need. The transformed suburbs provide food for the people and the God-Machine provides raw materials for technological goods. Everything else is manufactured through an automated process as the need arises. Storefronts contain a series of menu selections; a person simply has a push a button and whatever she wanted is delivered through a small tube to her location. Currency is still in use, but it mostly functions as a form of control to keep the citizens of Mechopolis in check.

Angels

The God-Machine and Its angels oversee every aspect of the city. The actual running of the city is organized through highly independent angels. Each angel has a specific task related to maintaining Mechopolis and its inhabitants. A few angels hold high governmental roles, dictating laws, rules, and regulations in regards to the city. The rest maintain order within the city as a secret police force, moving undercover among the people. These angels monitor human activity and serve to remove potential threats before they become a problem, or to seek out and label newly awakened stigmatics.

Maintaining a constant angelic presence is functionally advantageous at certain levels, but processing speed and routine maintenance requirements become compromised if too many angels are operating at the same time. For this reason, the God-Machine keeps an average of 100 angels operational at any one time, recalling and deploying as necessary for specialized tasks. Angels are assigned to one of ten districts across the city, with ten angels working together in each district. Each district contains one (or two, in the case of the central district) angel functioning as a governmental unit. The leaders of the districts form the governing council for Mechopolis, each representing the district they control. The people of Mechopolis know the angels as priests of the God-Machine, elected in a democratic process to represent the people. Elections for new representatives of half the districts are held every two years, which coincides with God-Machine recycling programs to keep angels up-to-date with its latest software and hardware configurations.

The rest of the angels assigned to a district are deep-cover secret police. They appear as shopkeepers, bankers, transportation officers, medpod operators, and in some cases peacekeepers to keep an eye on the human police force. These angels' main assignment is to eliminate humans who might pose a threat to the state. This involves keeping a close watch on the populous and using predictive algorithms to determine if a person's activities might lead them down a destructive path. Many innocent people disappear in the middle of the night, taken away by the secret police for crimes they might one day commit. They maintain a tight hold on the population, ensuring people continue to function in the role set for them by the God-Machine. People who seem discontent but do not fit within a dangerous algorithm are repurposed into new jobs.

All angels in Mechopolis are long-term constructs with highly evolved programming, capable of upper-level problem solving abilities and adaptive learning. Quite a few of the normal reasons an angel might defect and fall into demonic status just don't come up in Mechopolis. Self-awareness and the ability to learn and respond to new and different stimuli are hard-coded into each angel's program. The Mechopolis project is too delicate for the God-Machine to have it any other way. Like any well-designed artificial intelligence, angels are programmed with fail-safe mechanisms to prevent defection. Most turn themselves in for maintenance before such a thing could happen, but mistakes can occur. Singularities are the most common reason for angelic defection, though sometimes secret police grow a conscience about killing innocent people. Any time an angel Falls, the God-Machine treads carefully, using its stigmatic minions to deal with the rogue rather than exposing additional angels to the catalyst that caused the initial problem.

Overseer Angel

A single angel stands outside the normal pattern for angelic duties within Mechopolis. This angel is known as the overseer angel. It is stationed in the central district and serves as an eleventh governmental unit, a neutral tiebreaker during decision-making sessions. This angel oversees the operation of the Special Operations Executive. While cells of stigmatics are scattered between a few different districts, the governmental leaders of those districts have no control over their operation. The overseer angel is the only angel operatives have any access to their cell leaders.

The overseer angel is specially crafted to not only direct the SOE, but to be as uncaring towards them as possible. To ensure the overseer angel does not defect, the God-Machine performs maintenance on the angel monthly, replacing it if it seems to contain any glitches in its programming. In all of Mechopolis' memory, an overseer angel has never Fallen.

The overseer angel also gives nominal direction to the angels in the secret police, directing activity to assist the SOE when necessary. Its orders cannot be disobeyed, though it rarely exercises that power. It is also responsible for maintaining the SOE's integrity. It keeps an eye on the stigmatic operatives and deals swift justice to those who step out of line. The overseer angel's operation is considered to be the most pivotal, and is the only angel who remains functional in all states of Mechopolis.

The normal citizens of Mechopolis have no idea that an overseer angel exists and are not privy to the internal operations of the governing body. The stigmatics view the angel as the most direct connection to the God-Machine.

Special Operations Executive

Despite the constant contact and exposure to the God-Machine, most people seem to take no notice of their mechanical overlord; those who do are tended to very carefully. While stigmatics are still difficult to come by, the overwhelming amount of contact between people and the God-Machine leads to more stigmatics in Mechopolis than in a normal city. When someone awakens to the truth of the God-Machine, angels find the budding stigmatic and deliver him to the Special Operations Executive. These stigmatics are then enhanced and trained as special agents of the God-Machine, executing operations that maintain the security of the state.

The Special Operations Executive is the designation for a final failsafe to deal with angels who defect from the God-Machine's service within Mechopolis, though they do other less important jobs that are deemed dangerous. The God-Machine uses stigmatics for this function instead of normal angels, because it fears that whatever caused the defection might infect its other agents. Stigmatics require no processing power from the God-Machine to maintain, and are viewed as mostly expendable, thereby the perfect operatives to deal with dangerous situations.

Whenever the God-Machine or one of its angels recognizes a stigmatic, she is brought into the SOE. She is indoctrinated, implanted, and designated an operative. Often this is done by other stigmatics already a part of the SOE, to make the transition less traumatic. Operatives believe their main function is to maintain the safety of the state. Usually, this requires operatives to track down and eliminate rogue angels, though sometimes operatives must investigate possible breaches of protocol or find and bring in rogue stigmatics.

Operatives are grouped into cells, each directed by a high ranked operative who gets her orders directly from the overseer angel. Cells contain at least one operative with intelligence gathering implants, one with defensive capabilities, and one with offensive capabilities. Each cell is assigned to a district, much like the angels in the city, and has little to no contact with other cells. Only the overseer angel has any knowledge of how many operatives are in the city; each cell and cell leader is completely unaware of other cells, unless some specific duty requires cells to work together. When not on a mission, operatives are free to do as they please. Originally, operatives were tasked to function as any normal citizen, but their status as stigmatics quickly made this directive difficult.

Operatives enjoy a special status amongst the people of the city. Most people in Mechopolis have some kind of cybernetic implant. Usually these take the form of a computer chip or communication device embedded under the skin and wired into the nerves, allowing the person to operate devices with an eye flick or a hand gesture. Operatives, on the other hand, are implanted with cybernetic enhancements that give them direct access to God-Machine protocols. Some even gain physical enhancements increasing their physical or mental prowess. These implants are obviously different and denote the operative is closer to the God-Machine than any normal person. In a populace that actively worships the God-Machine, operatives are viewed as prophets and holy people, making it difficult for them to function normally. Yet, this reverence has its benefits, as it allows them to move through the city without hindrance when on a mission.

Indoctrination

The God-Machine is no secret to the average citizen of Mechopolis, but all Its finer workings — including angels and Infrastructure — remain hidden. For new stigmatics, the sudden realization of the scope of the God-Machine's power and control over the city is jarring. Everyone in the city has a function, a role they perform for the God-Machine. The stigmatic's normal place in the world is turned upside-down; without guidance, she is likely to go insane.

The tenets are simple: the God-Machine is all and the God-Machine is life. In addition, operatives are taught a few fundamental facts about their environment. Angels work directly for the God-Machine and serve to keep the normal state of affairs. This is considered the first state, and is the only state the world should be in. Stigmatics have seen past the veil and therefore endanger the first state. If she does not tread carefully, a stigmatic could accidentally trigger a state of emergency. This is called the second state, and while the city can still function in this state, the God-Machine is diverted from its normal processes and life begins to fail. Thankfully, stigmatics can exist in the world without triggering a state of emergency if they follow the overseer angel's instructions exactly.

All stigmatics have a duty to preserve the state. New operatives adhere to this duty with a singular fanaticism. They view the SOE as a bastion of hope in an otherwise bleak existence where they are a threat to the very god they worship. Older operatives rationalize that the God-Machine is all-powerful and omniscient, and therefore would not allow people to become stigmatics if they were not part of Its plans. Some come to realize that the God-Machine is not all-knowing, and its plans are easily disrupted making the SOE's function very clear: they exist to clean up the messes. This viewpoint is dangerous as it can lead operatives to defect, searching for answers to questions better left unasked.

Stigmatics are taught that all beings that endanger the state are either other stigmatics or some kind of outside force attempting to break into Mechopolis. Stigmatics are not allowed to know that angels defect and become demons. The idea that the God-Machine might be fallible is too dangerous. Instead, all threats are generalized as dangers and rogue stigmatics. Those stigmatics who discover the truth are a danger and must be cleansed.

Working With Angels

Only cell leaders have direct contact with the overseer angel on a regular basis. Normal operatives rarely deal with angels, though they run across them in the course of their work. During a state of emergency, operatives may need to work with the secret police angels to find and deal with the source of the problem. Most operatives never have direct interactions with angels, however, even when they are working on a mission together.

When a situation does require direct interaction, operatives find angels unnerving. These beings are functionally their god made manifest. An operative is taught to believe she is always a danger to the state, and the only thing keeping her alive is her continued loyalty and usefulness to the God-Machine. Though her loyalty is rarely called into question, she believes angels would not hesitate to remove her if given a reason. Operatives try to remain out of angelic notice or scrutiny and prefer not to work alongside angels, if at all possible.

Implants

When a stigmatic is recruited into the SOE, she is outfitted with a series of cybernetic implants that network her into the God-Machine's core processes. The initial implants completely replace her nervous system with a biomechanical neural network, with interface ports located in strategic areas of her body. This gives the God-Machine complete control over the stigmatic's body, allowing it to see through her eyes and hear through her ears whenever it wants. If it wanted to, it could take over her body completely directing her every move and word. The God-Machine rarely finds it necessary or worthwhile to make such gross movements, however, and is content to simply gather information passively through its minions.

A stigmatic's Embeds and Exploits come to her as biomechanical and cybernetic implants plugged into her new interface ports, giving her direct access to select God-Machine processes. Embeds are simply microchips with plug and play programs inserted under the skin and connected to the ports. Exploits are more complex systems and require larger hardware to house, sometimes replacing some other natural body part to make room for the mechanical implant. Stigmatics with several Embeds may also have replacement parts housing a suite of Embeds within them. Older operatives appear as cyborgs, with more cybernetic or mechanical parts than normal human parts visible on their bodies.

All operatives start with a couple of implants beyond their initial neural network. They can earn new or improved implants by proving their worth to the God-Machine. The implantation process is mostly painless, but requires a considerable amount of recovery time.

The God-Machine controls an operative's implants and determines which Embeds and Exploits she can have access to at any time. Normally operatives can only access their assigned Embeds, and of those, only the ones that do not allow them to change their environment in any way. So a stigmatic may have access to Mercury Retrograde, but not Hush. She only gains access to all her Embeds and Exploits if the state of Mechopolis changes.

The Resistance

When Mechopolis underwent its changes, the God-Machine removed evidences of the outside world and erased people's memories to the best of its ability. But, like most cleaning software, artifacts were left behind — small pieces beneath the notice of the overall programming, such as maps of outlying lands, books hidden in floorboards, travelogues describing foreign countries, and pages from magazines showing an incongruous world. These things alone are not enough to endanger the operation, but if enough were ever gathered together, they tell a tale of too many missing pieces to be a coincidence.

When discovered, angels remove such offending artifacts, but not all fall into the hands of angels. Some fall into the hands of skeptics, those people who are careful enough to escape notice from the secret police and don't show up on any algorithms. These people form the basis for the resistance. The resistance is a loose group of people who have gathered, or been shown, enough evidence to question the beneficent nature of the God-Machine. Suspicious and paranoid, these people rightly believe that their existence is a manufactured lie. They seek to unveil the lie and somehow return the city to some semblance of normal. The resistance is not informed; they do not know the extent of the God-Machine's influence beyond the theocratic government and the slavish worship from the people. They have no idea what is normal, much less how to achieve it, but that doesn't stop them from trying.

The resistance is a known threat, but the nature of how they function and recruit makes it difficult for angels to pinpoint their members. The first thing a member of the resistance learns is that the God-Machine has spies everywhere, and it can be listening at any time. Members are cautioned to never speak of their beliefs and to always act the part, never giving away they know anything different from the doctrine and propaganda fed to the citizens of Mechopolis. They spread messages through written words, specifically using paper and pen. Members only recruit when the city is in a state of emergency, having learned that somehow this means the God-Machine is otherwise occupied and they are freer to talk.

Not all members escape the notice or punitive justice of the angels. Sometimes entire cells of the resistance are wiped out in a single night of activity, but the movement continues to retain footholds. Sometimes groups intentionally sacrifice themselves to angels in order to divert attention from recruitment campaigns or more important missions.

Members of the resistance view stigmatics as traitors. They know more of the truth than they are letting on, and they use that knowledge to oppress their fellow humans instead of uplifting them. Members are thrilled to take in a

rogue stigmatic, hoping to use her connection to the God-Machine to strike a fatal blow against the oppressive regime. Unfortunately, the resistance must tread carefully when it comes to stigmatics, since they explicitly work for the enemy.

Demonic Followers

Alone and without help or guidance, the resistance would eventually decline as key members are discovered and eliminated by agents of the God-Machine. Yet, they continue to thrive, small cells popping up even after long periods of inactivity. This phenomenon is largely due to the activity of rogue angels. When angels defect, they rarely do so in a manner that is immediately evident. A demon has very few places to hide from the God-Machine in Mechopolis, except directly within its sights. So she feigns compliance as she builds up resources and followers before finally revealing her deception. Most would choose to never reveal themselves, but eventually her activities are noticed and the SOE is dispatched.

Within the time period between initial defection and discovery, a demon has plenty of time to build up a cult of loyal followers. Most people in these groups don't even realize they are part of a resistance group; they simply believe their god has sent a messenger to them. The longer the demon has to work on them, though, the easier it is for her to convince people that Mechopolis is not what it seems. While members of the resistance are almost all normal humans, their support is often the difference between immediate death for a demon and a long, drawn-out hunt. These people are willing to make pacts with the demon, using the powerful benefits provided in the name of the resistance.

Even if the demon is destroyed, the members of the resistance who remain behind keep documentation of the truths revealed by the demon. These documents are compiled and distributed, keeping a network of believers alive and ready to rekindle a new resistance should everyone else be captured.

Cryptids

When Mechopolis transitioned out of reality to its current state, all its living beings came with it, including the animals in the city. Just like human interaction with the God-Machine, some of these animals got a little too close to Infrastructure or an angel. Those who did not die outright became cryptids. In normal places, cryptids pose a threat to the God-Machine by calling attention to Infrastructure and the God-Machine's plans. In Mechopolis, the creatures only pose a threat if they become rabid and start interrupting the normal flow of the city. Instead of destroying the creatures, the God-Machine collects and trains them.

Much like stigmatics, the creatures undergo extensive implantation routines to give the God-Machine complete control over their actions. Members of the secret police use most cryptids as attack animals. The Special Operations Executive has a few cryptids in reserve, used to sniff out demons in hiding. Some cryptids are stationed at important Infrastructure as guard animals, but the need for such animals is rare in Mechopolis.

Normal people treat the animals as they do most other aspects of the God-Machine. Some view them as just another functional part of the city, provided by the God-Machine for their safety. Others see them as living agents of the God-Machine, to be worshipped and praised. Stigmatics can see the cryptids for what they really are and have a deep sympathy for the animals. These creatures are just as much a threat to the state as stigmatics, but they are incapable of understanding such a thing, meaning their lives are in even more a precarious state than the stigmatics.

The States

Mechopolis is an extension of the God-Machine and no longer simply a city. As it exists outside of reality, it does not always follow the normal rules. The city is more a machine than a series of buildings and roads. Certain events can trigger the machine to change; and when it does, the entire city changes with it. The state triggered determines what kinds of changes affect the city. Only the God-Machine and its angels know what can or will trigger a change, but when any state other than the first is triggered, the overseer angel give instructions to operatives who then attempt to trigger the first state again and restore order.

First State

The optimal state is the one in which the city functions in its normal capacity. Angels refer to this as the first state; stigmatics call it the normal state of affairs. Sometimes angels and operatives simply call this "the state" — such as in "restoring the state" or "protecting the state." In the first state, the machine is in good working order, and all its processes are functional.

While in this state, stigmatics cannot use implants that give them access to Exploits, and can only use Embeds that affect their own person or personal space. Angels operate normally in this state.

Second State

Whenever the machine recognizes a threat to itself, it triggers the second state, or the state of emergency. Rogue angels and stigmatics are almost always considered a danger to the Machine and, once recognized, automatically trigger a state of emergency. Other circumstances may trigger the state of emergency, but these are rare.

Once in a state of emergency, the God-Machine ceases all non-critical functions, initiates power saving protocols, and diverts processing power to emergency protocols. Much like a living organism, Mechopolis seeks to conserve power to better deal with the crisis until the threat is eliminated. The city is thrown into perpetual dusk — the sun hovering just above the horizon giving off a blood red glow. Unessential buildings lose power and people with unimportant tasks fall into comas, their heart rates and breathing slowed to just barely maintain life.

Stigmatics gain access to all implanted Embeds and Exploits that only affect themselves or their personal space, and all non-policing angelic units are deactivated to preserve their programming. To a stigmatic, the second state resembles an animal in panic, where traces of power pool at essential Infrastructure points while the rest of the city appears lifeless.

Third State

Truly serious threats to the God-Machine trigger the third state, or the state of arrest. Generally, if a state of emergency is held too long, the third state is triggered, but seriously problematic rogue angels may also trigger this state. A state of arrest is rare and indicates a crisis has gone critical. The God-Machine shuts down every non-essential process; and some essential processes are dampened or completely shut down for short periods of time as the machine diverts all energy towards dealing with the threat.

In a state of arrest, it seems as though the entire city shuts down. All angels except the overseer angel are deactivated. Normal people are put into a deep slumber, and all the city shops, services, and vehicles cease to function. Only completely essential Infrastructure is powered. The city is plunged into darkness, a starless night sky blanketing the land. Some aspects of physics stop working properly, such as thermodynamics and gravity. The city grows cold, and even sounds do not echo from its metallic walls.

Stigmatics gain access to all of their implanted Embeds and Exploits and tend to be the only thing moving around, other than whatever triggered the state. If the first state is not restored within 24 hours, processes being to die permanently, starting with the city's human population. Few new stigmatics have experienced a state of arrest, but those who have know they must act quickly and without hesitation if they want to keep people alive and restore the machine to the first state.

Fourth State

Operatives are briefed and trained to deal with the three states. Angels do not speak of a fourth state, but rumors circulate among the stigmatics about something called the null state. No one knows if this state is real, and no one remembers ever witnessing such a state. Angels do not deny the existence of such a state, but refuse to impart any information about the null state. Cell leaders attempt to discourage speculation about the null state, dismissing it as conjecture and unimportant.

Despite this, theories around the fabled fourth state arise from the ranks of the operatives. The null state is a state of complete non-functionality. The God-Machine is the only thing that functions, rewriting processes until it fixes the problem. The null state is a state of maintenance; it happens routinely and is used to collect all the angels and redistribute them after maintenance. People don't recall it because all humans, even stigmatics, are put to sleep during this state. The null state is the end of all things. Even the God-Machine cannot function in a null state, and it spells the death of Mechopolis. One heretical theory indicates the null state is the first state before the normal state of affairs, a state with only humans and no God-Machine or angelic influence. Whether the null state actually exists is anyone's guess, but either way, stigmatics fear this state more than any of the others.

Stigmatic Character Creation

Players create stigmatic characters following the same rules for mortal character creation found in the **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook,** with the following additions.

Step Five: Apply Stigmatic Template

- **Embeds and Exploits** Stigmatic characters begin play with three Embeds and/or Exploits. Stigmatics do not have a favored category and are not limited in which Embeds they purchase. Purchasing Exploits still requires the stigmatic to have a prerequisite Embed, and stigmatics do not utilize the Cipher and Interlock system. Characters can purchase new Embeds and Exploits at Storyteller discretion.
- Stigmatic characters suffer visions, much like those from the Omen Sensitivity Merit (p. 299, **Demon: The Descent)** but that are completely beyond the stigmatic's control. Once per chapter, the Storyteller may spontaneously subject a stigmatic character to one such vision, giving the character a single bit of truthful information about the character's life, surroundings, the task at hand, or the world at large. Afterward, the character gains the Stunned tilt for a single turn and the Spooked Condition in regards to the vision.
- Stigmatic characters gain a single glitch (a major brand or tell; see p. 184, **Demon: The Descent** for more details) that cannot be cured, removed, or changed by any means, although it may be suppressed for a scene with a Willpower point. This trait is called stigmata.

Step Six: Select Merits

Stigmatic characters have access to Supernatural Merits (p. 298–302, **Demon: The Descent**). In addition, all stigmatics receive the following merit for free:

Unseen Sense (God-Machine) Merit (p. 302, **Demon, The Descent**). Additionally, stigmatics can see the gears and structures of the God-Machine unveiled.

Step Seven: Determine Advantages

- Stigmatic characters gain Aspirations and Virtues and Vices as described on pp. 284–86, **Demon: The Descent**.

- Stigmatic characters use Integrity from the **God-Machine Chronicle**, pp. 184–86. If a stigmatic character reaches 0 Integrity, she has a mental breakdown. She is unstable, completely unpredictable, and the God-Machine cannot control her. Such characters are immediately considered a danger to the state.
- Stigmatic characters have an Aether pool but do not have a Primum rating. Stigmatics can carry a maximum of 5 Aether plus 1 for each Exploit they have implanted, and can spend at most 1 Aether per turn. Aether can only be spent to power Exploits or fuel gadgets that require Aether use. If an Exploit requires more than 1 Aether, the character must spend several turns channeling Aether before the Exploit manifests. Once all the Aether required is spent, the stigmatic's player rolls to activate the Exploit as normal. If for any reason the stigmatic is interrupted before fully fueling the Exploit, any Aether spent is lost and the Exploit doesn't happen.

Stigmatic characters can regain Aether by connecting to any Infrastructure in the city. They simply plug one of their various I/O ports into a specially designed port at the site of the Infrastructure. While connected, the character regains one Aether per turn. Also while connected, she loses her Defense and takes any action at a –2 penalty. Most SOE base of operations are Infrastructure.

Step Eight: Age and Experience

Stigmatic characters do not start with any Experience by default. The Storyteller may elect to give more seasoned characters bonus Experiences. The costs to raise traits follow the same rules as for demons, presented on p. 89 of **Demon: The Descent**, except that stigmatics do not have Primum and use Integrity instead of Cover.

Gadgets

Stigmatic characters can use gadgets as though they were demons. A stigmatic does not make gadgets herself, but instead gains them through SOE. Gadgets are created by the God-Machine for operatives to use in specific missions and are delivered through the overseer angel to cell leaders.

A character can use gadgets on missions, but they are only operational when the city is not in a normal state of affairs. A stigmatic character can only have at most three gadgets at any one time. If she selects a one-shot gadget, she gains 5 of the same gadget for her use. When she uses them all, she can get a new gadget to replace it. A character may exchange gadgets between missions if she chooses or hold on to the ones she selected previously.

Stigmatics can use form gadgets but cannot use Propulsions or Processes. She can only make use of one form gadget at a time. If a gadget requires Aether use to trigger, the stigmatic must have available Aether to use the gadget. Stigmatics can use gadgets that store Aether, but this does not increase their normal Aether expenditure abilities.

New Conditions

Unplugged (Persistent)

Someone tampered with your implants and they don't work the way they should. Regardless of the state of Mechopolis, you cannot access your implanted Embeds or Exploits. You cannot plug into Infrastructure to regain Aether and you are effectively off the grid. The God-Machine is aware of your status, but does not know exactly where you are. You probably have angels looking for you even if you don't want to be found.

Resolution: You can have your implants reconnected at an SOE base of operations, but you have to get there. Alternately, an angel can restore function, but it may not be thrilled about the effort.

Beat: If the character reaches 0 Aether and cannot regain it, or if she is in a state in which her Embeds or Exploits would normally turn on but cannot, she gains a Beat.

Controlled (Persistent)

The God-Machine has taken control of your character's neural network and is directing your actions. You still feel like you are in control, but you understand exactly what the God-Machine wants you to do and how to do it. Depending on how suddenly the God-Machine took over, the character may not realize her impulses are not her own at first. She can attempt to fight against the impulses, but does so at an extreme penalty. The character has a –3 penalty to take any action against the God-Machine's wishes.

Resolution: God-Machine control may only last for a few minutes, or it may last for a full day or longer — but it doesn't end until the character fulfills whatever task the God-Machine sets forward.

Beat: If the character gives in to the God-Machine's wishes and takes an action she doesn't want to do, she gains a Beat.

Mundane Implants

The people of Mechopolis are used to sub-dermal implants and a few basic biosynthetic upgrades to make their lives easier. Some are as simple as cellular phone receivers embedded in the ear or computer systems implanted within the hand or arm; some bestow extra functionality, though not as drastic as God-Machine implants. Stigmatics have their body scoured of mundane implants when they undergo SOE surgical procedures to install the neural network. Operatives are allowed to restore mundane implants if they so choose. Implants can be purchased as Merits.

Cybernetic Limb (•••)

Effect: The character has one of her limbs — a hand, arm, leg or foot — replaced by a mechanical one. The effect depends on the limb replacement. All replacements give the character a +1 bonus on Strength for the purpose of climbing.

Hand and arm replacements give the character a +2 bonus to her Strength for lifting objects and the Strength requirement for carrying a weapon. Also, the limb counts as a weapon with a damage rating of 2L for Brawl attacks. Full arm replacements have a compartment that allows the character to store a single Size 1 item.

Leg and foot replacements give the character a +2 bonus to her Speed and Initiative. Full leg replacements have a compartment that allows the character to store a single Size 2 item, or two Size 1 items.

This Merit can be purchased multiple times, each time representing a different limb.

Implanted Device (•)

Effect: The character has a device implanted under her skin or in her ear. She may have a phone receiver and speaker implanted in her ear, allowing her to answer and make calls though voice-activated software, always hands-free. She may have a computer chipset embedded in her hands that allow her to manipulate the interface with finger and hand gestures instead of a keyboard and mouse. In most cases, devices use voice commands; the character is never unable to use the device unless bound and gagged. The inherent skill to use the device is not altered, but the character is always considered to have the device on her person and it cannot be lost or stolen. This Merit can be purchased multiple times for different devices.

Implanted Weapon (••)

Effect: The character has a weapon implanted in her body. Select any ranged or melee weapon (**Demon: The Descent**, pp. 324–28) no larger than Size 1. She ignores any strength requirements for ranged weapons, and the implanted weapon does not incur any Initiative penalties for use. She can activate or deactivate the weapon as a reflexive action. The weapon is part of the character's body and can never be lost or stolen.

Optical Enhancements (•••)

Effect: The character has had her eyes replaced with biosynthetic ones, giving her an enhancement to both short-range and far-range vision. The character can telescope her vision to see far away with a slight muscular twitch, or zoom in on tiny jobs allowing her a microscopic view. Gain a +2 bonus to perception rolls, ranged combat rolls, and rolls to perform delicate tasks.

Sub-dermal Armor (• to •••)

Effect: The character has enhancements to make her skin tougher, her bones less brittle, and her organs better protected. Each dot in this Merit affords the character an Armor rating of 1/0 with full body coverage. The character does not suffer any Defense or Speed penalties for this armor. If the character wears external armor, she benefits from the additional protection and adds the two ratings together.

Wired (•)

Effect: The character has a subdural implant that affects her mental capacity, her reflexes, or even her way with words. For each dot of this Merit, the character gains a +1 bonus to rolls using a specific Attribute. When the Merit is purchased, the Attribute is chosen. This Merit can be purchased multiple times, each time with a different Attribute. The following Attributes can benefit from the Wired Merit: Composure, Dexterity, Intelligence, Manipulation, Stamina, and Wits.

Stories in Mechopolis

The God-Machine has invested quite a bit of hardware and processes into the stigmatics of Mechopolis, and therefore uses them for more than just clean-up crews whenever an angel goes rogue. Of course, their main purpose is to deal with those dangerous elements, but they are also charged with gathering intelligence, putting

normal people to rights, and several other mundane missions. Stories in Mechopolis take on the form of a series of directives and missions. Characters rarely act on their own accord and are often informed of a danger well before a state of emergency, or worse, is triggered. The players may find themselves fulfilling missions between all three states though, and should be aware of how each affects their character's abilities.

The Defector

The God-Machine prefers to deal with angels before they go rogue, collecting them and replacing those with damaged processes. Not all demons present themselves after going rogue, of course; in fact, a careful demon is likely to go unnoticed by the God-Machine for some time, at least until his activities in Mechopolis are so overt it can't help but be noticed.

The operatives are sent to District 4 to gather information about Tom Dicks. Tom is the alias of the governmental angel in charge of District 4, and the God-Machine has noticed a glitch in his routine. The God-Machine is uncertain if Tom is suffering from a defect and wishes to collect more data before deciding to recycle him. The characters are unaware of this fact, and are only aware that they must gather as much information on Tom's activities as possible.

When they make it to District 4, everything seems normal. Tom is not around, but the evidence of his governmental style pervades the district. People look happy and healthy, but many processes normally automated in other districts are being handled manually in District 4. People are preparing, cooking and serving food to each other in cafeteria facilities. People are cleaning vehicles and washing their own clothes. Some people even have gardens and flowering plants growing in window boxes outside of apartment windows. The characters can see immediately that the God-Machine's influence is not as strong in this district as others.

When they arrive at the main Infrastructure node of District 4, they find the power has been rerouted back into itself, maintaining the exact same power output but not powering the district the way it should. This explains why the God-Machine had not noticed its loss of control over the district. Someone is clearly working against the God-Machine in the district, and Tom has done nothing to fix the situation.

Tom went rogue months before, but has been keeping quiet in his district. He's somehow been able to keep his activities hidden from the secret police angels, but not without considerable help from the members of the resistance that has built up around him. Tom has convinced the people of District 4 that he is a representative of the true god, and the God-Machine is a lie that must be brought down.

The discovery sends Mechopolis into a state of emergency and the characters must find the source of the problem and eliminate it. The people of District 4 treat the operatives differently. They keep their distance and do not give the operatives the deference they are used to in other districts. Almost everyone in the district is an active member of the resistance, and those who aren't are still uneasy around agents of the God-Machine.

Downsize

Angels routinely go through maintenance and upgrades as the God-Machine cycles through programming sprints. Stigmatics do not get nearly as much high -evel maintenance, but do undergo after-action reports, performance reviews, and sometimes must contend with early retirement if it seems they are on track to defection. The cell leader performs these processes periodically on the orders of the overseer angel.

The characters are called in for a routine performance review. As long as the characters have not been doing anything untoward lately, the review goes as expected, awarding each of them a return to action order and the chance to upgrade implants. The next week, the characters are called in for a second performance review, something completely unheard of so soon after the first. After the interview, the cell leader explains sympathetically that she is just following orders.

The results of the second review are less than stellar, and the characters are ordered off active duty for the time being, with a third review scheduled in the next week. Something is wrong, but the cell leader insists that she is getting her orders directly from the overseer angel. She tells them he said something about downsizing, but she isn't sure if any of the other cells are going through this.

Based on context, it's reasonable to assume the characters are going to have a forced retirement on their hands after the next review. For operatives, retirement means death and only happens when they step too far out of line. The characters know they haven't done anything wrong, but clearly something's up.

If the characters attempt to see the overseer angel, they find he is not in the central district and is unreachable. When they ask their cell leader how she got orders from him, she says they came over the computer network and she hasn't actually seen the angel in weeks. A little investigation reveals the orders came from somewhere outside the central district. Now the characters have a week to find out if the orders came from the overseer angel and figure out what's going on before they are put to death.

Glitches

Mechopolis suffers from program glitches, just like any other machine. Angels spend a great deal of time finding and fixing these glitches, but every now and then the problem is so bad the SOE is called in to help deal with it.

The characters are sent to deal with a cryptid that has broken its training and started killing people. When the characters arrive, they find a single wolf-like creature growling and harassing people on the city street. The animal cannot be talked down and the characters must destroy it. Attacking the creature is easy; it seems set on a predictable pattern and falls after only a few strikes against it.

The next day, the characters receive a mission very similar to the cryptid mission the day before, only now two creatures threaten the area. The operatives find the creatures in the same location as the day before, and they are both wolf-like creatures that look identical from yesterday's animals. The next day, the same thing, only this time three cryptids are killing people. This continues each day, another identical cryptid alert with one more cryptid in the pile.

The occurrence is too frequent, too much, and just strange. The characters are pretty sure that the God-Machine doesn't even have that many cryptids working in the city for them to all defect in such a manner. The system has a glitch; Mechopolis is repeating the events from the day before, producing the cryptids out of some faulty Infrastructure. The characters must find the source of the problem and fix it before the entire district is overwhelmed by these phantom cryptids.

New Recruits

Despite its best efforts, the God-Machine does not always find every stigmatic as soon as she starts showing signs. A stigmatic left on her own, without guidance from the God-Machine, quickly becomes a threat to the state. Normally new stigmatics are easy to deal with, but those left alone too long often fall in with the resistance and are harder to deal with, which requires the SOE to take action.

The operatives must find and bring in Narissa Jones as a newly identified stigmatic. Narissa is hard to locate; it seems somehow she's found a way to slip through the cracks, and the God-Machine's current information on her is completely out of date. The characters must follow her trail to her new hideout. Narissa is not easy to track, but with access to Embeds, the characters shouldn't find it too difficult to find and collect her. She does not go willingly, but is no match for the characters and is not stupid enough to put up a serious fight against them.

Narissa is put through indoctrination and implantation, like every other stigmatic, but the process takes longer than normal. Just before she is deemed field ready, Narissa and her operative handler, Luke Day, disappear. Mechopolis is immediately thrown into a state of emergency and the characters are charged once again to find Narissa and take her down. Narissa's trail is not nearly as easy to follow as it was originally.

When the characters finally catch up with Narissa, they find she has killed Luke and stolen some of his implants. She tries to reason with them, explaining that she knows the truth about the God-Machine and Mechopolis. She wants them to free themselves and join her and others who are living off the grid. The characters have to make a hard decision about what to do.

- The characters may simply decide to fulfill their mission and destroy Narissa. This requires a fight, since she has stolen some powerful defensive Embeds from Luke.
- The characters may decide to listen to Narissa. If they do, she leads them to underground connection of rogue stigmatics. The group is ten strong, led by Renee Wilson, an operative thought killed in the line of duty in the last state of arrest. Renee and Narissa offer the characters the chance to join them and eventually take down the God-Machine. Characters may consider this as an option, but even if they do, the angelic secret police have been following the characters and descend on the group to destroy them all.
- The characters may decide to go with Narissa to meet Renee, but then betray the entire group when they get there. In this case, the angelic secret police do not interfere, letting the operatives handle the situation.

Rogue Operative

Not all operatives take to the indoctrination as well as others. Some end up seeing too much and questioning the guidance of the God-Machine after a while. These operatives tend to work within the SOE to undermine missions and convert the other stigmatics.

The operatives find themselves on a routine mission to bring in a lone stigmatic before she endangers the state. When they arrive at her house, they find she's left recently and in a hurry. Someone must have tipped her off to the SOE's activities; the characters must hunt her down within the city. When they do find her, she is so terrified that she'd rather fight to the death than go with the characters.

Within a few days after this mission, another routine activity goes horribly wrong. The characters are sent out undercover to gather information about a group of resistance members, only to find the group waiting for them with weapons ready.

Everything seems to be going wrong for the characters. Their missions are compromised and what should be need-to-know information is leaking all over the place. The only people who know about their missions are their cell leader, Jonathan Adams, and the overseer angel. Either someone has serious surveillance on the headquarters or Jonathan has gone rogue. The characters uncover that their cell leader is attempting to foil the God-Machine's plans and cause their cell to question Its omnipotence. Not only that, but he's part of an extensive network of resistance members.

The characters must decide what to do with their cell leader and how to handle him. They could turn him in or take the initiative to take him down on their own. Either way, they are the ones who have to deal with the situation; if they try to turn him in, the overseer angel tasks their cell with his destruction and the destruction of his resistance members.

- By turning Jonathan in, the characters have alerted the God-Machine to his crimes. His implants are turned off and Mechopolis is put into a state of emergency. Unfortunately for the characters, Jonathan goes to ground using the resistance to set up interference and hide him.

- If the characters try to deal with Jonathan without first talking to the overseer angel, his implants are still operational. He may have a few resistance members with him, but the characters do have an easier time finding him.
- If the characters decide to help Jonathan, they endanger their own lives and end up with a host of secret police angels attempting to destroy the whole operation.

The State of Arrest

Most operatives have never encountered a state of arrest before. While the state is explained in full during indoctrination, few events warrant the kind of crisis state needed to trigger the state of emergency.

The characters are on a mission to deal with a demon. The city is already in a state of emergency, and the situation is bad enough that secret police angels are also working on the case. The demon is crafty and hard to find, so the characters are relying on the angels to search out the demon and flush him their way. The characters have constant communication with the angels and get a report that they have a bead on his location.

One by one, the characters lose communication with the angels. When the characters arrive at the site, they find a few angel corpses slowly disintegrating and returning to the system. They assume all the angels have been destroyed and call in for new support, reporting the incident. Before the new angels arrive, however, the characters are confronted with a rabid cryptid. The creature was clearly once used for guard duty, but it seems to have a bead on the characters and the only way to get it off their trail is to destroy it. The demon has control over the Infrastructure the cryptid once protected, and this clue leads the characters to the demon's hideout.

Once they get there, they come to a horrible revelation. The demon did not destroy all the angels; instead he hijacked them, and now they work for him. Upon this revelation, Mechopolis is thrown into a state of arrest. Now the characters must race against time to deal with the demon without any angelic support. If they cannot restore the state within 24 hours, they risk innocent lives.

Thought Police

The God-Machine is not all knowing. It may seem that way to the operatives, due to Its extensive communications and surveillance network, but It does have blind spots. Some areas just don't have the right access for the God-Machine to see and hear what is going on without a physical operative to convey information. Also, It cannot read minds or predict the future with any true accuracy. It uses angels and stigmatics to gather otherwise hard-to-obtain information. Preservation of the state is more advantageous than restoring the first state after one of the other states has been triggered. Normally, the God-Machine runs predictive calculations and removes anyone who might become a threat to the state before they can start to do so.

The characters complete a series of missions in which they must find and eliminate people described as dangers to the state. The characters are killing people thought to be a danger due to algorithmic equations, not necessarily any action they've taken. The characters know they need to protect the state and must complete their missions as directed, despite any reservations they may have about killing people.

Each person they find and kill seems completely normal, no special implants or special powers. They rarely fight back, and those who do are clearly unskilled. Each new assignment is worse than the last, the person begging for mercy or crying out to the God-Machine to spare them. This comes to a head when the characters are tasked with killing one of the operative's family members or loved ones. If they refuse to complete the task, the characters are likely to be eliminated themselves.

Does the mouse in the maze think:

"Today I shall try a different route.

Go left instead of right.

Chew through a wall.

Refuse to run."?

Does it? I think not.

I think the mouse runs because it only knows the maze. It follows the corridors like a charge following a circuit.

It knows all routes lead to the same end.

You know it, too. You left, but you'll come back. This is your end".

- The Triptych, Messenger Angel

The Demon Storyteller's Guide includes:

- Expanded information on angels, including a look at how Incarnations apply to them
- A extensive look at the spy genre and its permutations and how they apply to Demon
- Three "setting hacks," including an examination of Demon in the Bronze Age

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