

# CONVENTION BOOK SYNDICATE



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# PROLOGUE: A CAPITAL VENTURE



## SHINJUKU WARD, TOKYO, JAPAN

The most important thing I've learned in my years with the Syndicate is that it often pays to be what others expect you to be.

The looks I get on the way to Shinjuku Station tell me that the image I've chosen this evening is working as intended. Part of it's effortless, because people from Tokyo know a tourist when they see one, and I'm not hiding the peculiarities of my mixed ancestry with Procedure. Chinese mother, Spanish Caribbean father, and a Tennessee walk don't really add up to blending in.

The other part is a message written in pure commerce. The suit's a genuine Armani from this year's collection — 98% virgin wool, double-breasted jacket, matching pants, slate grey with stripes, no appliques. An imitation wouldn't do. Sure, people can't tell the difference, even when they claim otherwise, but they can tell when you know you're lying about it. Authenticity breeds confidence. They expect me to be confident.

They expect me to be severe as well, so I've chosen just a slight foundation and no other makeup. Hair is cropped short, but not pixie, not styled. I try direct eye contact with a pack of students strolling in Takadanobaba, four barely-bearded men chattering about their hopes for an impending izakaya crawl.

Two look away. The third gives me a jittery nod. The fourth manages enough boldness for a smile he probably thinks is flirty. I imagine him practicing it in the mirror, and I give him a bemused smirk.

One of his friends taps him on the shoulder and urges him along, and soon they're out of my sight.

The responses are the same along the rest of my walk. Even among the crowded shops of sultry Kabukicho, where the red lights shine in spirit if not in fact, I am not approached by man, woman, or anything between.

Perfect.



## NODA, CHIBA PREFECTURE, JAPAN

The journey by train takes a little less than an hour. Towering aggrandizements of neon and steel recede in minutes to rolling greenery, interrupted here and there by humble structures devoted either to utility or tradition, echoes of a proud past. I'm stunned by the speed of the transition. It's as though the Japanese encased Tokyo and all it represents in a bubble, permitting it to exist only under quarantine.

I get out at Unga Station, deep enough into the country that I no longer recognize signage or brand names, and start walking north to the Tokyo University of Science's local campus. It takes me about six minutes, and on the way, I encounter another aspect of my chosen attire. In the city, I was not to be trifled with, but not an outsider. Here, I'm a representative of alien ways, someone to reject wholesale. The locals I pass give me a polite and proactive distance. Again, I meet expectations by returning that treatment in kind.

It's a good thing that no one wants me here. It helps with the role. The persona I'm going for should radiate the burden of solitude. By the time I reach my destination — a squat, long building on the far end of meandering paths of cherry blossoms — I'm suffused with that burden.

Dr. Junichi Arai, the head of the research team asking me for funding, is already in the lobby when I enter. He greets me with a sharp bow. I return it, though not as low. He's every bit the obsessive-compulsive science type: tousled hair, heavy rimmed glasses, white lab coat, navy polo shirt, and khakis. So boring. Typical behavior for someone who shops for expedience and function, who has never been taught the value of the personal touch.

"It is good to meet you at last, Chen-san," he says, using my current alias. "We are very excited that you have come to see us." He's speaking Japanese, but my implants render communication problems moot.

I fix him with a stern mask. "The firm is more interested in your results than your enthusiasm, Arai-san. Please lead the way."

He blanches, and a combination of shock, fear, and anger brings a tremble to his hand and a twitch to his left eye. Then he nods, his head drooping in deference, and gestures to a hallway before pacing away. I feel a twinge of sympathy. Our prior correspondence and my research show him to be dedicated, reliable, and humble. He doesn't deserve this. But I have a role to play.

The laboratory is spacious, taking up a majority of this wing of the building. Arai's assistants bustle about, noting our entrance with a range of responses: surprise, annoyance, anticipation. Counters lined with sample tanks and computer equipment segment the room into a maze. The glow of indicators and displays throw prismatic projections around under deliberately dimmed fluorescents.

I'm struck by the personal touches at war with sterile austerity. A zen rock fountain here, a bonsai tree there. Portraits of smiling spouses and children. A reproduction of Degas' *Before the Race* on the west wall. A coffee mug, with a passage from the *Book of Five Rings* in kanji: "From one thing, know ten thousand things."

Hypothesis: To many of these researchers, this place is home.

Dr. Arai walks me up to one of the tanks. Inside, a piece of organ tissue floats in solution. He rises to full height, suffused with pride.

"Here, Chen-san, you can see—"

But I'm already on the nearby monitoring station, going through records and reports.

"Chen-san, this equipment is very sensi—"

"Do you think the firm would have sent someone who had not done their homework, Doctor?" I narrow my gaze, flare my nostrils just a touch. "I'm not here to listen to your pitch. I'm here to examine your work. Now, please excuse me."

I'm loud enough that work in the lab comes to a halt. Dr. Arai stiffens. I turn to the computer again, giving him my shoulder.



He'd be well within his rights to try and stop me, but I wield the Almighty Dollar, the only divine power recognized by modern research scientists. I calculate an approximate 12% chance he'll persist, and I brace for it.

He lets out an exasperated breath and fritters away to diffuse the sudden tension with his co-workers. I can't help but smirk.

I have the records I need after a few minutes wrangling his file system. Dr. Arai's team is working on gene engineering treatments aimed at reprogramming the body's natural immune response to various types of cancers, after a recent breakthrough with leukemia at New York's Memorial Sloan-Kettering Center. Their first round of clinical trials was a success, resulting in the disappearance of cancer cells in all patients for a wide variety of cancer types: breast, lung, bladder, non-Hodgkins lymphoma, melanoma, and thyroid.

An effective, one-shot cure for cancer, against all conventional medical wisdom. Near the top of the list of things too good to be true as far as the Masses are concerned, yet I'm staring at the results. Triumph on this scale should be enough to secure publicity and funding from nearly any research institute in the world.

So, why do they need me?

I dig further into the records and find a working budget. Major expenses remaining include a second round of clinical trials, an expansion of their available facilities... and several entries indicated only by numeric codes, adding up to an estimated \$22 billion in operating costs.

That answers my first question, but it brings up another. That much money is way more than even the National Cancer Institute gets in a year. Why does a single research team need that much?

I search for references to the codes. Nothing.

"Dr. Arai," I say, in my best goddess-summoning-a-mortal voice. He shuffles over, head drooping again. "Explain this to me." I gesture to the screen.

He glances at it, then at me. "I don't understand." I recognize the hesitation, the natural reaction when you think you're being tested.

I soften my tone, play for sympathy. "Why are these entries encoded?"

It doesn't work. His jaw tightens. He eyes me. "Iridium Medical provided us this budget analysis shortly before contacting you, or so they claimed."

"You didn't think these figures looked... unusual?"



"Again, Chen-san, they're your figures, not mine." He crosses his arms. "I thought you said you had done your homework."

All I can do is stare at the monitor. "So did I, Doctor. So did I."



I return to the building around 2 A.M. Two armed guards are standing in front of the entrance. Not campus security, but bruisers with pistols and Kevlar. The first sign my hunch is right.

Dr. Arai wasn't too happy with my noncommittal answers and my invocation of every cliché about corporate medicine that circulates on Facebook. There's not enough money in it for Big Pharma. We're interested in ongoing treatments with long profit margins, not cures that suck all the cash from the industry. We're out to squeeze every last dollar out of sick people.

It's an easy trigger for his disgust. Maybe a low blow, but I need him distracted. He's a smart man. If he starts adding two and two, he's going to develop the same hunch I am. I can't afford that.

The guards start chattering, and I wonder if it's tactical until one of them laughs. I realize I'm cracking my knuckles while I watch them. It's an old pre-confrontation habit from before I started working for Disbursements. I broaden the input to my visual cortex with my implants, analyze their micro-movements. Conclusion: Bored and displaying no signs of hyperawareness or other Enlightened enhancement, intended to intimidate rather than confront. Threat assessment: Minimal.

This could go quietly. I could use Procedure to trick them out of there, distract them, persuade them to leave.



The after-action backlash hits as soon as I start hacking the lab computer in earnest, and I slump into a lean on the counter despite myself. The cold, black particle board surface looks absurdly comfortable and nap-worthy. Stupid parasympathetic nervous system. I've been out of action too long.

I repeat the mantra I learned an eternity ago in training, the signal for an implanted post-hypnotic suggestion: The Bottom Line is the Bottom Line. Only victory is victory.

By the ninth repetition, the fatigue clears. There'll be consequences later. There'll be time for them later.

But I don't know who they report to and whether they have access to reinforcements.

I roll my shoulders back, another old habit. Looks like it'll have to be the direct approach, and I'll have to risk a little noise.

Okay, I admit I used to love this part.

I approach the two guards with my best "lost and vulnerable lady in an unfortunate place" act: hunched shoulders, darting eyes, inarticulate sounds of frustration. My heart rate's accelerated, and the dump of adrenaline helps with the ruse.

The guard to my right gives me one of the two most common reactions, frowning with concern. "Miss, are you all right?" I feel a sympathetic flutter in my chest.

Then I drive a knifehand strike into his throat with my right hand.

I follow up by stepping in with my right leg and sweeping his left leg out from under him. He falls. Palm strike to his nose; I break it.

His partner's OODA loop finally starts, and he advances. I twist and snap a kick out to his closest knee, hear a crunch. He crumbles, and I blast my right knee into the side of his head.

I linger just long enough to confirm they're both staying down.

Now for the real work.

In another hour, I have all the information I need.

I pull out my smartphone and key in the app that allows me to access its higher functions: a suite of sensors and data collection tools that would make your average Google researcher turn green. I run an analysis of the mass of all objects in the lab, find an anomalous concentration of mass and space, and walk over to its source.

The Degas painting. Of course, it would be just big enough. I unhook it from the wall. A wave of sound rushes into the lab as if let out of an airtight jar. Voices chatter, machines hum, and static crackles.

Behind the painting, an open window looks into another lab, larger than this building, over a mile of scientists and gleaming chrome consoles within my field of vision. In front of me, the sample tanks resemble the setup in the lab I'm standing in, except they're much larger, each holding a human subject, naked and impaled by tubes.

"It's over," I say, again in the goddess voice. "Get me someone in charge."

After five minutes of shuffling and muttering, I'm rewarded for my insistence. A pale woman, slighter than me, sporting a similar suit, hair tied back so tight that it could be frozen on her. Somewhere in her mid-fifties, which for a ranking Progenitor could mean anywhere from 55 to 255.

"I am Director Dannika Cruz," she says, with that tone people get when they expect their name alone to mean something. "We will appeal to your superiors if necessary."

"I doubt you'll find them sympathetic." I indicate the window between us. "Spatial co-location? Serious Paradox risk."

"We've taken the necessary precautions, Miss...?"

Checking my credentials, of course. Not giving her the satisfaction. "You may call me Synapse."

She crosses her arms, and her lips purse. "Code names are gauche." Translation: I'm enough of a higher up that we don't waste time with such things. "Was there something anomalous in the budget request? We were assured that everything would be in order."

"I was assured that I was evaluating the work of a gifted research scientist. I'm not funding this farce."

She goes for the innocent look, the matter-of-fact routine. "Dr. Arai is very gifted. He may even become Enlightened one day."

"Before or after you tell him that his work isn't his own?"

She blanches. Her jaw sets. Shock and offense. Now I'm getting somewhere. "We've worked through proxies before. Our predictive models have shown enough widespread belief in genetic manipulation to guarantee results among the Masses. They're already making strides in this field without Enlightened help. Where's the harm in giving them a bump?"

"Crunching the numbers on Trinary computers and providing an army of clones isn't a bump, Director. It's a statistical disaster, waiting to claim lives."

She becomes even paler, stays silent. It doesn't seem possible, but then, I've seen a lot of impossible things.

I allow myself the luxury of a smile. "I found your files. And we have rules for this sort of thing. If it won't work in their labs with their people and their gear, it won't work. Period. Something will go wrong, and I won't have that on my conscience."

"You prefer the alternative." It's not a question, but a judgment. She knows my answer, and she hates me for it.

"We can't just hand them a world where cancer doesn't exist. Not without cost." As the words come out, I hate myself too.

"They already want that world. Can't you see that?" The color's starting to return to her cheeks, but now, they're red as rage.

I hope she doesn't hear the tremble in my voice. "Correction: they dream of it. They don't believe in it. And last I checked, it's still a paradox when certain dreams come true."

She shakes her head, unable to speak through her disgust. I pick up the Degas and hang it back up. The sounds die away, leaving me in the silence of the lab.

I flee. I leave the lab, the campus, the countryside, and the disapproving stares of scientists all behind. I'm back in Tokyo by first light, but the rising sun cannot burn their image from my mind.



# INTRODUCTION: THE BOTTOM LINE



The Technocracy is in the black.

Look at the Masses. They happily go to work, give their lives to a grand machine for pay, unwind at the end of the day with a beer and streaming TV, then go to bed to do it all over again tomorrow. They make plans — some small, some large — like homeownership, vacations, starting businesses, going to college, striking out in the world with a few dollars and a crazy idea.

The world in turn provides new wonders for their consumption: cell phones that can do everything imaginable, distributed entertainment and media networks, cars and homes with more amazing features, and so on. The

Syndicate's done the market research: this is the world the Masses want.

The Syndicate's greatest investment isn't in any one corporation or government, but in the whole of Consensual Reality. We put every resource at our disposal to two ends: protecting it from hostile takeovers and making it profitable. Not in terms of money — that's unEnlightened thinking — but in terms of the only currency that matters on a venture cosmic in scope: desire and contentment.

We're glad to see the Masses thrive, but in truth that's not our job — it's on them to thrive for themselves. In the grand scheme of things, we don't impose our will on them; they impose their collective will on us. This follows the natural law of supply and demand. The



Masses demanded a Consensual Reality. We supplied it, creating the Union in order to fulfill the longest service contract in history.

Not that it's easy. We might be winning the war against Reality Deviants, but like any insurgency, the calm doesn't last for long. We're still repairing the Union

after the catastrophic event that was the Dimensional Anomaly. And we're doing all that while fighting against factions in our organization who have different visions for the Technocracy and the world – visions that are dysfunctional and dangerous.

But we do what we must, because we're the Syndicate.

## THEME: GUARDIANS ⊕ OF THE STATUS ⊕ QU⊕



The Syndicate is about the almighty Bottom Line, but the Bottom Line is this: the Masses want a Consensual Reality where they have a say in what goes on. The Union gave the Masses exactly what they asked for, and we continue to do it today. Traditionalist propaganda aside, the common man doesn't want to fight for Awakening. Hell, they don't want to engage in the struggle toward Enlightenment, and Enlightenment makes a lot more sense.

The Masses want something simple: they want to live. Propaganda would say the Syndicate just wants people to watch TV, get fat, and buy all the shit they see on TV. Everyone telling you that are really just trying to convince

themselves that their pointless rebellion is somehow “noble” and “better.” But they're dead wrong.

What we want is for the Masses to have families. We want them to have kids who go to school and grow up and get married and have more kids. We want them to fight not for some big, unattainable goal, but for moments of happiness and contentment we all have a right to.

Sure, this isn't a perfect world. The Consensus rejects all attempts at a utopia, but trust us – if we could, we'd make that perfect world where everyone is always happy and peaceful. After all, we'd get to live there too. Since that's not the case, it's on us to be the architects of this imperfect world, merging what the Masses want with what they'll accept.



The Status Quo is what we fight for. It's the world where we can be annoyed by little things like shitty traffic, and not insurmountable things like a wizard electrocuting you for your land or your children or just because you

looked at her funny. We even fight to keep this world safe from our fellow Enlightened, who in their zeal to see a world of hypertechnology forget the entire point of the Technocracy: to keep this a world of the Masses.

## MOOD: BEARS AMONG BULLS



All markets have up and down periods, and the market that's the Consensus is no different. It's in an upswing right now — we're discovering Extraordinary Citizens at a rate previously unprecedented. By the end of this Time Table, the world will see Progenitor and Iteration X technology that will blow their freakin' minds away. (Wait until 2019, when we have a debut that makes smartphones look like rotary phones.) It's a good time to be the Technocracy.

At least, it's supposed to be. But the Union's not living up to its name. The friction between the Syndicate and the New World Order continues to grow. They blame us for a host of problems, most notably the recent hypereconomic crash that's ravaged global economies and crippled the Masses' trust in the system. And sure, that's on us, but that's not why NWO continues to call attention to it. No, they're gearing up for a hostile takeover.

We've run the numbers, and it doesn't sound good. Open war within the Technocratic Union means that, at

best, the Time Table's set back decades after a few years of war and reconciliation. At worst, we start losing a large amount of the Consensus to the Traditionalists (or worse) within a year and a half.

This could all be solved if calmer minds are at the table, but they aren't. People are still uneasy after the Dimensional Anomaly, and since we still don't have good answers from the Void Engineers about exactly how the fuck it happened, we're all eyeing at each other as a possible instigator for another one. Just because we're Enlightened doesn't mean we're immune to panic and fear. Nor are we immune to other emotions: greed, envy, pride, hubris — the very things that everyone else, Traditionalists and other Technocrats, accuse us of.

So here we are, in one hell of a time to be alive, worrying about who might push the big red button and end everything we've fought toward. And while no one in the Syndicate wants that — there's no profit to be had in this war — we know things turn out worse if someone else presses the button instead of us.

I suppose that still means it's one hell of a time to be alive.

## WHEELS OF PROGRESS

*Thorne: You have to admire anyone who can bring the wonder of scientific discovery to the masses.*

*Zane: Especially if the masses will pay top dollar to see it?*

*Thorne: Doesn't hurt.*

*—Eva Throne and Zane Donovan, Eureka*



This book continues the love letter to **Mage: the Ascension** fans that started with **Convention Book: N.W.O.** and continued in **Convention Book: Progenitors**, and it lays more groundwork for the final volume in this series, **Convention Book: Void Engineers**. This book especially for two different sorts of people: those who love the Syndicate and those who hate them.

Everyone is the hero of his or her own story, and with Syndicate executives, it's no different. Welcome to

the inner thoughts of one of the most hated factions in all of Consensual Reality. Expect your opinions of this vast Convention to change.

Some of the ideas contained within will refer back to ideas introduced in the New World Order and Progenitors books — story elements like the brewing Technocratic civil war, mechanical elements of NWO's Data theory of Correspondence, and so on. If you haven't read those books, it shouldn't be too hard to pick up on what's going on, but those are pieces of a whole puzzle revealing more about the Technocracy in 2013.

In short: the Avatar Storm (what any good Technocrat knows to call “the Dimensional Anomaly”) changed everything by severing the head of the Union. In the last decade, the Masses have become more interconnected – a massive game-changer for everyone, especially those trying to control and steer them. With all five Conventions

suddenly under new leadership during a time of great change... yeah, that’s going to go over real smooth.

What does this mean for your chronicle? How will you take these ideas and go forward? Will your Syndicate agents succeed in forging a better, stronger Union, or will they be beaten back by the twin forces of rivalry and chance?

## CONTENTS



Continuing the Convention Book trend, this book is about the Syndicate as heroes to the Union and to the Masses overall. That’s a view every other faction in **Mage: the Ascension** has a problem believing, but when you’re done reading this book, you’ll see how they justify what they do. Hell, you might even be sold on the Syndicate’s humanity and struggle between the desire to be noble and need to be pragmatic on behalf of the Union.

And boy, is this book one hell of a deal for you!

**Chapter One: Status Me** catches you up on the last fifteen years, with the strained relationship with the New World Order, events after the Dimensional Anomaly, and the recent hypereconomic problems. You’ll get a taste of how the Syndicate runs things in the Union,

and an insider’s view of its relationships with the other Conventions, the Traditionalists, and more. But wait, that’s not all!

**Chapter Two: Human Resources** goes into detail on the Syndicate’s org charts. It shows the steps from Associate to Vice President of Operations, how the Convention’s structure changed after the Anomaly, and the individual Methodologies. Act now, and we’ll throw in a special look at Special Projects Division. Can this deal get any better?

**Chapter Three: Power Players and Blowout Deals** presents a treasure trove just too good to pass up, so call right now. We’re offering iconic Syndicate executives, rumors and legends, and Syndicate amalgams. That’s not enough? How about Syndicate gear and Procedures? All right, you drive a hard bargain – we’ll finish off with the Syndicate’s alternate theory of Prime, Primal Utility, and a few character templates for use in your chronicles.





# CHAPTER ⊕ ONE: STATUS ∏ E

## AN⊕OTHER DECADE, AN⊕OTHER D⊕LLAR



In the darkest hour of our history, the Syndicate saved the Technocratic Union. While the walls fell down around our colleagues, we were there to drag them back to their feet. We held strong through economic crashes, the Dimensional Anomaly, and all the infighting that comes along with a downturn. Hard work is the lesson we teach, and the Union can be a very difficult student. This is what's been on the agenda.

### INSURANCE AGAINST ACTS ⊕ F ⊕ D

To some of us, the Dimensional Anomaly was like losing our parents; the best Technocratic minds and projects were gone in a flash. It took investments we spent decades cultivating and threw them out the fucking window. No warning from the Void Engineers or Control or any of the Horizon outposts – we just lost contact. The aftershock alone killed so many good men and women. Thanks to how



## A WAR OF WORDS

You've probably seen the NWO memo on "Statistical Inevitability." They're embracing the Iteration X term for what we all used to call as slang "Paradox." Don't any of you buy into that. NWO prides itself on being the masters of memetic control, and they do that with language.

We know this phenomenon for what it is: the great market that is the Consensus rejecting an Enlightened idea. So unless you want to look like you're an NWO prole, you'll say "Market Correction," or Correction for short.

The Progenitors call this "Rejection," which is fitting given what they do. And very politick of them. In any case, when it comes to talking with the other Conventions, sometimes "Paradox" is the lingua franca. That depends on whether you're trying to soften up or put at unease your contact.

we operate, the Syndicate was the first to recover. When the other Conventions clung to existence by their fingertips, we grabbed them and pulled them up. It wasn't a secret agent or cybernetic superhero who saved the Technocracy; it was a team of dedicated accountants.

Maybe you noticed that the world didn't devolve into a few thousand little magical fiefdoms, whose very existence holds no rhyme or reason? You're welcome.

We immediately began the process of Reorganization. The Anomaly left gaping wounds in the form of power vacuums. We stepped in and filled them. Field promotions and financial triage were top priority. We put projects on hold and reallocated funds to places where they really mattered. (The Dimensional Anomaly hadn't voided the budget, after all.) We'd never really acted as Union medic before, but that's the thing about disaster insurance; you hope you never have to use it.

The dark truth is that as harmful as the Anomaly was for our organization on a personal level, operationally it wasn't all bad. (Though reminding people of that won't make you any friends, especially among the Void Engineers.) It cut off those members of the upper echelon who had lost touch with the real work we were doing — leadership who had ceased paying attention to the Masses. The most flagrant of them were, in some cases, barely human at all and couldn't have come back to Earth without significant risk of Market Correction. They were a liability too deeply entrenched to have been

excised any other way. Union management is lean and fierce now. Young guns guide this organization. We refocused and implemented new initiatives that Control would have dragged into a bureaucratic grave. We chose to move forward.

## SPECIAL PROJECTS DIVISION

Since the Big A, Special Projects Division has become a much less vocal partner in our Convention. They don't contribute tech anymore, don't return many calls, but still pay into the system. Pentex is still a thriving corporation that shows growth even during a crap economy, so whatever's going on is anyone's guess. After a dozen years, the rest of us have stopped asking questions — maybe they're working on something massive in response to the Anomaly, and don't have time to do their old job. They've always been the Board's wildcard.

## QUARTERLY REPORT

It's been a very busy decade, and we've been a very busy Convention. Housing crises, credit clusterfucks, financial upheaval and collapse — shit's changed. Look at the slow slide of the Masses away from the trust and faith they once had in the institutions we've built. They're desperate, huddled in the rain, spitting insults at their financial pillars and job creators. They attempt to "occupy" anything they don't understand. We have our work cut out for us.

Maybe we forgot some of the hard lessons our predecessors, the Craftmasons, learned in the Middle Ages. Maybe we'd gotten soft off our rampant success and believed that the Masses finally begun accepting our dream for them. It was a failure on our part, really — believing that humanity would respond rationally when threatened. It turns out people utterly lose faith when they can't get phone reception, to say nothing of losing their homes or jobs. They just give up on or lash out at the system.

We're working hard to repair the damage caused in the last decade. As always, our work is slow and subtle. The hypereconomic experiments we were running failed. We don't deny that. It's all in the reports. What we do deny is that they've failed completely or that they're even finished. Phase Two indicates significant new growth — the Internet, social media, crowdfunding. With the failure of the old ways of big business the Masses are opening up to alternate economic models. Models we can influence in new ways.

The other Conventions blame and hate us for the financial mess we're in, and that's fine. We don't do our jobs to be liked. They'll have to tighten their belts and continue to cooperate. What choice do they have? What they fail to understand is that economic downturn

is inevitable — the market demands a fall so it can rise again. In tight times, people rely more, not less, on the institutions that protect them.

## STATE OF TECHNOLOGY

The Internet is something we can all be proud of. There was a time, during its infancy, where it might have been dangerous — a place to spread subversive ideas and connect dangerous elements who might threaten the safety we'd created. Thanks to our hard work, that didn't happen. It's a moderated commerce machine. It's a shopping channel. We won this one. Let's all take a minute to recognize the folks responsible. Good job, team.

Because of our early initiative and dedication, the speed at which we can perform Adjustments on this system is staggering. We're learning as we go along that we don't have to go directly after big projects ourselves. Lucrative crowdfunding platforms have been created of late — platforms we own controlling stock in. We curate the projects we want to see approved and the Masses pay for them. We discovered that it's much easier for the Masses to accept a new technology when they feel like they've helped create it. (For all the NWO grandstanding about how the Masses are more accepting of Technocratic innovations than ever before, we don't get so much as a thank-you card. So it goes.)

A new economy is forming on the Internet, one that runs on reputation, and Media Control is having a field day. It won't be long before how many social media followers you have impacts your prosperity as directly as how much money you've got in your bank account. In exchange for reputation, fame, and a sense of connectedness, the Masses have given us direct access to a remarkable database of personal information. Every day, people trade privacy away for fame and notoriety, and with that comes a new vista of Mind Procedures that can be performed without vulgarity. Big Data is good, and we've already started selling it to the other Conventions. The Masses no longer balk at us knowing every detail about them — and because of that openness, we can make the world safer for them. (You'd be surprised at how useful all those social media apps that bug you to check in are. They help the Union track down Reality Deviants.)

## THE (WALLED) GARDEN OF EDEN

What we sell to the Masses is control — a stable system in which they can pursue their goals without fear. They can find their niche and they can work, raise their families, and contribute their full-and-complete worth to their fellow men and women. Control is about trust.

## FOR THE WIN

When massively multiplayer online games started, they weren't something the Syndicate was interested in. We got burned by the video game industry crash of the mid-80s. The AAA titles from profit-heavy studios were of interest, but it was a small piece of the media pie compared to blockbuster movies.

That all changed in the mid-2000s. A report about the fiscal impact of virtual game worlds came across the desk of a middle-grade Financier Executive. Within months of launching, these games were pulling in more money than entire countries. Fictional universes were more profitable than war-torn African regimes. Like any good Executive, she recognized opportunity when she saw it. These were economies of pure labor — people toiled for goods that could be created, modified or destroyed at a whim by administrators. Scarcity in these economies wasn't determined by crops or oil, but by an easily Adjusted component of a completely closed universe.

There are teams of Executives across all the Syndicate involved in the virtual economies of MMOs. Whether officially sanctioned marketplaces exchange in-game goods for real cash, or black market gold sellers operating out of Asian sweatshops, the Syndicate has a firm grip on this weird new economy. (Especially in that game with all the spaceships.)

Trust in the banks, the government, and the corporate families to whom each person belongs.

Riding the myth of "small town coder makes it big", the Financiers helped create the walled garden model. We'd created a playground where anyone with a little knowledge, an entrepreneurial spirit, and a willingness to play by our rules can come and make a buck. All under the watchful eye of our "Application Approval" teams. We decide what does and doesn't sell, the Masses do the work, get to be millionaires and we take our cut. It's the new American Dream. Who doesn't want to make the next Angry Birds?

What's happening here is a managed experiment in control. We're teaching the Masses that all they have to do is meet our guidelines and we'll make them rich. They just have to embrace their creativity, and we do the hard work of selling it for them. We acknowledge that not everyone

can be successful in the same way or to the same extent, but we've provided a level playing field — something you can't say about the Traditionalists or even many of our fellow Unionists. The world is accepting a place where we protect consumers from harmful content and present them with a billion ways to shop and play games. We tell the Masses how to play the game and how much it'll cost. They submit, and we approve or disapprove.

It's a beautiful example of an Adjustment in motion. The poetic thing about all of it is that the Extraordinary Citizen who engineered the concept could have been such an embarrassment. A hippie with some very wrong ideas about life turned himself around when he realized the fortune and impact on the world he could make. A lost sheep come back to the fold. We're so proud.

## SELLING THE ENEMY

We've made dramatic headway in the so-called "Ascension War." Waging a war of any kind isn't cheap nor straightforward — expenses always appear where you least expect, but we are winning this conflict. The end is closer with every passing day.

The other Conventions fight in the streets, taking physical action against those who would drive the Masses back into the dark ages. We couldn't do it without their dedication and fearless drive. We generate the revenue needed for that service, to purchase gear, research technology, and put boots on the ground. Too often, we go unappreciated or resented. For guarding the budget or for the lack of field agents, we're considered cowards. Our contributions are subtle and indirect. We're not fighting for glory or fame. We understand we might never be seen as heroes. Every war effort needs funding, so we provide our services proudly.

The Syndicate does, however, provide some direct contribution to the war effort. Media Control has worked diligently the past decade not to kill our foes, but to embarrass them in the eyes of the Masses. To discredit them into submission. Their spiritual misgivings are greeting cards and new-age novelties. Their famous figures are movie characters and fast-food combo meals. Their alchemy and herbalism are packaged and sold on shopping channels. One by one, we co-opt them. We turn our enemies into commodities, and they're profitable.

This is how the Syndicate wins wars. Not by killing our enemies, but by selling them to the Masses and reaping the rewards.

## OCCUPATIONAL HAZARDS

The Occupy Movement was an unfortunate alchemy of social media and civil unrest. Protestors and malcontents gathered on the Internet to organize large-scale economic protest with a speed and agility we couldn't have anticipated.

It was a wakeup call. Financiers used to be able to operate from the safety of the corporate boardroom. When news was bad, Media Control would put a spin on it and we'd all get back to work. The Masses, if they found out about our fuck-ups at all, would be too confused to act or would be gently reminded that Big Business had only their prosperity in mind. It was a comfortable way to do things. Before we had a chance to understand the unrest brewing in the social media sphere (being too busy dealing with recent market crash), flash-protests surrounded every major financial operation in North America.

Media Control (with NWO assistance) took action. The plan was infiltration and destabilization by two methods: first, by posing as violent "anarchists" who threw bricks, lit fires, and attacked police officers to paint the movement as terrorists; second, by infusing the movement with privileged white college students with a guilt complex who would take charge and shout down anyone who might actually cause any damage. The Financiers secretly arranged for the creation of the Domestic Security Alliance Council, a body of guerilla defense and counterintelligence for major banks. If the Masses were going to revolt, it was their job to protect the terrorized. Media Control activated a number of "feel good" Adjustments in the popular media. Following the Movement's rise to the popular consciousness, messages of goodwill towards the affluent spiked. Daddy Warbucks made a comeback in a real way.

Media Control's defense budget has since jumped significantly. They've been given real authority and the cash flow to back it up. NWO might monitor social media for subversive messaging, but Media Control manages the messenger. The right things are being said because we reward the Masses for saying them.

# THE ECONOMIC GEARS OF PROGRESS

The following recording was submitted as evidence in the case built against Financier Manager Efua Sarpong as a possible conspirator in the Godfather movement, prior to her acquittal.

Welcome, newly promoted junior executives. Take a moment to enjoy the fruits of our labor. Order whatever you like – the Macallan 25 is a delight. This one's on your new bosses. Hell, it's on me.

You're probably starting to get suspicious; "why the free drinks?" If you aren't thinking that, get the fuck out of here – you're not Syndicate material. We want you to ask questions. We're not looking for mindless drones. We're not Black Suits, we're

Italian suits. Consider it an investment. We believe in the future of our Executives. Enlightenment is a growth industry and I see the potential in all of you to be tomorrow's bosses, colleagues, or even just useful resources to me. Don't take it personally. I'm sure you're all fine individuals.

I'm going to tell you a little story about why the Syndicate is the most important Convention in the Union. Cheers.



We are the Technocratic Union's management, and being the management is a tiring and thankless job. At the end of the day, we're responsible for making sure all the Enlightened Science this organization can produce gets made. We may not put the machine together with our own hands, but we created it — make no mistake. The rest of the Union sees us as merely the bankers of their precious projects, and that affords us leverage. We're underestimated: our Adjustments are built on statistics and experimental math equal to anything Iteration X can muster. Our economic forecasts are as much a "miracle" as the medicine of the Progenitors. Unlike our fellows, however, we are grounded in reality. Our work is done here and now. Our work makes a difference to absolutely every day the Union operates. Here's how it all works.

## The Big Picture

At the opening of each decade, coinciding with the all-hallowed Time Table, we take on the herculean task of convening the Board to write the Collected Budget. This document sets out all the available funds (well, most of them – we need to keep some on cash on hand, after all) and assigns them to our fellows based on the holy trinity of requirement, progress, and success. If a Convention presents projects that need funding (hint: they always do), have made clear progress on their existing work, and show a hope

in hell of turning a profit down the road, then they get a bigger share of the Collected Budget.

In an ideal world, this process would be quick and straightforward; but then, in an ideal world there wouldn't be a need for the Syndicate to labor as we must. We adjust the numbers during a yearlong appeals process, during which the other Conventions bitch and moan about how they "just need more time" or "the Superstitionists wrecked our spaceship." We ask them to address the numbers, they instead bring us anecdotes. Typical: when you work with exceptional people, they all think they're exceptions to the rule.

## ENLIGHTENED POCKETBOOKS

To be clear, by "funds" or "money" we don't just mean cash and credit in the global market. Sure, temporal resources (pretentious Syndicate term for money) are a big chunk, we look over every commodity, mundane and Enlightened: rare minerals, exotic staff and equipment, real estate, Premium, clones, and last (but the complete opposite of least) Primal Energy.

Disbursements maintains a commodity exchange that translates all of this back and forth. Some Financiers spend their off time day trading in this private market, more for sport and competition than for serious gains.





Given the secretive nature of our fellows, this process is necessary to unearth the actual truth behind the reports we obtain. It never ceases to amaze how many Level 5 Eyes-Only security clearance gates one can suddenly surmount once you need an extra million dollars. So we deal with the bullshit because it provides us with information. And information, as you'd better fucking know by now, is power.

We afford them a year of this. At the end of that year, and not a day over, appeals are closed and Disbursement does a final review. If there were any justice, we'd all get a week of centrally mandated holiday, drink a bottle or five of scotch, and get back to work. However, Market Corrections invariably invades this process, some otherwise-unknown expense will make it clear or a worldwide calamity will occur, like the Dimensional Anomaly, and we're back to the budgetary drawing board.

Reviews and sub-appeals are available to the Union, but they're reserved for absolute emergencies. We're a busy Convention. We don't waste time. Any Convention expecting a review of their Collected Budget Allocation can process it via the central database. All forms are requested in triplicate.

This process is something we endure for the sake of the Union. The Union is an organization of visionaries — unpredictable people whose talents are often laser-focused on a single discipline. They don't have the time to stop and think about how much something costs. That's our job. Someone needs to keep their heads down and do some real work around here while the creative types paint their pretty picture of the future.

## Nickels and Dimes

On occasion, a specific amalgam will require funding for a project outside their existing Allocation. They can come to Disbursements directly and be assigned an Executive for Probationary Assessment. This is a job you do not want to have. It's a misery that lasts between three and six months and may even cost you your life.

Let that sink in. I'll wait.

"Our lives?" you say, "but I thought we're accountants?" And yes, to them, that's exactly what you are. You will be the mole, the corporate shill,

the firm hand on the purse strings breathing down their neck. You will be their Blake, their Cyril-fucking-Figgis. Sometimes this means that you'll be shot at or deal first-hand with Reality Deviants. Such is the nature of the occasional fieldwork we must do. You can expect to be compensated accordingly.

The job of Assessment Executive is to temporarily join the amalgam in need and decide two things. One, do they warrant the funding they are asking for? Two, are they pissing on the money we're already giving them with shitty spending decisions? Overzealous application of Enlightened equipment and damage to vehicles, weapons, or Union facilities can lead to a reduction to both the amalgam's budget and the Convention's place in the Collected Budget overall.

This is why they hate us, deeply and personally. It all boils down to that we pay for their toys, and when they break them, we stop giving them their allowance.

For a Probationary Assessment to proceed happily for all involved, the amalgam in question must satisfy us. We need to see the potential that the money we're sinking into their project will come back to us or that the expense it represents is one of significance. That may sound unexpectedly philosophical, but it is a point that the other Conventions forget — we have a philosophy. (We'll get to that in a couple seconds.) We're almost always going to prioritize a fiscally sound project, but not if it doesn't make philosophical sense. If our gut says that it's not what the Union does, then we don't

approve it. Our colleagues accuse us of favoritism from time to time but we understand where value lies in this organization. We follow our conscience and the Bottom Line. We're not here to make excuses. There are review boards to prevent bias. Let them handle complaints.

## Bang for our Buck

As a result of all this, we're granted oversight. We understand every project the Union undertakes because everything we do costs resources — since we pay for everything, we know what's going on. It takes hard work and sweat and toil and Enlightened Science to make the numbers work. We are why the Union lives and breathes. The Traditionalists might try to make change out of sticks and blood and magic words, but we make Progress, here. You are the guardians of that Progress. A wrongly approved project means money isn't there for the dedicated men and women who need it. Do not make stupid mistakes. Do not close projects that do not deserve it. To be able to do that, you have to understand why we operate the way we do.

The other Conventions see us as money-grubbing sadists. They see us as arbitrary and vindictive, and think their Science is so much more important than ours. That's because what they don't understand is that money is not just means to an end. It's a symbol. It's trust. It's the value of human effort.

Go get another drink. Next, I'm going to tell you where you came from.

# HISTORY OF THE SYNDICATE



Our legacy is as “noble” and “rich” as any Convention. More so, once you get to understand it. We're always going to be the banker to the rest of the Union. That's the burden we have to bear. Learning where this enterprise came from is going to help you get a handle on why that viewpoint is so fucked up. Or why we let them keep it. Either way. Whichever helps you sleep at night.

## Sacred Works

Western Civilization loves ancient Rome. Why not? We start there, too. (The Syndicate, I mean; I'm a woman from Ghana, pretty far from Roman pedigree.)

Money wasn't invented in Rome, nor was commerce, but it's where we come from according to the history, and there's no reason to debate that now. You're curious about what else was going on, hit the archives. I don't have time for that shit.

In 715 B.C., a guild formed called the Brotherhood of the Rule. Men, mostly, but not rich ones. Not nobility. We were laborers, then. The Syndicate started as a group of *tignarii* — that's Latin for “beams,” as in “the shit holds up the roof over your head.” These folks were luminaries: architects, carpenters, craftsmen. Hard-working types who came together with a philosophy that not only is human sweat worth something, but people deserve to be rewarded for it. Exalted, even. You put your mind and hands to something and improve the lot

## MEANWHILE, ELSEWHERE...

The Technocracy likes to moan about the Dark Ages like it was a time in which all progress came to a complete stop. A time in which the good and noble agents of the eventual Technocracy spent hid from inquisitors and the Masses huddled in the mud and rain, serving their Traditionalist overlords. Some of that's true — Europe was shit for a good, long time. But not everywhere was like that.

During this period, proto-Syndicate agents were hard at work improving the economies and working Adjustments in other parts of the world, with a lot more success than the Brotherhood of the Rule was having. Islamic capitalism flourished in the Middle East right up until the Mongols invaded in 1258. In Bengal, agrarian economy flourished in the Pala Empire. In 1299, the Turkish tribes were united into what would become the cosmopolitan (and ridiculously wealthy) Ottoman Empire. The ancestors of the Syndicate were hard at work in all these places.

The problem with acknowledging that the Dark Ages wasn't all bad would mean acknowledging the Union's history is basically a Eurocentric shit-show. Many "Classicists" Technocrats who fetishize their Greco-Roman mythology are uncomfortable admitting that.

of mankind? You'd better believe you deserve to be compensated. That's what keeps us going, even now — labor is sacred. Human work means something.

Rome was strong, and strength brings stability. Stability allowed the tignarii freedom to specialize in the work they did and get rewarded for it. We need the other Conventions in the same way — we aren't warriors. Just as you need protection from hostilities and you need people to supply materials and food in order to create a specialized labor force, you need the other Conventions to do their jobs so that we can do ours.

Rome was also stupidly ambitious and their unchecked ambition led, as it does, to a fall. The tignarii got put into survival mode — eat, sleep, screw, don't die. Nobody ever made a change to the world just trying to get by. It's why socialism doesn't work. So, the Dark Ages came along and we were fucked.

### La Compagnia

The Brotherhood spent hundreds of years getting by in hiding or relocating to slightly less hostile countries. We were running scared. Someone among the tignarii, or what was left of them, managed to summon up the backbone to call a meeting: Wolfgang Von Reisman.

Remember that name, he'll keep coming up.

After assessing the costs, he summoned together all the extant members he could find and, in 997, called the Gathering of the Square to Frankfurt. They hit upon a truth we take for granted today: agents working alone and scattered can't accomplish anything. Individuals have no real economic impact. Von Reisman was a shit-disturber, and he riled up or

shamed everyone present into action. The time had come, he claimed, to liberate the Masses from the work-without-pay that the Traditionalist feudal system had them toiling under. Remember, working for free is the worst kind of embarrassment. Those gathered decided it was time to rebrand. La Compagnia was formed. The Company. Feels good, right? They'd also come to be known as the Craftsmasons.

Right after that, a spectacularly fiery member got involved in a violent series of encounters with some nobility that tried to close down a local trade market. This asshole, one Stephen Trevaine, assembled a bunch of outlaws and peasants and reminded them that they were human beings, goddammit, and that their lives had value. Theft and highway robbery won Trevaine as much gold as his thugs could carry, and he just gave it all away. Not that he needed it, since he was a company man.

The Enforcers like to think of Trevaine as the first of their kind, and that's a valuable lesson to them — violence is sometimes a fiscally appropriate approach. Trevaine's story is where Robin Hood came from. Trevaine is why the disenfranchised can dream about overthrowing those who fuck with their ability to make a living. We created that legend. We gave it teeth. I'd call that Media Control, wouldn't you?

Our enemies weren't having any of it. We expected them to strike back, but not the way they did. They'd learned a trick or two from us. A Traditionalist with an ironic streak, one Baldwin Langenstrait, came after the trade guilds with accusations of witchcraft. Our secrecy and unwillingness to tithe away our earnings meant we were "devil-worshippers." In 1189, The Council of Rouen — a synod called by Archbishop de Coutances —



U banned trade guilds, and thus us, completely throughout Europe. It was bullshit of the highest order and only a short time after being founded, the Craftmasters were staring into an obscure unprofitability.

Langenstrait's covenant, Mistridge, was a bunch of grade-A bastards. Rumors abound of torture, experimentation on locals, and even worse obscenities indecent to the human condition. All the more reason for what came next. Trevaine, our heroic Robin Hood, got Von Reisman to back him into building an army, and together they marched on Mistridge and showed them what happens when you fuck with the Craftmasters. Not only did we rout the Reality Deviants that lived there, but we sent a message to all the other Traditionalists who thought they could put the Masses in a vice and squeeze. That night was supposed to be the turning of an age.

It didn't quite happen that way, though we learned a serious lesson.

## After Mistridge

We used the breathing room gained in the assault to spread the word and start doing real work again. We built trade routes. With the commerce from those trade routes came exploration and knowledge. We paid for ships and roads, and the money started to flow. Craftmasters reconnected with the communities of peers who'd fled during the Dark Ages. We spent a long time unopposed by the Traditionalists, who returned to their caves to paint oxen on the walls and pray for salvation.

What we learned then was a painful lesson, and one that's shaped this Convention. This is a lesson that, hopefully, you've already learned: people are fucking lazy. It's something you see on the streets every goddamn day. When you give them the golden goose, they kill and eat it. When you give them the tools to make a new life, they moan and complain and go back inside to watch TV. The Masses do not want to work; they want things given to them. We are not a charity, and learning that lesson struck the Craftmasters to the core. It hurts to have your hard work go unrewarded. Make a note — call your mother, tell her you're sorry for being such a shit to her as a child. This stuff matters.

After giving the Masses so much to work for, seeing them get fat and lazy was heartbreaking. When the other Conventions remind us that we are obsessed with money or that we demand too much, we can't help but be reminded of the years that followed Mistridge. The wound was so deep that it caused a philosophical rift.

In 1325, we met at the Convention of the White Tower. Von Reisman, Trevaine, the whole body of the Craftmasters. We discussed what to do with the Masses. Optimists like Trevaine believed that humanity simply needed more time, more fostering before they would come to realize their own worth. The Traditionalists damaged their ambition with a dogma of God and King and Country, but time would heal them and they could all join us in utopia. More rational members of the assembly, Von Reisman among them, saw the truth

## ENLIGHTENMENT IS FOR CLOSERS

Some in the Union believe that everyone can and should be Enlightened. That the whole mess of humanity is just one medical treatment or a cybernetic implant away from leaping face-first into a golden age of brilliance and inspired science. It's bullshit. And deep down, they have to also realize it's crap, but they're just too scared to admit that most of humanity is just not strong-willed enough to take that step.

Does this mean that the Syndicate doesn't believe in the Masses? No. It means that we understand that there is only so much room at the top — people need to be pruned and tailored and some people simply don't have what it takes to be the boss.

This is not a hopeless model. This is not a depressing or fascistic approach. The Syndicate believes in humanity. We see the absolute value and worth of every human being on the planet. Everyone has a place on the Bottom Line. Every CEO needs a board. Every manager needs a team. While we don't believe in Enlightenment for all, we aim to be shepherds of progress and prosperity all the same. We create a system in which anyone has the potential to succeed. Anyone can look at their bank account and their home and their car and say that they earned something with their labor. Humans function on order and stability.

Some of them will be Enlightened and join us at the top. Others won't. It's how the game's played.

of things. The Masses were never going to become Enlightened on their own, and we would have to take a hand in shaping their destiny. Heavy stuff, isn't it? I'd like to think that I know where each and every one of you falls on that divide, or you wouldn't be here. At the Convention, the Order of Reason was formed. The Craftmasters went with Trevaine and the rest of us formed the High Guild or "Grand Financiers".

You see how even in our idealism, we are pragmatic. Enlightenment just isn't for everyone, and it falls to us to recognize those in whom there is potential and to manage the rest. Consider yourselves special, then. Congratulations.

## Dangerous Ideas

The High Guild and the Craftmasters tried to work together for a long time after the Convention. We did some good things together — built up economies throughout Europe, managed bigger sums of money than we'd ever seen before. We spent that money to fund the Age of Exploration, for fuck's sake. Marco Polo got to chat with Kublai Khan because we paved the way with cash. We founded the Medici and laid the groundwork for the Renaissance. You can thank the Board at the Christmas Party.

Three hundred good years went by, give or take, as we became more and more prosperous. But you know what they say about all good things. Trevaine got some socialistic ideas in his head about how things were and about how best to utilize the work of the Masses. His dedication to Enlightenment started to waver. In 1649, a bunch of renegade farmers in England unlawfully occupied some land they didn't own and started farming it for themselves. The Craftmasters protected and supported these squatters with manpower and money, and the rest of the Order came to us, as betrayed brothers and sisters, to handle the issue.

We tried to show Trevaine the right path, offered him retirement options he'd be a fool not to take, but none of that worked. He just brought in more muscle. The struggle lasted twenty years, but with us and the whole Order on one side, and him and some peasants on the other... well, the outcome couldn't have come as much of a surprise. Trevaine died and the Craftmasters were disbanded. It's a shame, but downsizing's a necessity for any vital organization. Trevaine learned much too late that "rob from the rich and give to the poor" only works when it's for the betterment of everyone, not just the tool of some feudal terrorists.

The Ivory Tower likes to gloss over or obscure this part of our history. They say that it might be misinterpreted as the Order of Reason turning on their own for stepping out of line. We don't see it that way. The Syndicate has always had a responsibility to protect the Bottom Line. Dangerous ideas like socialized farming need to be stamped out. Trevaine was a visionary who had lost his way and refused to bow out. Sometimes that's just how it goes.

## Queen Victoria's Technocratic Union

By the end of the Renaissance we held enough capital to start pushing forward to a new future. A Grand Financier by the name of Reginald Proctor assembled a body of investors in 1704 and presented a plan, a vision. The man was a genius — we have him to thank for the Industrial Revolution. His organization, Proctor House, ushered in steam power, colonial expansion, and mechanization of a workforce that made the slaves who built the pyramids look like pathetic slackers. Proctor was a goddamn closer, is what he was.

On the other hand, the Industrial Revolution was plagued by labor strikes, union organizations, and violence against both factory owners and their equipment. We turned to the rest of the Order — the people who had made these machines the people hated so much — and we were rejected. They saw the Revolution as our responsibility. They saw us as salesmen, and if the customer was upset about their purchase, that was too bad for us.

Where were the secret police? Where did the Operatives of the Cabal of Pure Thought get off to when we needed them? It was the first time that the other Conventions turned their backs on us. It wouldn't be the last.

So we did what we could. Enforcers busted heads in the picket lines around factories. We sold more and more machinery to the factory owners to compensate for lost labor, and infiltrated the lawful agencies of the time to help guide them in keeping the peace. Expenses were out of control.

As if by clockwork, too, the Masses got all twisted up and decided that we were the enemy. In record numbers they turned to the Church or occultism or just plain gave up. Not our man Reginald, no. He marched himself up to Queen Victoria, and in 1885 the Grand Council of World Government was formed. Five years later, when she





died, reorganization occurred and there we were: the Technocratic Union.

We needed a new brand, too. A shiny new face for the twentieth century: the Syndicate.

## Internal Affairs

As with any restructuring, when we made the transition from Order to Union, there were layoffs, promotions, and employee reassignments. Not everyone who participated in these moves was completely satisfied with their new position, and there was backlash. Debate and dissent about the Syndicate's role in the larger Union caused schisms. Some influential members of the Financiers heavily invested in the economies of Europe took to feuding amongst themselves. Blame Market Correction (as they did) or blame the nature of the Masses to fuck things up for themselves (as I do) but the chaos that resulted from all that infighting led right into World War I. We spent the whole time trying to adjust, and the Masses killed each other in the single most atrociously unprofitable war we'd ever seen.

What's worse, with our hands tied with internal divisions, the Adjustments we'd been running in those

countries now shooting mustard gas at each other got completely out of control. The pursuant backlash was a complete fiasco. A war we could handle — what came next ended up dumping us into the Great Depression. Yes, this was partly our fault, but we also fixed it. More importantly, we learned something.

The flip side of the Masses' seeming inability to cope when presented with luxury is their remarkable ability to adapt to diversity. When placed in a position to suffer, they will fight tooth and nail to make themselves comfortable again. Massive economic downturn, while a pitfall to avoid, can occasionally increase the number of Extraordinary Citizens that appear in the general populace. We didn't have the data analysis skills then that we do now, but there are records of this phenomenon occurring more heavily during this era. We were too busy to look into it at the time, but you can be sure the NWO has reports on this activity spike. It's something to keep in mind during this modern period of crisis. There are good employees out there; we just need to recruit them.

Our reputation as filthy Mafioso started around the same time as the war was coming to an end. Some enterprising Financiers realized that Prohibition was an opportunity to divest ourselves of the moral high ground

and diversify our portfolio. Our legitimate business saw a mass of supplemental income from illegal alcohol procurement and distribution, and by the 1930s we'd expanded to all sorts of vice. Profit margins are above the law. The Masses show needs, and we fill them.

## War Economy

Things were shit after the war. The Great Depression, paired with the recent expiry of most of the work force of the civilized world meant that we had our work cut out for us. We used our remaining stores of cash and invested them in economies throughout Europe. Germany in particular. Working through the newly established government, the Financiers worked some skilled adjustments on a handful of key industries. By 1933, the whole country was on its way to a turnaround. It didn't stop there. A strong automotive industry meant an economy that was pretty great at making tanks and bombs and with the wounds of World War I still fresh, Adolf Hitler took all that money we gave him and threw it into another war. Slippery fucker got away from us. It was a mess. Just one more disappointing handling of funds by a member of the Masses. Petty choices made with the freedom we so carefully cultivated.

This time, we would not be caught with our proverbial pants down. While the war was a hard thing to see the Masses go through, we managed to turn a decent profit and guide it into a sudden burst of economic growth. American financiers took what

they'd learned organizing gangsters and building vice empires and applied it to good old-fashioned patriotism.

Let me pause here for a second — let's think about God and Country, shall we? What is cash, exactly? It's a bond of trust between the people who have it and their government. It's pure, unfiltered belief that the days you work at your three-fifty-an-hour job are going to come back to you as financial gain. So, patriotism is just another facet of that trust. War bonds, donations, a belief in economic stability. Patriotism is something we can use. Remember that.

We put in our time and when Control said it was time to end the war, we ended the war. We pulled support out from under the Great Dictator and that was that. Good guys win, everybody's happy, and we've managed to shuffle the deck and put America in power — a shiny jewel in the Syndicate crown.

## The Age of Media

The next fifty years were about building on the work we'd done during the war. We spent most of the early modern age dragging the Masses into prosperity. No one had a bigger part in that process than Media Control. While they'd existed in some form or another since 1909, this was their time. Marketing, advertising, radio, movies, and television are all venues for the management of desire. For the first time, we were not only able to empower people with the value they deserved, but also to guide the use of it. This is how you win: control the input and the output.

Media Control helped glamorize the rich during the late '70s and '80s, changing the bumbling travelling salesman of the '50s into slick, rock star executives. For a while, this was an absolutely brilliant strategy. We were sharks, feared and respected by the Masses. You'll meet a lot of Executives who'll reminisce about that period, happy to tell you all about the supermodels they fucked and how they'd always be able to get a reservation at Dorsia. Be polite and let them enjoy it. We both know their time has passed.

## Euro and Enron

When the Cold War ended, the Syndicate was overjoyed. The NWO might have enjoyed playing Spy vs. Spy, but we were tired of moving drugs and bootleg VHS tapes of MacGyver into the Soviet Union. Underground markets function best when legitimate business has room to breathe.

## THE JEWISH SYNDICATE

There are hateful and racist assholes even among the Enlightened; the ability to do hypermathematics doesn't come with it a sense of civil unity. Some of these guys make cracks about how every Syndicate exec or Chair is a Jew. It's true that there are more Jews in our history, but that's because the Christian restriction on moneylending meant that Enlightened Christians went down other paths.

Today, there aren't more or less Jews in the Syndicate than there are in the other Conventions. If there's a difference between Syndicate Jews and others in the Union, it's that they're keenly aware of what happens when we invest in wars. And they exist as part (but certainly not the whole) of our organization's reborn conscience.

In 1999, we introduced the Euro in an effort to stabilize a shattered European economy and gain some semblance of control over those fractious countries. Unfortunately, it hasn't gone so well. During the initial talks, the Board was bullshitted by a handful of backwater Financiers whose confidence far outmatched their competency. Their misrepresentations have utterly destabilized the area. We're struggling to keep up, day to day, on which country will go bankrupt next. Some Executives in the U.S. are starting to back out of the experiment, leaving the Eurozone to fend for itself. Their response has been to attempt direct control, but the Board won't stand for it. Risking Market Correction in such a fucked up economy is just not worth it. We're worried the European branch is going rogue. At any rate, if you're investing in the Euro, here's some free advice: diversify, children.

It's not all stars and sunshine in America, either. In 2001, right after the Dimensional Anomaly (I'll get to that, trust me) an Adjustment we'd been carefully working on since the mid-80s came to a complete collapse. By that I mean, of course, Enron and the utter embarrassment we, as a Convention, suffered as a result. Some sloppy work and bad math led to the hiring of their leadership to begin with, and as with all lazy operations, this one came back to bite us in the ass.

It wasn't that we couldn't handle the crash, mind you. It's about the psychological effect among the Masses. The Financiers and Media Control struggled for a long time to contain the impact, but as I'm sure you can all tell, this shit turned the public against Big Business. And not just from the poor, either. Legitimate stockholders started to look elsewhere. We had to change our whole strategy, and only a year after establishing the decade's Collected Budget. We're still working to reinvest in smaller, "safer" business until Media Control can get things back under their hat.

## Start-Up Culture

Speaking of Media Control, the darlings of the modern era reported to the Board around 1990 or so that the model of the '80s was on the way out. Media Control saw the crash we were headed for, but the Board hesitated — and you can see that we're still fighting to make up for it today. Flouting wealth with cars and yachts and cocaine only led to the Masses hating their bosses. We couldn't operate like that anymore. Their proposal was a complete revision of corporate culture. Flat hierarchies, shared space, open communication, and the concept of work-as-

family are the new way. We want the Masses to live, breathe and eat their jobs. We want 60-hour work weeks not because they're mandatory but because you just love your job so goddamn much you can't bear to go home. We want people to identify with their jobs, because if you love yourself and you are your work, well, you're going to be worth a hell of a lot more, aren't you?

When someone feels like work is home and their team is their family, they work harder and better. They innovate. Start-up culture is the new world. Many amalgams embrace this internally, as well — living together in shared work-and-home space, acting as much like a family as a business. It creates loyalty and focus.

Around the same time, the evolution of the Internet managed to catch us by surprise. We'd obviously been involved in funding the hard work and research of Iteration X but we figured it wasn't going to go anywhere beyond being a bunch of toys and a quicker, cheaper mailman for a fringe tech elite. We got on board for the dot-com boom, but once that fell apart, we just weren't convinced that the Internet was going to be profitable. Again, Media Control came to the rescue. They convinced the Board to reinvest, both so they could leverage the Internet as a Syndicate tool and because they saw a very exciting future in store.

## The Dimensional Anomaly

There was something none of us saw coming. If you've studied your Union history, you know I was getting to this. You've seen the memorials (like The Wall in Station Yemaja), and I'm sure various "Missing Agents" boards still has faded photographs pinned to it. The Dimensional Anomaly hit the entire Union pretty hard. Let's take a second. This drink is for the men and women we lost.

The Dimensional Anomaly not only cut us off from Horizon, it also caused some pretty fucking serious backlash here on Earth. It was a tragedy — we lost staff to the grave and to the void of space or wherever the Void Engineers had them stationed. Communication was cut off, chaos took hold. We lost untold billions in projects, personnel and equipment. The insurance payouts alone nearly ended us.

To be frank, the Syndicate didn't personally take that much of a hit. Most of our leadership prefers to be here, on Earth, where the money is. We don't attract these kinds of tragedies the same way our



more experimental colleagues do. We spent the subsequent years building resentment from the other Conventions as we denied funding rescue mission after rescue mission. When someone proposes a plan to head into space to save her missing husband, she doesn't want to hear "sorry, we just can't afford it right now." Some agents went rogue and abandoned their amalgams, and with everyone else morale hit an all-time low. We've improved employee mental health support by 2% since. We think it's helped.

In the end, we paid for a lot of funerals, Adjusted the budget, and just moved on.

## House of Cards

We have to put the Anomaly behind us. It's been over ten years, now. The other Conventions have had their budget Adjusted where we've been able to put them in a position to investigate the why and how of that tragedy. Since then, we've been pursuing other projects — economic experiments to make up for some of the loss and keep us profitable in hard times. Not all of these experiments have been completely Board approved. This is a cautionary tale. Consider this your warning for going out there and using Convention funds without sanction.

A handful of overly ambitious shithead Financiers gave some very bold advice to the people who write the laws that govern how loans work in these United States. They needed more fluid capital to work with and figured that if a bunch of poor people got loans for houses they couldn't afford, well, then they could just drain them dry and they'd have some easy money. A lot of money had to go out, first — money that went to people who couldn't pay it back.

Cue bankruptcy. Cue the crash, cascading down due to the interconnected world of global finance. The housing market all but totally collapsed. Foreclosure and misery have reigned over the middle classes for the last decade. As a Convention, we noticed too late to do anything. We've dealt with Depression before and this time, we've been keeping an eye out — monitoring for any uptick in Extraordinary Citizen activity. Reports are due presently and the Board is optimistic.

It was a stupid move, and the rest of the Conventions knew that the Masses couldn't support this experiment. Not only did the Masses struggle, but Disbursements had to cut funding to make up for the losses, and the perception is that the Syndicate fucked up and now the whole Union has to pay for it. Something had to be done. An emergency Board meeting was called. The

Financiers that caused this whole mess had to be put up as martyrs. "Rogue Executives," we called them, and took disciplinary action. A few managed to escape the guillotine because of past success or traditionally excellent track records, but we kept those secret. Never let it be said that we don't protect our own. Rehabilitation is part of self-policing.

Part of the compensation plan has been to back a rewrite of the whole American bankruptcy law. People were taking out loans they knew they couldn't afford and then just claiming bankruptcy and making the state take care of them — parasites with little to no judgment or self-control. So we Adjusted things slightly and have been making up for lost time. Credit has always been an imperfect science, but more and more of the Masses are signing up and we're getting better at managing it. We haven't forgotten the cardinal fuck-up of the Craftsmasons: too much faith in the Masses and you're toast. Modifying the bankruptcy act has kept the Masses honest — we're helping them play by the rules we've set.

## Social Media

Start-ups we could predict, if a bit slowly. The big happy families of Apple and Google and Amazon we saw coming. We adapted and were ready for it.

### WHY THE CRASH REALLY HAPPENED

Even though we need to point blame inward for this fuckup, we cannot forget why the hell it happened in the first place. NWO surveillance ain't cheap. Progenitor and Iteration X progress — not the controlled progress in distant labs, but the progress being integrated into the Masses' consciousness — is very expensive. Void Engineer reclamation projects are a Primal Energy sink. And that's to say nothing about war expenses.

The Financiers have a mandate: make the part of the Union you're looking over profitable. Profit is, after all, the wellspring of Primal Energy. And when you can't do that, find other ways of engineering profit elsewhere. So yes, some young guns fucked up the global economy, and it's on their supervisors for not catching the Market Correction in time, but the NWO party line that we're irresponsible is bullshit. We're doing what we can to keep the Union going, and that's going to involve some risk.

Corporate growth is our forte. What we couldn't have predicted is the rise of social media. The Masses took interest in influencing each other in a stream-of-consciousness mess. Iteration X was so smug about the whole thing, too. People were communicating intensely in 140 character bursts and Iteration X just grinned like idiots about the server load. Useless nerds. By the time we'd gotten Executives in place to try and manage and control it, we were too late — an uncontrolled influence channel had been created.

Honestly, we'd have had an easier time of things if the Spooks hadn't gotten in our way. They insisted on wasting cycles installing their idiotic "Feed" into the system. They completely misunderstand social media. They wanted to monitor and modify the message — to get their Big Brotherly hands on the data and fuck with it. The point they have dramatically missed is that the data is not what this is about. It's about the people that generate that data. To control social media, you just have to manage the people that generate it. NWO cost us time and productivity. They're fucking with the Bottom Line.

(The only usefulness the Feed has is being a front of the digital war with the Virtual Adepts. Treat them like you would NWO's HIT Marks, not as useful or reliable partners.)

Media Control went to work, establishing channels for reputation currency and creating the new celebrity. The Masses will reject any presence that comes off as "too commercial" or "corporate,"

but any idiot with a smartphone can garner thousands of followers by posting videos of their cat. If we reward that idiot for promoting the messages we want promoted, we can control the signal itself. We've created a reward cycle outside of money — a reputation economy that is growing. Something revolutionary is happening here, and the Board is now paying very close attention.

## The Next Big Thing

We're all looking out for the next big thing, and if you want to get ahead you'd better be, too. And that means not being a moron, not just seizing an opportunity because it's shiny and can turn a buck. Some will bite you in the ass, as we've seen over the last few years.

And that's really why I'm talking with you, buying your cigars and drinks instead of going out there and making money for the Syndicate. You guys are the Next Big Thing. You're the future of the Syndicate, each one of you who decides to swim with the sharks and survives. I don't want any of you to become the assholes the rest of our Convention is known for, because that's not the path to profit. Eye the other Conventions with distrust, because they distrust us and will screw us over if they can get away with it. But whenever you can, reflect back on what I've just told you — my personal investment into each of you — and keep in mind the endgame: the prosperity of Consensual Reality. Follow in the footsteps of our Convention's godfather, Reginald Proctor, and you'll do the Syndicate proud.

# BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS



In any massive enterprise, the relationships between one department and another can look like two warring states. Consumers look like proles or partners, other companies look like competitors to slash or competitors to steal from before slashing. When you walk into a new business dynamic, if you don't know the lay of the land, don't know how the spider web of politics works, you're fucking useless.

And when it comes to the Technocratic Union, that could mean you're fucking dead.

## THE MASSES

We love the Masses. Unlike everyone else you'll meet in the Ascension War, Technocrat or Traditionalist, the Syndicate alone loves humanity exactly as they are right now. We're not fighting to change them nor making false promises of global Ascension or Empowerment. All we want to do is keep them safe from those who would rule with terror and rip Consensual Reality into utter chaos.

If you ask junior execs "what does the Syndicate want most?" they'd probably say something shortsighted like "money" or "power." Those are important, foundational



principles, but what we as a Convention want most is for the Masses to be happy.

Now, that's a fucker of a concept, because individuals have very different ideas about what happiness is, and the very fact that they can't agree is why utopia experiments result in explosive Market Correction. So we sell all forms of happiness that they're buying, knowing that some of these are destructive. But every Convention has their cross to bear; ours is the understanding that if we didn't sell it, someone else would and would put those resources and influence to destructive ends.

Happiness isn't just sex, drugs, and the American dream. It's giving people new wants to feel good about themselves through global crowdfunding charities. It's about fighting against economic terror and wavering faith in currency systems. And most of all, it's about not spooking the Masses with radical ideas they aren't collectively ready for. We do all this for their own good, because we know what's best for them.

## EXTRAORDINARY CITIZENS

The rise in the number of Extraordinary Citizens wasn't predicted, but it's become a hell of a boon. The Masses seem to have an innate respect for many of these gifted individuals, especially with all of the tools we've created to keep them in contact with thousand of followers and fans. Extraordinary Citizens have become something we work to cultivate — they're products, just like anything else, to push happiness. They inspire people, brighten lives, introduce innovations, and evangelize for our planned way of life.

Financiers love finding these people and grooming them. If there's any one thing that will keep humanity from the barbarians at the gates, it's having Extraordinary Citizens on our side.

## THE OTHER CONVENTIONS

The entire point of the Technocratic Union is the preservation of the Consensus, though many of our compatriots in other Conventions misunderstand that to mean forced evolution. Still, on the whole we need the Union to ensure that the world, our way of life — hell, life itself — endures.

It's worth remembering whenever you deal with someone outside of the Syndicate that they'll all look at you like some sort of stupid bean counter, no matter what you do for the Union. To them, you're either "not really Enlightened" or a "waste of Genius." Let them think that. That gives you power and leverage over all who would underestimate you.

## ITERATION X

We love Iteration X, we really do; but our courtship is so very strained. Once, they were trustworthy and (next to us) the most valuable member of the Technocracy. They're the vanguards of economical-technological progress, creating new avenues to keep the world interconnected and thus interdependent. Their breakthroughs that we release to the Masses keep us firmly in control of the world. Technology is crystalized desire, and the Machine Convention makes the most desirable things.

But since the Anomaly, since they lost contact with the Computer, the Iterators have become unhinged. Granted, individuals among them still perform, but their new leadership is distracted. Even before, they had a hard enough time connecting with the common people. After all, when you think it's a good idea to cut off a perfectly functioning arm in order to get a cool "upgrade," your reality is in no way related to the Consensus.

Those who are lucid enough to do the Union's work make up for the rest of their Convention. In addition to intra-Union services like DNIs, replacement limbs for Enforcers, and massive server farms for our hypereconomic calculations, they craft critical components to the world of finance. Iterator engineers provide active security for all the world's financial institutions — custodial and investment banks, financial services firms, government treasuries, stock markets, etc. (the so-called "bulge bracket") — from Virtual Adept assholes. Of course, the smaller, consumer-level banks and credit unions get looked after too, but they're not priority targets.

Iterators also work with Financiers to pioneer the future of digital banking, one that will instill in the Masses trust rather than fear. Without them, the Syndicate would not be able to forge the next great age of commerce. That's if we can protect it from being corrupted by Virtual Adept's fighting for the Masses mindshare, with their e-hippie open-source currency projects interfering with plans we have on this decade's Time Table.

And, of course, the other Masses-ready and near-Masses-ready tech they develop keeps them profitable and us more or less happy. Overall, when the Iterators aren't going off the deep end, they're a Convention worth their weight. Here's hoping they'll snap out of it soon. The pace of development takes a human toll, to be sure — the suicide rate at certain key technology plants in China for instance — but all in all the high-tech wafers they turn out keep the Masses satisfied and the money flowing.

Of course, even a single Enlightened mind is never profitable to waste, so we'd prefer that the Convention not self-destruct, for their sake as much as ours.

## NEW WORLD ORDER

The New World Order and the Syndicate were once two sides of the same coin, and together the very sanity that kept the rest of the Union in check. Those were the days.

What we are to the corporate and economic spheres, NWO is to the governmental and academic spheres. At least, that's what they're supposed to be, but that structure's antiquated and a detriment to us all. Highest education was once restricted to the same privileged class that held political power, so it made sense for them to be in one Convention. But with the growing separation of academia and state (so to speak) thanks to democracy, the New World Order is long overdue for a restructuring. Even their name is a complete joke: there's nothing "new" about them anymore.

But instead of accepting that they're really two Conventions in one, NWO is grabbing at more power. Because they panicked at something new happening that they couldn't control, their new Feed Methodology is at odds with our Media Control. They're taking direct control of manufacturing Iteration X and Progenitor war assets. Hell, they're even going as far as capturing Traditionalists and Processing them to send against their own kind.

We are not yet at the point of a civil war, and given the expense of one, we can't afford it. At the same time, NWO is seriously fucking things up — "shepherds of the Masses" my ass. And we can't afford to let their draconian worldview ruin everything the Syndicate has built to keep the Consensus stable. So we keep waging ideological proxy wars. They support legislation to restrict the flow of information — DRM, increased surveillance powers, anti-net neutrality bills, and so on. We fight those with every tool we can buy, just like we used to do when the old guard warred between communism versus capitalism.

The one point they have is that we did fuck up on the hypereconomic experiment. But they've conveniently forgotten that they pushed us into doing it in the first place. And they aren't without major fuck-ups in the last decade...

## PROGENITORS

The Progenitors, like Iteration X, is a beloved and profitable Convention. But whereas Iteration X is going batshit, the Progenitors are a steady rock. That's critical, since their anti-aging technology is a part of our complex executive incentive program. They make all that humanity relies on to get well, become stronger, and even escape from boredom — and they make the Union rich doing so.



This Convention has enabled so many institutions that we utilize daily: health insurance companies, biotechnology firms, big agriculture, the cosmetic industry, illicit drug trade, and countless others. And the funds that come in from those projects goes to things like arming amalgams who combat Marauders and Nephendi, keeping crazy space fuel in Void Engineer ships, the bleeding heart charity amalgams in the Progenitor's "Applied Sciences," and in general keeping the lights on in tens of thousands of Constructs around the globe.

And that's why we're getting sick of the younger Progenitors who rally against how we do things. They're fucking trust-fund protestors who don't actually understand that the very thing they're shouting at is they very thing granting their privileges as Technocrats. There've always been Progenitor medics complaining at inequality in the human condition and of the shadier side of pharmaceutical progress, but before the Dimensional Anomaly, they never got any political clout among their Convention. It's a different story today, and that makes our relationship strained.

Still, the older Progenitors keep to our arrangements. They work with us to slowly introduce biotech to the Masses (the whole point of us creating entities like the FDA and HMOs). But we've noticed that they go out of their way to smooth ruffled feathers throughout the Convention. We're not sure what game they're playing at, but as long as they keep delivering on their contracts, the Syndicate is content to just keep an eye on them.

## VOID ENGINEERS

To call the Void Engineers "the least profitable among us" is frankly an insult to unprofitable institutions everywhere. Sure, they deliver on occasion something that surprises everyone and validates their funding for years — take Velcro, for instance — but by and large they're the Union's biggest money sink.

They keep using the Dimensional Anomaly as an excuse to have requisitions filled. They ask for more ships to replace those damaged and destroyed, in the name of fixing the problem so we can get back to Horizon. They keep submitting requests for weapons and military training in order to counter something they call "Threat Null," but don't shed much light on. Honestly, one of the few places where we see eye to eye with NWO is our distrust of the Void Engineers, but you know what they say: keep your enemies close.

In this case, that means funding them enough to make them feel in the family, while keeping them on as much of a leash as possible. De-prioritizing space exploration in the West has helped to lessen their hold on government and public alike (though, not without

resentment), and sends a clear message that they need to cover their bottom line or else.

On the other hand, if we go too far with that, we alienate one of the most advanced Enlightened military force on (and off) the planet. If you think other Technocratic defections were massive blows to us, you haven't seen shit compared to our projections if the VEs jump ship. Imagine it like this: you have a friend who always carries a gun around, and keeps coming over to "borrow" \$100 that you know he won't pay back. What do you do?

We're trying to just give him \$50 and see if that'll make him find money elsewhere without pissing him off.

## THE TRADITIONS

We love the Traditions. They're an endless supply of fantastic product ideas.

Seriously though, the Traditions are almost trivial to undermine. In this era of hipster cynicism, the best way to combat them is to sell their cultures outright. When you turn mysticism into something you can buy without truly believing it, when you can turn the trappings of those religions and culture into something almost commonplace, you twist the story they're telling. And you're making a few bucks while doing it. How the hell can't you just love that?

## AKASHIC BROTHERHOOD

The cool factor from the Akashics doesn't come from their spirituality crap (though yes, we package and sell that too in bite-sized easy-to-pretend-you-get-it pieces). The martial arts are sexy, and we've been selling that for ages. Our Hong Kong entertainment offices are god damned masters of that, making people interested in the fighting and stunt parts. Kids go to karate schools to learn how to "be awesome," not how to fight their inner center or whatever the hell the Brotherhood goes on about.

Not that it's perfect. There are arts that we can't completely co-opt, because they aren't showy. For instance, no matter how hard we try, we can't break aikido. On the other hand, people buy the shit out of Mixed Martial Arts fighting and love reality shows all about kicking ass. So on the whole, we're ahead.

## CELESTIAL CHORUS

We've been profiting at the Choristers' expense since well before we were a Syndicate. The Catholic Church selling indulgences? Corrupt tithe collectors? You're welcome. All of that undermines "The One's" worldly authorities, fracturing their followers and building resentment. Anger and despair against religion makes people cynical about the Chorus' message.

The tricky part has been the other side of the coin: selling atheism. Nothing would hamper this Tradition's message like worldwide atheism. But that experiment pretty much failed in the Soviet Union, and in the West it's hard to sell to a subculture defined by the absence of something. But some of the guys in Media Control and Financiers keep drawing up ideas.

## CULT OF ECSTASY

Sex, drugs, rock & roll — that's still money hand over fist today, though nothing quite like the '70s. And much as these Reality Deviants can fuck with the Consensus through their Time effects, most of them just use that to keep a high going longer. They make being coked up and "opening your mind" with hallucinogens downright sexy.

And we have controlling interests in poppy fields and coca plantations. The Ecstasies are rarely a significant problem as far as gaining Consensus mindshare, since most of their would-be apprentices are either too high to give a fuck or die of an overdose. (Sometimes those overdoses are courtesy of Enforcers, trying to keep the number of people capable of temporal chaos down.)

## DREAMSPEAKERS

You have no idea how much shamanistic shit we're able to sell thanks to white guilt and the idea of embracing a "noble" culture. Mix that with New Age-y things like astral projection and embracing the spirit world, and, well, let's just say it's no coincidence that you can buy Ouija boards in big box stores.

While it's starting to go out of style, the "ghost hunting" fad was great for undermining Dreamspeaker ideas. Nothing like showing a constantly lack of firm evidence to strength the Consensus against their particular form of Reality Terrorism. And showing people using science-esque methods rather than just spiritual claptrap (even if it's more like Etherite pseudoscience than it is anything real) further undermines the Dreamspeaker approach.

I hear guys in Media Control are drafting the next big anti-Dreamspeaker memetic campaign. It's hard to keep the public's interest though when what you're selling is the lack of evidence.

## EUTHANATOS

These guys are just plain bad news. It's hard to sell a cult of psychos with a semi-incomprehensible murder-ethos to the Masses, and frankly there's not a dime of profit in it. But we still have to neutralize their effect on inspiring the Masses, so we market fear of serial killers. Sure, slasher flicks have as much to do with these Reality Terrorists as the Karate Kid does with the Akashics,

but it's close enough to instill an innate sense of distrust when they start trying to sell you on noble assassination.

The real problem is that these fuckers are able to cause real and devastating chaos to the global machine. Of all the Traditions, they're the worst of the bunch, and not just because they have a hard-on for "The Good Death." Their Entropy effects work against our own, and if they really wanted to, they could destabilize everything we've fought hard to build. So when it comes to Euthanatoi, Enforcers have a "shoot first, burn the body later" policy.

## HOLLOW ONES

Two Financiers came up with this wacky idea a long time ago: making these guys mainstream enough to have specialty stores in malls. Everyone laughed at them until they succeeded. Then they laughed with them all the way to the bank. But selling these guys goes beyond making goth into a sexy fashion (even though we make a lot of money selling that fashion as pornography). We sell their lack of ideals.

Hollow Ones are the slacktivists of the Traditions. They're more concerned about easy shit like bitching about gender word choice or making sure that people drink free trade coffee than they are about making real change in the world. So we sell them the ability to buy their conscience, one micro-transaction at a time. Make a \$10 donation to some niche charity, and you feel good about yourself without doing anything. That's the Hollow Ones in a nutshell: people who want to sit around feeling superior to everyone without doing a damned thing.

## ORDER OF HERMITES

The Masses will always be entranced with the fantasy. NWO would squash the Hermetics if they could, but the truth is there's no real way to do that. You can kill the people, but you can't kill an idea. (Trust us: we've tried.) People who want to make fantasy worlds a reality will always endure.

So instead, we've worked for the last decade to break fantasy out of the closet, and nothing does that better than award-winning blockbuster fantasy movies. That leads to cosplay, children's toys, other novels and movies, shitty fanfic, all that. No one worldview or sense of consistency that dominates that fiction. And when you have people arguing on forums whether Harry Potter or Harry Dresden would win in a fight, you have the sort of discord that keeps would-be Hermetics from becoming threats.

## SONS OF ETHER

Where do we begin? These jokers are just plain fun to fuck with. Did you know there are now faux-English steampunk rappers? Try selling to the world the "noble"

idea of sailing a vast frontier on ether-ships when you're the punch line of a fan subculture. We've spent the last few years working to turn their ideals into little more than an aesthetic, and it's worked. Watch people shopping around for top hats and goggles, various brass and clockwork-themed accouterments, all that stuff. These people are just thinking about how they'll look, nothing more.

We've been able to market some of their other fake innovations. Homeopathy has taken off in New Age circles, though that's causing some conflict with younger Progenitors. *C'est la vie*.

## VERBANA

The whole "return to our roots" vibe the Verbana push on people is an easy sell to those disillusioned about modern living "on the grid." While no one in Syndicate is pushing the Masses to buy chickens to slaughter for rituals (at least, no one taken seriously), we're able to sell lesser versions of that, ways to feel better about how you're living while not actually moving out into the harsh wild. The urban beekeeping fad's one way where we've sold the Verbana ideal.

But we're pushing something else that drastically undermines these assholes: feminism. We can't take credit for the feminist movement—let's be honest, until the Dimensional Anomaly, the Syndicate leadership's was fighting to keep the Status Quo, well, quo. But in the last decade, many Syndicate women have firmly stated that the best way to keep their gender disinterested in a female-celebrating mystical cult is to start sharing power in the actual, legitimate world. It's no easy sell to the men in power, Enlightened and otherwise, but women won't give up.

(That said, these women put the Convention in an... interesting position, as they frequently collaborate with the NWO's Collegium of Gender Studies. Whether that will lead to subterfuge for or against us is unclear, but the leadership is just watching for now.)

## VIRTUAL ADEPTS

Honestly, it's hard to sell Virtual Adept culture. The only people seriously buying into it are people who are susceptible to their influence. Cyberpunk isn't a dead fiction genre, but our projections don't show the Masses buying into a major cyberpunk film anytime soon.

That doesn't mean we can't deal with them—we're selling sanitized versions of their innovations, ones that are suitable for a thriving Consensus. Social media was our master stroke. And all the while, we're also selling shitty versions of other Adept ideas, ones

## TRADITIONALISTS WHO GO TO FAR

Within the Enforcers' Extralegal Division (see p. 47), there's a group of 20 to 30 operatives known as "Pre-Corrections." They handle tracking and executing Traditionalists who put the economy at risk. Did you know that there are countless ways they can cause chaos? Going beyond lead-to-gold-style inflation events, they can destabilize banks with code, rob secured vaults with Correspondence, analyze or cause market fluctuations with Entropy and Time, and so on. There are unfortunately more than a few ways to turn a buck by violating the very laws of causality and commerce—the sorts of things that cause massive Market Correction events.

So Pre-Corrections looks for these offenders and handles them before a Correction happens and does more damage as a response. Pre-Corrections takes Reality Terrorism extremely seriously. (It also keeps an eye on Financiers who might destabilize the economy with another hypereconomic experiment failure, but without the lethal follow-up they save for Deviants.)

that are fundamentally flawed and create consumer distrust while (and this is fucking important) not causing Market Correction.

But it's double-edged. Everything we sell can be used against us. Every now and then, a new exec in Financiers talks about cutting off selling their legitimate technological progress. But we know that if we don't sell it, they will, and then we can't control the story around our growing world. So we're in a bind: we sell their wares, as altered as they are, and that helps them out a little. Our job is to make sure it helps us out more than it does them.

## OTHER REALITY DEVIANTS

When it comes to other Reality Deviants, we're the Convention most at a loss. Unlike the Traditions, we can't really sell these guys to the Masses in order to undermine. Sure, we sell things that trivialize supernatural beings like vampires and werewolves, but that doesn't hurt them—in some ways, it actually helps, but there's little we can really do since someone would sell them to the Masses if we didn't.



## MARAUDERS AND NEPHANDI

These fiends need to be eliminated wherever they're found, before they do irreparable damage to the Bottom Line. You can't do business with them. You can't reason in any way with them. And if anyone finds out that you're trying to, you'll probably get Downsized.

The only difference between those two groups is what they'll do to you if you fuck up around them. Marauders will kill you, and if that happens, consider yourself lucky. Nephandi torture and corrupt Enlightened minds, twisting great Syndicate operatives into double-agents. There are likely Nephandi among the Syndicate, there certainly are in the rest of the Union, and a few in Disbursements have taken it upon themselves to find them out based on requisitions and statistical patterns. What we do with that information once we've got it is anyone's guess.

## VAMPIRES

Vampires are interesting case studies. On one hand, they represent functioning anachronism in a microcosm: their secret society is based on feudalism, while they interact with our modern economy. It's a stable system, one that makes dealing with vampires relatively easy as long as their "Masquerade" is not threatened. On the other hand, some of their longer-lived ilk have entrenched themselves in Consensual economy. Honestly, it's hard not to respect the power that comes from being able to invest in an institution for decades or even centuries — though don't mistake that respect for vampiric reverence overall.

With those Reality Deviants, we can strike peaceful accords. Money is, after all, the lingua franca of society, and even vampires can value peace and profitable business. With the younger or more rebellious of their kind, though, that's best left to other Conventions to exterminate. Not that we can't, but our Enforcers are better served protecting the Bottom Line, and there are a bunch of overzealous Progenitors who would be happy to slaughter brutish leeches.

## WEREWOLVES

To our dismay, reports of werewolf decline have been greatly exaggerated. These tree-hugging rage machines continue to target Technocratic holdings, especially Progenitor-front labs and Syndicate investments. Their disdain for the modern Consensus combined with their ability to hide in plain sight makes them frightening insurgents. And a war against an insurgent population is always costly. Still, allowing them to rampage free is more expensive.

Some werewolves are far more dangerous than others — notably those who blend into cities and the world of business. Some Enforcer amalgams specialize in eliminating city-dwelling lupines, using recent Progenitor toys to identify them and level the playing field with their own hyper-strength and dermal armor. Beyond that, we don't hunt down such creatures in their territory; that's what our allies and fellow Conventions are for.

## OTHERS

In spite of the Void Engineer's reports, there are no such things as ghosts, faeries, demons, etc. They serve as entertaining (and profitable) fiction, nothing more. Now, in the laughable event that credible proof comes to light, that would be another matter. Some Financiers have written various marketing plans just in case, usually as a test by a higher-up to see what they can do when given completely ridiculous parameters.

Hunters, on the other hand, are very interesting. Members of the Masses who suddenly take on nasty monsters on their own, without massive infrastructure supporting them, raises a few eyebrows among the Enforcers. There isn't more beyond that, though — what these hunters do does not impact, positively or negatively, the Bottom Line. And their religious zealotry makes for poor business partners. We keep tabs on those that might turn their ire toward one of our holdings, but for the most part they're just interesting curiosities.





# CHAPTER TWO⊕: HUITIAN RESOURCES



Here's the skinny: revenues are up, expenses are down. Our network of contacts continues to grow and our headhunting efforts have never been this successful. We are building an organization with an eye to the future, and we've got all the fundamentals in our portfolio today. The Syndicate owns this planet.

Don't think we're careless owners, like teenagers with their first cars. We're investors — hell, we invented investing. We take our investments seriously, and play a very long game when it comes to the Consensus. Let me tell you, there's no growth industry like reality defense and maintenance. And business is good.

Our guidance has ushered in a global economic culture that provides uncountable services for an industrious population. Food surpluses? Us. Durable and safe housing? Us. Instantaneous global communication network? Us. Healthcare? You're welcome. Nearly every element of modern living has passed to the Masses through our hands. We don't always build it, but you can bet your ass that we've sold it. We are the pipeline that delivers the bounties of the Technocracy — thirty minutes or less and with free shipping on orders \$25 or more — to humanity's doorstep.

And our greatest assets in this work have always been people. Our people are dedicated, innovative, and driven. Those traits come from operating in a culture that encourages prudent risk-taking and rewards success. If you can hack out a place in that, welcome. We're a land of opportunity.

# HEADHUNTING



With the sudden loss of so many of our human resources, the Board passed a directive to redouble our recruiting efforts. Normally our headhunters look for talent who already appear on our books: folks with significant debt or other financial obligations who will appreciate a helping hand. Bailing out their problems is chump change for the Syndicate, and it buys tremendous loyalty. We still do a lot of that, especially for our lowest-level employees, but the criteria have been broadened when it comes to Enlightened Citizens. Anybody who proves their monetary flair can earn their place at the table.

We don't just look at Fortune 500 wunderkinds, either. We watch crowdfunding sites, track down independent day traders, scout in the "nonprofit" world of charities, and even shake down the criminal underworld. (The other Conventions tend to bitch about that last one, but we've done a lot of good business with crime lords looking to turn their ill-gotten gains into respectable money. "Going legit" often means going Syndicate.)

It's rare that new recruits are brought in on the reality-spanning side of the business straight out of the gate. They start out as **Providers** — contacts we might give a hot tip in exchange for a minor favor. If they perform well, we bring them on as consultants for one of our fronts. While they're working for us, we're always watching, gauging their abilities, vision, and vulnerabilities. If they match our needs — significant ability, malleable vision, and exploitable vulnerabilities — we start drawing back the curtain.

Not everybody is Enlightened when they join up, of course, and there's not much that we can do about that. Despite trying, believe me — you need to invest in your workforce if you want to succeed. There's some mumbo-jumbo about making Providers work their hardest in close

proximity to some hardcore Adjustments, or handing out commission checks infused with Primal Energy, or even just gradual exposure to the full extent of the Syndicate's operations. Any of these are supposed to give new guys a little kick in the pants, but nothing's been proven. What actually works is what always works: the market. If you can show you can pull down the real power, you get called up to do real work. If you don't, well... we'll always need Providers.

New guys always come in with new ideas. Sometimes those ideas are bold new directions with real earning power; sometimes they're hippy-dippy "fair trade" socialist bullshit. You know: the guys who want to harness economic activity for their vision of social progress while ignoring or trampling on incentives and benefits that make economic activity work in the first place. Most of the time, we let them try on the small scale and allow failure to do its job: to be teachable moments. They learn that, for example, microloans aren't about helping Nigerian women dig a well; they're about making middle-class nobodies in the U.S. feel good about themselves. That sort of thing. Enough failures and new guys get to understand how things work.

It's perhaps the exploitable vulnerability that's most important. We like our new guys to start at the bottom rung (or even lower) to give them all the more incentive to move up and fight to stay there. If you're not fighting to climb up the ladder, you're useless to the Syndicate. That might not sound heroic, but understand that this is how we discover who among our recruits will fight for what they believe in and what they want in life.

Enlightened Citizens in other Conventions join up to get access to bigger toys or join a neat secret science society. Our guys join to bail out their underwater mortgage or get their grandma the medical coverage she desperately needs. Consider all that said for a moment, then guess which Technocrats have the most personal stake in the Union.

Don't look so shocked.

# CAREER ADVANCEMENT



On the ground floor, a starting **Associate** such as yourself doesn't know much about your corporate overlords. You're talented and driven, and you've been given an offer you can't refuse — usually in terms of money or access that you would never have a chance in hell of getting on your own. You're assigned a steady stream of

tasks from manipulating your markets to clearing out undesirables from targeted real estate to reporting on transactions otherwise obscured by secrecy and back room dealing. Not that we won't tell you to turn around and do likewise, but we like to keep tabs on all market activity.

You probably know that you're working for something big called the Syndicate and there's something else even bigger called the Technocratic Union. Sometimes you're

hazy on whether the Syndicate answers to the Union or the other way around, and while that's adorable, it's usually good to quash early on. Here's the bottom line: the Union is a cartel. Everybody needs to get their backs scratched to stay convinced that the cartel's in their best interests. Our role within that cartel is the back-scratchers. Which makes us (as I'm sure you can figure out on your own) the guys in charge so long as nobody notices that we've got the power. So treat the other guys as equals rather than temp contractors. It pays dividends later.

In addition to whatever tasks you're assigned, an Associate's most important job is networking. If you're not already well-positioned, we will install you in a lucrative and influential position – whether that's a law firm, drug cartel, corporate office, broadcast studio, or the like. From there, Associates are expected to branch out, making contacts in your own and allied industries and then shifting into advisory or consultant positions. Demonstrate you're a good Associate. Take what you're given and grow it into your own little fiefdom. We will know you're ready for management.

**Managers** are the next step up the Enlightened corporate ladder. Once they've shown the skills to keep many plates spinning and the appetite for more responsibility and the corresponding power, we give them their own shops. This might be a whole Construct or it might be just a few Associates to supervise. Sometimes we point them at a Traditionalist or Nephandi holding, give them a small arsenal and some fresh meat for the grinder, and let them sort things out on their own. You always work harder for something you've built yourself.

The Syndicate gives its people a good deal of freedom. We make sure they know what's expected of them, leave the details up to them, and just expect that they've got their own projects going on the side. Sometimes this makes things a little murky, like when your Manager tells you that a zoning law needs to get crushed; you don't know if that's working toward a global Union goal or just forwarding her private little agendas. Other Conventions call this sloppy, but we know it unlocks an incredible amount of innovation and out-of-the-box thinking.

There's actually a vast array of different positions under the title "Manager," and quite a lot of jockeying for position within that tier. We don't bother with specialized titles like "Executive Manager of North American Operations" because things change too fast for such titles to retain any meaning. The woman who deals with most of the shipping concerns in the U.S. might make and cultivate contacts in oil refineries. If that means she starts doing some work in the energy sector, so much the better for everyone involved. There is of course some dick-waving involved whenever

## CHAIR ⊕ WHAT?

Unlike Managers, Chairs have titles, usually derived from what's in their portfolio. That may be a Construct (Chair of Call Center 46), a corporate conglomerate (Chair of Iridium Medical Supply), or criminal cartel (Chair of Solntsevskaya Bratva). A Chair's title may change over time to reflect a burgeoning portfolio.

However, what a Chair is responsible for is never the same as what a Chair has interests in and influence over. Most Chairs control Managers unrelated to the core assets of their title. Additionally, Chairs always have side projects, off-book investments, and extensive networks beyond their ostensible responsibilities. Chairs that don't aren't earning their keep.

two Managers interact ("How's your toilet business coming along?" "Oh, I diversified into copper futures; weren't you working an angle in MILF porn last we talked?"), but nobody argues with success.

A good Manager can expect to remain in that position, enjoying its considerable perks, for the rest of his life. A great Manager may be tapped by a VPO to become a **Chair**. With a staff of Managers and their Associates,

## THE RESTRUCTURED GLOBE

Used to be that Chairs only dealt with VPOs for the regions they did business in. This led to a lot of comfortable ruts. Whether it was "gifts" that were really bribes or the proper way to show respect or the right frequency of progress reports, Chairs could fall back on shared cultural expectations with their VPO. No longer.

Now the Saudi VPO of Energy deals with the Chair running geothermal power in Iceland, the Chair setting up wind and solar farms in the U.S., and the Chair pumping oil out of OPEC. Friction much? You bet. Fiercer competition, too, and that just means more effort, more determination, and more raw will gets poured into making these projects work.



## THE BOARD AS OF 2013

Turki al Saud, VPO of Energy	Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Nori Takanashi, VPO of Finance	Tokyo, Japan
Gregor Ebersbacher, VPO of Healthcare	Munich, Germany
James Ritter, VPO of Media	Hollywood, USA
Bao Chen, VPO of Manufacturing	Shanghai, China
Zoe Nelson, VPO of Transportation	London, UK
Song Deng, VPO of Resource Extraction	Chengdu, China

a Chair is installed in a large corporation or criminal network. Their first job is to maintain what already exists, preserving the Syndicate's infrastructure, power, and influence. This earns Chairs reputations among their underlings as conservative thinkers or stuck in yesterday's modes of thought, which isn't entirely deserved.

In addition to their primary job, all Chairs are expected to show significant and continued growth. This can (and should) occur both within and without their organizations. An oil magnate may branch out into solar, wind, and natural gas concerns. A shipping mogul might dabble in a little smuggling or even street drug sales. In the latter case, concerns outside a Chair's immediate

portfolio are often calved off to a new Chair promoted out of the original organization.

You'll see significant competition between Chairs. The cream of the Union's luxuries and benefits are doled out to these powerful men and women both scrupulously and slowly. Many Chairs are effectively immortal thanks to the life extension treatments they win as bonuses. Others personally control vast estates on private islands or have local governments in their back pockets. The brass ring for all Chairs, however, is filling a vacancy on the Board — and no one expects a slot to open short of another major calamity.

And at the top of the heap is the Board, made up of the seven **Vice Presidents of Operation** (VPOs). The VPOs used to be associated with regions, but since the Reorganization, the Board is geared toward a globalized world. Consequently, each VPO's portfolio concerns a single, massive industry. There is a VPO for Energy, Finance, Healthcare, Media, Manufacturing, Transportation, and Resource Extraction. A VPO serves as a shepherd and custodian for their associated industry. Most Chairs and many Managers end up falling under two or more VPOs, which can lead to some conflicting directives. This isn't the VPOs' problem: if a Chair can't figure a way to make everyone happy, the assets in question can be transferred to somebody else's portfolio.

In the decade since, rivalries and alliances have cropped up. Resource Extraction and Healthcare are always bickering about pesticides and runoff; Manufacturing and Transportation fight over Energy's attention and favor. Media and Manufacturing despise each other. Finance is the undisputed king of the hill, complete with tarnished crown. These complicated interactions inevitably trickle down the corporate ladder.

## THE LAST JOB YOU'LL EVER HAVE



Working for the Syndicate is not for the faint of heart. You're given access to tremendous power, handed a few ground rules, assigned tasks large and small, and then you're on your own to figure everything out and thrive. Sometimes the difficulties and complications of this job get laughably complex. The power you have is fickle and fleeting. You're never sure if the tasks you've been given are official Union business or a feather for the cap of somebody up the food chain. The ground rules, you're told flat out, are actually more like guidelines and it's up

to you to figure out when they need to be broken. But if you can tread water until you learn to swim, the rewards are astronomical. (Or at least they used to be, before the Anomaly shut down our dreams of lunar tourism.)

### THE DEAL WITH POWER

Our power is almost entirely "soft" power. We don't run around with gleaming chrome hand-cannons or have Premium-reinforced skeletons. While we have ways of bringing down the hurt, we've long known that the threat of pain, not the pain itself, is what produces results. So we threaten, sure, but we also bribe, cajole, and deal.

Lots of people in this world think they're above the petty deals that we offer. That if they steel themselves against temptation, if they live a simple life away from the evils of modern consumerism, if they simply don't talk with us scheming Syndicate types, then they're safe. The amount of stupid involved here is incredible. Humanity is a social species; nobody is an island. Nobody can do entirely for himself. We need each other. And that means everybody needs something. It's just a matter of finding out what: a sick grandmother who needs hospice care, a little bit of condensed Primal Energy to level the playing field against your wizardly rival, or reopening that community center that got its funding cut.

While the other Conventions build things out of metal or cells or ideas, the Syndicate builds with people. Which means a lot of what we do is cat-herding: making sure everybody comes together to do their part. If we do our job right, the whole is greater than the sum of parts — the deal that makes both sides richer, the strategic partnership between business and government that benefits both, the bank that redevelops a declining neighborhood. Sure, there are ideas about trade and money embedded in there, but the key players are always people. The New World Order creates a social structure that makes people do what NWO wants; we take the shortcut and just use people that will do what we want... with a nudge here and there from us.

## TRICKLE-DOWN INTRIGUE

There's a reason "do me a favor" is a standard opening when middle management starts talking with their cubicle-occupying wage slaves. This meme — which got started in the Syndicate, you're welcome — is a convenient cover that obscures whether what you're asking is official business or an actual personal favor. This is always murky territory for us. Managers and Chairs have their own personal agendas above and beyond their stated benchmarks and organization goals. Everyone needs to demonstrate growth potential.

So you never know if you're making the world a better place by building towards the Time Table or if you're stockpiling influence to power play some would-be enemy into doing something they don't want. (Hell, those aren't even mutually exclusive.) You don't know what agenda you're forwarding, but you trust your superiors' judgment. Or at least you trust their ability to reward you when you deliver. And those aren't mutually exclusive, either.

Does this open the door for abuse of power? Absolutely. But if you can't abuse your power every once in a while, it loses a great deal of its appeal. If we came down hard on every operative that used Syndicate resources for

## THE INEQUALITY PRINCIPLE

The other Conventions have recently started asking us about "the 1%" and other economic elites around the world. Our work reinforces a system in which the many work hard, perhaps even suffer, for the benefit of the few. Shouldn't we try to alleviate this inequality?

Here's the reality: wealth only has value *because* it is unequal. If everybody has equal wealth, then nobody is wealthy. We've tried to adjust this; it always results in heavy Market Correction. Hell, *we just tried this in 2006*. Want us to try again?

Besides, tracking wealth to gauge happiness is using the wrong scorecard. What you want to track is access to resources and information, opportunity to act, and security of health and safety. Which is exactly what the globalized economy offers every person on this planet, "equal" or not.

their own purposes, we'd see an immediate and precipitous drop in ambition and productivity. Why work hard to gain power if you can't actually do anything with it? This is a fundamental aspect of human nature, and the reason the Syndicate is successful is because we're *in harmony* with this and other such aspects. We're not playing the fool's game of trying to change what it means to be human.

This setup also produces mavericks: Syndicate executives that might not entirely trust their superiors (which is wise). These guys have no problem going around their bosses, surreptitiously undermining them or going over their heads (which isn't as wise). It's a dangerous game, but the prizes are incredible. Reveal your superior as a Deviant collaborator, or even just a reckless buffoon, and you might walk away with her job. Go you.

## POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The Syndicate doesn't have a lot of hard rules, but we do have some guidelines. These dictate our day-to-day operations maybe 90% of the time. We spend the other 10% seizing opportunities, no matter (and sometimes because of) the risk. That's business.

**Always Be Closing.** Every Syndicate member is expected to always keep their eyes and ears open for opportunities to exploit, to always be working an angle (or two or three), to always be figuring a way to turn their current circumstances into a net win. Every action you take should be geared toward forwarding the goals of

the Syndicate and increasing your own stock of power and influence. Ideology is for chumps. Keep your eye on the prize.

**Work to the Time Table.** The Time Table is the master agreement that keeps the Technocratic Union together. Our history, our charter documents, and all the high principles of our members are nice and all, but they hold very little weight. The Time Table, on the other hand, is actionable and assessable, and therefore the key piece of coordination that the Syndicate relies on. More often than not, we're the wet blanket, telling the others that we can't fund or market all the innovations they want to foist on the Masses all at once. So it's only fair that we don't buck the Time Table that we helped lay out. Sometimes circumstances on the ground dictate otherwise, and the Board understands this. But be prepared to defend your decisions with the Time Table in mind. As a few Enlightened economists will tell you, you don't want to make the Board look like they can't control their troops.

**Thou Shalt Not Steal (or Pirate).** Our work has us side-by-side with a lot of operatives from other Conventions, and they always bring along such fantastic toys to these play dates. Since Syndicate paradigms tend towards the malleable, it might be tempting to borrow or replicate their technology. So let's make this simple: *Don't. Take. Their. Stuff.* First of all, they'll find out — and that's all sorts of political fallout that nobody wants to deal with. But more important, theft and piracy undermine the principles of private ownership that we work to embed in the very fabric of reality. Dealing with the socialist tendencies of the New World Order is enough without adding fuel to their fires.

**Consorting with the Enemy.** The Union and the Syndicate have a lot of enemies: Traditionalists, Nephandi, vampires, werewolves, Things From Beyond, whatever the Void Engineers mean by "Threat Null" — the list goes on forever. Generally speaking, we give no aid or succor to Reality Deviants and the other things that go bump in the night. Find them, deal with them, and then find a way to profit off of what they had or were working on. But every once in a while, allying with the lesser evil can be lucrative. (Or at least an alternative to failure.) We all understand that sometimes these deals are necessary or beneficial. So we do work, on occasion, with "reasonable" Traditionalists, "Glass Walking" werewolves, or whoever else might benefit us.

**Cover your ass.** The Union may be vast, but the Masses dwarf us. They're happy not knowing that there is a vast global secret confederacy managing the nature of reality and their daily lives. Let's not harsh their vibe, huh? Lest we forget, the Union itself rose long ago from

the rebellion of the Masses against the elites of the time. We're doing a better job today than the Order of Hermes did then, but the Masses don't know that. If they started lifting the curtain, there's no controlling what they'd discover first. And if, in their panic, they managed to cripple our operations, any number of looming threats like those mentioned above could destroy humanity or throw it in chains for millennia. So except in highly controlled recruitment situations, we don't spill the beans. Leave the Masses as they are: content in their collective ignorance.

**Generosity.** To the rest of the Union, we're the people who say "no." We hold the purse strings, and so when they get all excited and want to enact some crazy plan, it's our people that shut them down. To soften this, the Syndicate tries to have an open-hand policy regarding everything else. If another Union operative comes to you for help, you give it to them. If you hear about other Technocrats in trouble, gather your resources and you help them. This helps us manage our image and puts a friendly face on the Syndicate as a whole. It also means we have lots of favors to call on in the future.

## REPRITIANDS

Let's say you fuck up. So far, we've talked about a number of ways that you can, but not how the Syndicate handles errant executives. Rest assured: you will do something that causes a problem for your higher ups or the Convention as a whole. Everyone does. It doesn't matter how badly you screw up, but what you do to rectify it. And it's all covered in your contract.

There are minor infractions: lose a few hundred thousand dollars in mundane assets, let leak something to the media that damages one of our Sleeper holdings, screw your boss' wife and get caught, those sort of things. For the most part, some Enlightened accounting can massage the problem away — yes, even that last one — so you've just managed to piss someone off. Maybe that means you get passed up for promotion a few times. Maybe it means you have to take a step or three down the corporate ladder. As long as your title doesn't change, you can eventually recover from it. Feel sorry for those poor bastards who get bumped from Manager to Associate.

Beyond that, there are major infractions: losing millions or billions of dollars, destroying Enlightened assets (including personnel), damaging the reputation of a key Syndicate front, and so on. You're at the very least in for a series of meetings with the Chair in charge of whatever you pissed on. Or if you're a Chair, you get to deal with the shitstorm that is a very pissed-off Board. The very best thing that'll happen is that you retain your title with no hope of promotion, and you lose the best perks of your

job while someone from another Methodology is assigned to watch your every move and hate you for it.

Come to think of it, being busted down a few rungs instead might be a kinder fate.

Then there is corporate treason: selling secrets—whether to Reality Deviants, other Conventions, or the Masses. One of two things happens here: either you’ve discovered some brilliant way of further a Syndicate agenda, in which

case you’re likely rewarded with a promotion on the spot; or your career in the world’s most powerful organization is about to come to a quick and unceremonious end.

Re-read the part of your contract that stipulates your body and “any post-mortal remnants” are the property of the Syndicate. Let that sink in: if you fuck up that badly, your boss will at least turn a few bucks selling your organs, or whatever it is that Enforcers do with treasonous corpses.

## METHODOLOGIES



Like any multinational conglomerate, the Syndicate is made up of organizations and fragments of organizations from many sources. Over the centuries, a number of minds have woven them together into one monolithic engine of economic control. And while there are inevitable cracks and seams born of history, rivalry, and ambition, the Convention is also united by its culture of optimistic capitalism and individuality.

The Syndicate values and rewards ingenuity, innovation, and acute business acumen, and is structured as a vast gladiatorial arena where victors win spoils and losers are relegated to the sidelines to plot their comebacks. This actually forestalls most infighting and bickering, because successes are easily measured by the bottom line and universally celebrated throughout the Methodologies. Sure, there are still rivalries, and sometimes executives work at

cross-purposes, but this is always couched within a greater context of competition that benefits the whole Convention.

Unlike other Conventions, transfers between the Methodologies of the Syndicate are relatively common. More than one Financier got his start on the streets as an Enforcer. Moguls in Media Control that air problematic content might find themselves transferred to a desk job in Disbursements. However, no transfer is permanent, and so what might be a demotion is often seen as a temporary setback.

The fluidity of the Convention also quiets the inter-Methodology power dynamics found in the rest of the Union. Quiets, but not silences: Disbursements has a hundred-year-old grudge against Financiers for stealing its thunder. Those in Enforcers are disdained as little more than thugs despite its long and proven history as backers of underdogs against oppressors. And everyone despises Media Control, mostly because they need it.



# DISBURSEMENTS

The money-managers of the Technocratic Union, Disbursements is charged with overseeing the funding of the entire organization. It can be the death-knell of an otherwise favored project or the downfall of a thriving construct if its ire is raised. Those in its good graces, however, enjoy a flow of material, talent, power, and other resources. Disbursements also contains the largest and most secure Ventures under Technocratic control, packaging and distributing the very essence of reality to aid our efforts and projects across the world.

It only asks minor favors in return.

## HISTORY

We have to go way back for this one: all the way back to the Convention of the Ivory Tower. You had all sorts of starry-eyed idealists show up convinced that together they'd bring down the power of the supernatural elites with force of will alone. They talked about strategies, alliances with sympathetic lords, building wonders of cutting-edge technology, educating the Masses, and troop movements... which was about the time somebody stood up and said, "And who's going to pay for all of this?" Thus Disbursements was born.

At first, it was called the Sun Guild. At the time, the Sun was a cheap stand-in for God as the source of all goodness. (Some like to think that it saw forward to our modern understanding that most energy on the planet is derived from the Sun.) For centuries, the Sun Guild directed the funds of the Order of Reason. It decided which offensives were pushed against the Traditionalists and which projects were approved for construction. It also decided to focus the Order's activities on Europe and all but ignore the rest of the world, so not every move it made was perfect.

Over time, the boatload of guilds that the Order started with collapsed down into Conventions. The Sun Guild found like minds of monetary bent, if only because it needed a source for all the wealth it was funneling into the other Conventions. Being money-minded, this group of guilds came to be called the High Guild. To hear Disbursements talk about it, the High Guild grew up around the Sun Guild, as new guilds were subsumed as tools to collect and protect wealth.

That didn't last, however, and the Sun Guild turned out to be a victim of its own success. By the time Prince Albert assumed his "advisory" role at the Great Exhibition, the High Guild had become a vast, lucrative network of trade connections and protections. After Queen Victoria became the head of the British Empire, she had a vested

interest in maintaining the status quo of free trade geared to extract resources from the rest of the world and import them to Europe, especially Britain. So when the High Guild became the Syndicate, Victoria, backed by her New World Order, tapped the freshly minted Financiers as the Convention's leaders. The Sun Guild, now Disbursements, was forced into a niche that was intended to be little more than a clerical support role.

Which didn't go over very well.

In the Syndicate, you work with the tools you have available, and the only tools Disbursements had was the purse strings. In the years since, it has worked tirelessly to earn its reputation as penny-pinching killjoys focused on spreading its spidery web of influence throughout the Union. It also spent a century and a half slowly turning its fellow Methodologies towards laissez-faire, free-market policies (which in many cases wasn't exactly a hard sell). This inevitably led to conflicts with the control-oriented New World Order, which coincidentally had backed Victoria's move to dethrone the Sun Guild. (Who says we only pay attention to the Bottom Line? Revenge is fun, too.)

## ORGANIZATION

When you say "Syndicate," most Technocrats think of the **Assessment Division** — the bureaucrats who come to inspect, assess, and approve or deny funding for new projects. While bruised egos tend to characterize Assessors as paper-pushers, the reality is quite different. Assessors necessarily understand broad swaths of science, both Enlightened and publicly released, in order to do their jobs. They're quite often accomplished engineers, surgeons, lawyers, and policy makers.

More than a few older Syndicate members decide to retire to Assessment after a couple lifetimes of adventures. These aren't slouches. And given the nature of the half-baked projects it often inspects, too often Assessors suddenly have to become troubleshooters to contain failed (or unleashed) projects. If you meet an Assessor who's been doing it for years, give her the respect she deserves. For your own sake.

Then there is the real boogymen of the Syndicate: the **Reorganization Division** — or as it's called behind its backs, the Axe-Grinders. When an amalgam or construct fails to perform up to its potential, Reorg consultants are sent in. It does much the same work as Assessment, except it considers the entire organization instead of individual projects. It finds the weak links, the fatty bits, and the loose cannons: all the parts of an organization that have to go. Technically it





just offers advice, not decisions, and the organization's leadership carries these out. However, it's a well-known fact that ignoring the Reorg consultants inevitably makes Assessors start doing rather invasive investigations.

While the Syndicate provides funding for the other Conventions, the rest of the Union provides necessary materials and services for us. This all falls under the **Procurements Division**, which manages the flow of these goods into Syndicate hands. It handles the inventory and distribution of new tech, clones, etc., to deserving Syndicate members. Procurements is incredibly popular within the Syndicate, for obvious reasons. It's equally disliked by many outside the Convention, who might "forget" the nature of its obligations or argue that it really needs those materials for a very important project coming up. Procurement politely and gently disabuses them of these notions and always comes home with the goods.

The Syndicate controls the largest collection of Nodes and Ventures of any Enlightened organization in the world, and they are maintained almost exclusively by the **Extraction Division**. These specialists not only arrange for the security and secrecy of node locations, but also harvest, distill, and distribute the resulting condensed Primal Energy to operatives within and without the Convention. These deliveries fuel the hard work and heavy fighting of the Union, and those who make the deliveries are alternately seen as miracle-dispensing saviors or stingy misers, depending on how much they make available. Technically, Assessment determines how much the Extractors are supposed to deliver, but Extractors have a habit of under-reporting its harvests and selling the margin for profit and favors.

## CONVENTION

While the Syndicate's rivalry with the New World Order is a Convention-spanning animosity, the conflict's core lies with Disbursements. Part of this is historical, but the rest lies in logistics and personal egos. The Ivory Tower's control is top-down, policy-driven, and ideological; Disbursements deals in bottom-up, value-driven, personal politics. The two forces mix like oil and water... or, more accurately, oil and fire.

In the last decade, the Ivory Tower and Disbursements have been fighting a very polite war of control over the Union. The Ivory Tower dictates policy, makes initiatives, and takes a heavy hand in shaping the Time Table; Disbursements funds projects by evaluating them on viability, proven ability, and potential gain to the Union's infrastructure. In other words, what the Ivory Tower says should happen doesn't always get the resources it needs to operate. The NWO has not yet publicly accused the Syndicate of suborning the "correct" agenda and advancing its own through selective funding. However, that day is on the horizon, and everyone knows it.

(And Disbursements still remembers when NWO Operatives executed three of its own back in the '90s. That's something that the Syndicate will *not* allow to happen again.)

# ENFORCERS

The muscle of the Syndicate, the Enforcers specialize first in persuasion, intimidation, and blackmail. Actual violence is something it prefers to avoid (unless a target is deemed to have zero or less economic value), mostly because it knows that the threat of violence is far stronger than actual carnage. When the time comes to take off the gloves, though, each Enforcer knows where to hit to cause the most damage and leave the fewest marks.

Over the years, Enforcers has branched out into every juxtaposition of commerce and violence. Private security is its stronghold, with a number of mercenary companies that are little more than fronts for its activities. Organized crime, despite the stereotypes, is its eternal frontier. More than a few Enforcers enjoy industrial espionage as a sideline to their “day job” in private security or organized crime. And because the Syndicate values both sides of every coin, Enforcers has thoroughly infiltrated law enforcement.

## HISTORY

For millennia, the markets of East and West were only tenuously connected via the Silk Road, a collection of routes through the high plateaus of central Asia. Even when the Mongols established peace and stability through the region, travel along the Silk Road was a dangerous proposition at best. Mercenary companies specialized in escorting caravans along the route, knowing both the terrain and the right local warlords to pay off with bribes. One of these, the Resplendent Axe Company based out of Karakoram, claimed as its leadership a cabal of Enlightened adventurers.

This was about the same time that the Sun Guild was recruiting its posse. Enlightened, well-connected bravos with a small

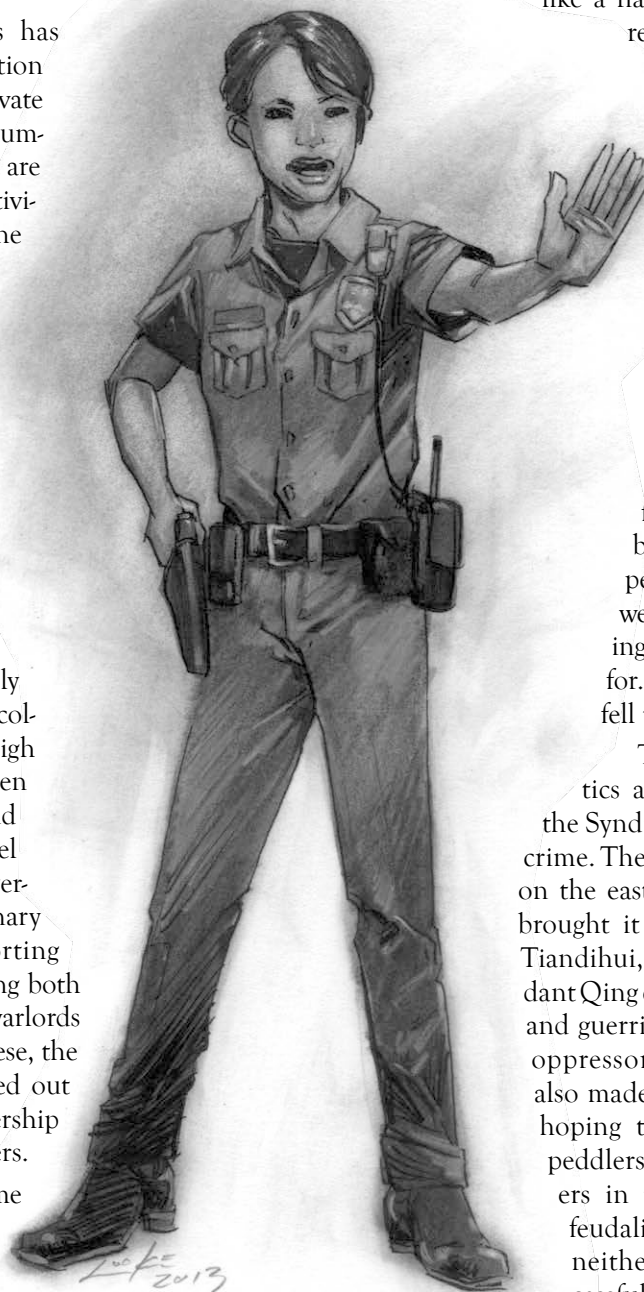
army at its command seemed like an obvious choice. The Company became a Guild and set to work running down the enemies of the nascent Convention.

While the Resplendents were the High Guild’s, well, battle-axe, its surgical scalpel called itself the Rose Guild.

Swashbucklers, courtly schemers, and agent provocateurs, the Rose Guild’s initial distaste for assassination (which otherwise seemed like a natural outgrowth) led to reliance on intimidation, blackmail, and general skullduggery.

As the muscle of the other Conventions grew in scope and power, the Resplendents and Roses slowly came together in a different way. Smarter, faster, lighter, and more precise, the High Guild’s enforcers became known for delicate work that balanced violence with persuasion — not that they weren’t capable of devastating power when it was called for. More than one Chantry fell to a Resplendent siege.

The Resplendents’ politics are also responsible for the Syndicate’s role in organized crime. The Resplendents’ contacts on the east end of the Silk Road brought it into contact with the Tiandihui, refugees from the ascendant Qing dynasty, who used crime and guerrilla tactics to fight their oppressors. The Resplendents also made connections in Japan, hoping to support the outcast peddlers and gambling-den owners in their fight against the feudal samurai class. While neither revolution was successful, its ties deepened even



as the Tiandihui became the Triads and the peddlers and gambling-den owners in Japan became the yakuza.

Once it was hip-deep into organized crime, bribery and dirty cops inevitably led it to infiltrating law enforcement. This was something of the Rose Guild's specialty, and for some time the Roses covered the Axes' indiscretions and oversteps. The two worked in concert so effectively that they were often called the "Rosebound Axe." By the time the Order became the Union, there was no longer much of a line between the two guilds that became the Enforcers methodology. To this day, Enforcers might chide each other as being a soft "Rose" or a brutish "Axe," but that's all that remains of the guilds' history.

## ⊕ ORGANIZATION

Operatives in law enforcement fall into the **Legal Division**. This includes not only officers of local and federal governments, but also criminal lawyers, bail bondsmen, police union reps, and the like. Its number even includes a handful of moguls in the corrections corporations game, providing prison management services to governments. On the whole, Legal is dedicated to ensuring that the law works the way the Syndicate wants, but it also serves important roles in monitoring activity and recruiting talent with easy-to-manipulate vulnerabilities already built-in.

Those Enforcers who ply their trade on the other side of the law are organized into the **Extralegal Division**, often nicknamed "the Cartel." These criminals, crime lords, smugglers, and thugs form a vast network of influence throughout the world's organized crime. It advises or outright controls tongs, Triads, yakuza clans, mafia families, drug cartels, white power fraternities, and biker gangs. It also works hand-in-hand with its colleagues of Legal Division, informing against its rivals and receiving tip-offs on the law's crackdowns in exchange.

The last group was first formalized as the Pinkerton National Detective Agency, now known as the **Extranational Division**. These Enforcers occupy top positions in trans-national mercenary companies and private security

firms, with deep influence in both the defense industry and in many national governments. Beyond the amount of firepower it can command, its connections and manpower are truly impressive. Extranational has, in fact, fought a few proxy wars all by itself... and billed both sides by the time they were done.

The **InSpectors** are not officially recognized as an individual body. Rather, many Information Specialists (nicknamed InSpectors in Enforcer cant) operate throughout the Methodology and can be called upon for whatever purposes they're needed. They specialize in untraceable break-ins, computer hacking, document recovery, kidnapping (a.k.a. "aggressive recruitment"), and sabotage. InSpectors are spies and thieves, the sort of people who watched James Bond and *Mission: Impossible* growing up and thinking, "Wow, those guys are chumps. I can do better."

## ⊕ CONVENTION

Many Enforcers spend their early careers in the Methodology and transfer elsewhere as they age (or when their experience is too valuable to keep on the front lines). Legal and Extranational operatives routinely move into Financiers, Disbursements, even Media Control. The leap is slightly more difficult for Extralegal Enforcers. Not because of the legality of the move; that's usually easy to manage. Rather, moving out of Extralegal almost guarantees abandoning networks of power and influence that can't be easily brought along to a new position.

Consequently, a growing faction of crime lords is pushing to calve off a new Methodology devoted exclusively to crime. It envisions a universal cartel that manages all criminal activity everywhere, a suitable complement to the Syndicate's global market and the New World Order's world government. Comparing a proposed Methodology's scope to another Convention, however, makes it seem like these dangerous men and women want a lot more than to be until a different umbrella within the Syndicate.

# FINANCIERS

The ostensible core of the Convention, the Financiers guide as much of the planet's economic traffic as it can get its mitts on. It founds companies, establishes combines, performs hostile take-overs, batters down trade sanctions, and lobbies every government on the planet with its massive clout. When done with a given company, the Financiers tears it apart to recycle the pieces.

## HISTORY

The Financiers have no explicit or clear pedigree like Disbursements or Enforcers. A number of minor guilds within the High Guild operated a dizzying number of individual franchises and industries. Many of these were drawn into the orbit of the Sun Guild in its rise; others were created outright when an opportunity arose.

By 1851, the exceedingly complicated set of laws and trade agreements between the individual guilds was deemed untenable, and the whole lot was collapsed into an omnibus organization dubbed the Financiers. Victoria picked her favorites among these luminary businessmen, focusing her favor on Reginald Proctor and his cabal of conspirators. Backed by Rathbone's new "Ivory Tower," Proctor and company completed a hostile takeover and assumed effective control of the Syndicate. (By which I mean that Proctor had made both Victoria and Rathbone think that those choices were *their* decisions. Proctor was a fucking marketing genius.)

Until this time, the High Guild had functioned mostly in service to the greater Order of Reason. However, Proctor brought his own vision to the table — one he had been working on for decades prior. He saw a planet crisscrossed by free trade, unencumbered by interference from petty national governments.

This became the Syndicate's agenda, which it pushed with all its monetary might. Tariffs fell, import laws were relaxed, and global trade flourished. This brought unprecedented wealth to Proctor, the Syndicate, and the British Empire, and so it was easy to overlook the damage wrought elsewhere.

China is a prime example of this collateral damage. When the Qing dynasty refused to accept opium imports from the West, the Syndicate muscled its way in anyway: sponsoring pirates, bribing government officials, and devaluing the Yuan. When even this volume of trade was not sufficient, it sparked the Opium Wars, which crushed the Qing's ability to regulate its own trade. This process was replicated again and again across the globe in Proctor's quest to see his dream of unfettered global markets.

(This is not a piece of our history that Chinese Syndicate executives have forgotten.)

But as long as the funding kept flowing, few in the Union cared who suffered to fuel its own projects. After all, once the Unions secured victory in the Ascension War, petty details like these would become irrelevant. Everyone would enjoy a safe, prosperous standard of living.

This view abruptly changed in the wake of the rogue Financiers' hypereconomic experiment in 2006. A few Financiers,



under pressure from Chair Camille Dulac, attempted to accelerate consumer wealth — primarily through home ownership, fueled by easy-to-obtain credit. They used all those old tactics: bribing officials, devaluing currencies, and manipulating the legal code, but this time on a coordinated, global scale. The end result overloaded the global banking system thanks to the ineffability of Market Corrections. Economies crashed worldwide, igniting a years-long recession and a retraction of growth everywhere.

With the suffering spread so widely and evenly, even the other Technocrats took notice and demanded answers from the Syndicate. A round of finger pointing ensued, with the Financiers attempting to simultaneously crucify the individuals involved while deflecting blame from its Methodology to the Syndicate as a whole. The Board, many of whom come from the Financiers, has expressed its displeasure at Dulac, but the political fallout is far from over.

(Let's not forget *why* this was done, though: to find new ways to support the other Conventions. The Void Engineers keep throwing money away in fools' errands. Iteration X is starting to go from cash cow to money pit. More Progenitors are taking funds to go out on crusade, which isn't cheap. And let's not bring up the massive costs involved in NWO creating a fourth Methodology. The other Conventions conveniently ignore this part of the equation.)

## ⊕ ORGANIZATION

The rank and file of the Financiers is the **Acquisitions Division**, which concerns itself with turning money and influence into more money and influence. These Financiers traverse the globe to identify undervalued businesses or wreck the public image of useful businesses, then swoop in and acquire controlling shares at rock-bottom prices. Once acquired, the business is often restructured, downsized, and streamlined — all of which allows a Financier to embed her own people into the organization. Acquisitions rarely spends its own money to make all this happen; it manages hedge funds or consults with presently ascendant holding companies. After all, it doesn't want to run these businesses, just pick the targets and seed them with its people.

Not all of the Syndicate's industries and cat's-paws are acquired from the outside. We have a thriving **Entrepreneurship Division**, which serves as a nursery for bold new ideas and strategies. The Entrepreneurs are experts at start-ups and soliciting venture capital (which these days includes crowdfunding). They have the contacts and networks to turn an empty office into a bustling cube farm plugged into a dozen different services: Mercury

## ⊕ OWNING VS. CONSULTING

Owning things is the chump choice, and this applies to owning controlling stakes in major multinational corporations that dictate the course of human history. Ownership requires maintenance, either material maintenance or just simple time and attention. No executive wants to spend her days rubber-stamping W-4s and 1099s. Even if you hire somebody to do your maintenance, you have to make sure he's doing his job and not running off with the treasury. So the Syndicate doesn't directly own as much as others often think.

Instead, Financiers serve as consultants, coming and going as they please, advising and guiding when necessary, and the rest of the time leaving competent Citizens in charge of the day-to-day operations.

Logistics can do all its warehousing and shipping while the new business can be one of many subsidiaries that provides widgets to Iridium Medical. With a few judicious Adjustments, it can take as little as a week to establish one of these businesses. Depending on the immediate needs of the Entrepreneur, the business may be disassembled a week later or last for years.

When a concern has exhausted its utility for us, it's handed over to the **Liquidation Division**. These Financiers specialize in extracting the last dregs of value from a dying business. The simplest version just fires the staff and sells off the furniture, but this is generally seen as a waste. Every husk of a company still has a few talented individuals or valuable patents hiding within. Businesses no longer useful can also be used in financial shell games, serve as a dumping ground for toxic materials or people past their prime, or take the fall for more thriving concerns.

## ⊕ CONVENTION

The Financiers have always been a global operation, following trade possibilities wherever they're found. One of its predecessors, the Albatross Guild, counted as members a number of Dyula merchants. These caravaneers traveled from Mali to the first Convocation of the Ivory Tower. Over time, their trade networks spread across the Sahel and down the east coast of Africa. Much of its activity, however, focuses on the extraction of natural resources for export to elsewhere. Some Entrepreneurs seek to change this, not only to realize savings in transport costs, but also to instill faith in industrial economies in the local population.



Pushing the brave new world of globalized free trade, however, has hit some snags. Increased and decentralized media coverage broadcasts the toll taken on the people and environments of the world outside the privileged West. Suddenly, the luxuries enjoyed as everyday realities throughout Europe, Japan, and North America come with a price tag of human misery. Media Control has advised the Financiers that this should be fixed, but in all truth it's not really certain how that can be accomplished.

The World Trade Organization, World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund are all playthings of the Financiers. When not desperately trying to cover up and fix its own messes, the Methodology has used these transnational organizations to focus and direct economic development across the globe. Back in 1999, the chaos of the Dimensional Anomaly meant that Media Control dropped the ball allowing a series of protests against the WTO to erupt with no friendly coverage in the news. The

protests led many to question the work done by these organizations, and the recent financial crisis and the ensuing national solvency problems has put the spotlight back on these otherwise back-room dealings. Public scrutiny makes its proper functioning as international clearinghouses difficult to perform, so the Financiers are looking for any solution that appears to put its machinations back behind the curtain.

All in all, current affairs look bad for the Financiers, many of who are blinded by the power and luxuries their positions entail. If the Methodology doesn't collectively wake up to the dawning reality of globalized, institutionalized greed, it'll be facing some hard Correction by the Masses. Some younger Financiers are looking for ways to do that, but none of them want to be the next example of how not to, as they now say, "Dulac it up." Because people being too scared to innovate and experiment is *exactly* what the world needs right now.



# MEDIA CONTROL

The youngest Methodology of the Convention, Media Control makes up for what it lacks in experience with pizzazz and glamour. These are the hardworking celebrities and behind-the-scenes people who make the global monoculture's media machine operate. It spins the news, push the trends, and dazzle the Masses into thinking everything will get better if we all just support the status quo a little bit more.

Most Associates of this Methodology prefer saying they "work in Media" rather than Media Control. The latter brings along all sorts of connotations that, while perfectly true, are either inconvenient or somewhat embarrassing. The typical Syndicate media mogul likes to think that she's presenting a view of reality rather than distorting facts to her own purposes.

## HISTORY

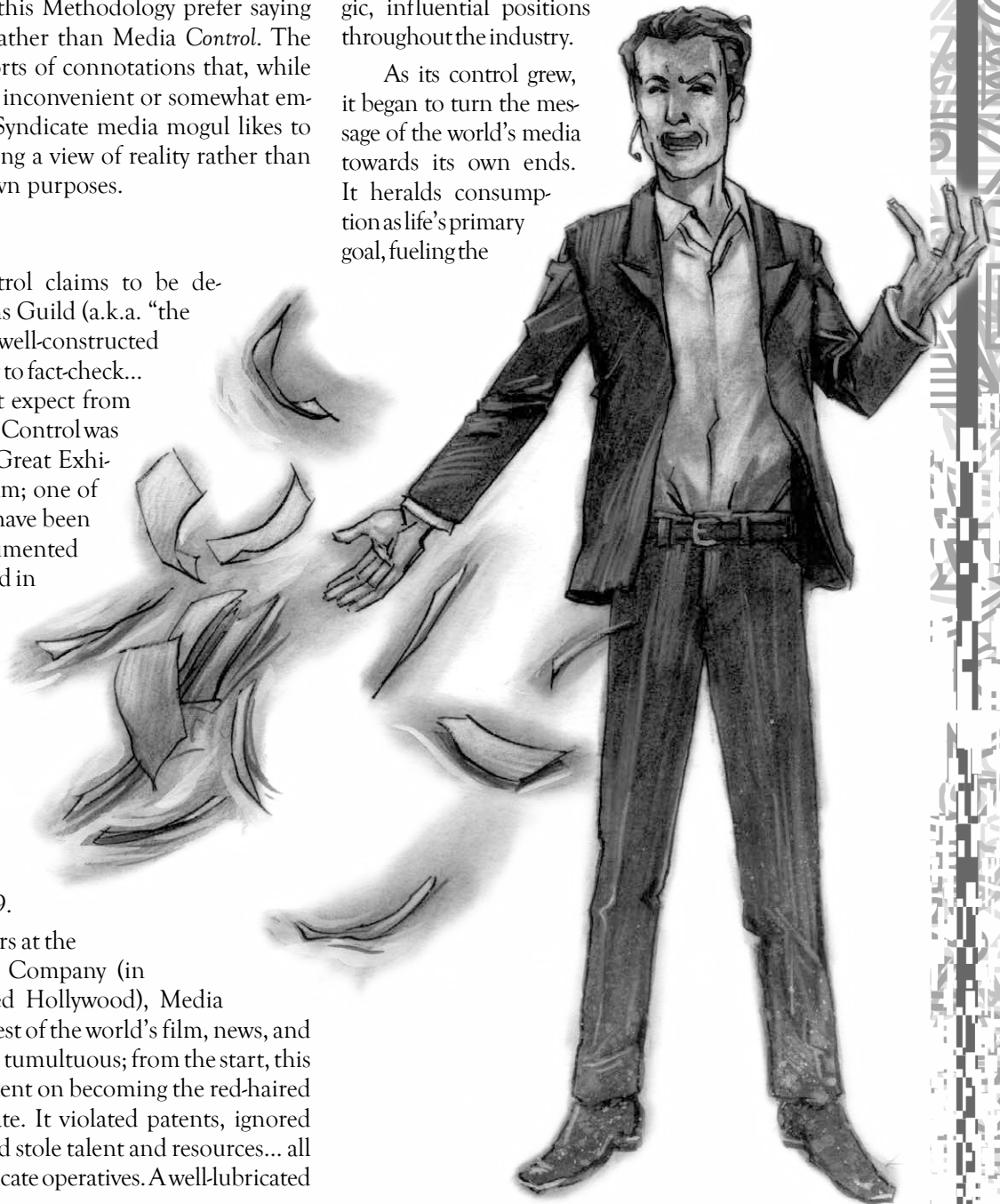
While Media Control claims to be descended from the Patrons Guild (a.k.a. "the Black Uncles"), this is a well-constructed half-truth that few bother to fact-check... which is what you might expect from this Methodology. Media Control was established at the 1851 Great Exhibition as a single amalgam; one of its members claimed to have been tutored by the last documented Black Uncle who perished in 1720. The truth is that Media Control parlayed the glamour of being created at the Great Exhibition to branch out, turning one amalgam into three, then into five, and finally winning recognition from The Board as a new Methodology in 1909.

From its headquarters at the Motion Picture Patents Company (in a quiet little town called Hollywood), Media Control began its conquest of the world's film, news, and broadcasts. Its ascent was tumultuous; from the start, this methodology seemed intent on becoming the red-haired stepchild of the Syndicate. It violated patents, ignored licensing agreements, and stole talent and resources... all of this against other Syndicate operatives. A well-lubricated

Public Relations Team kept it in the Board's good graces and supplied it with a steady stream of indulgences for its indiscretions.

Standardization of film format and broadcast protocols allowed Media Control to slowly consolidate media production across the globe. The Methodology never outright owned any of the major players (and still don't), but it's always enjoyed strategic, influential positions throughout the industry.

As its control grew, it began to turn the message of the world's media towards its own ends. It heralds consumption as life's primary goal, fueling the



## WHAT ABOUT NEWSPAPERS?

When Media Control was in its infancy, the original amalgams attempted to assume control of what was then the cutting edge of journalism: newspapers. They met with stiff competition in the form of the news conglomerates of the day, especially William Randolph Hearst, who along with his colleagues rebuffed any offer of a merger. The news magnates refused to bow to any superior, even one working for the betterment of the entire world. Thus began Media Control's century-long crusade to kill the newspaper and replace it with newsreels, then broadcast news, and finally the Internet.

The core of these efforts are an institutional grudge against Hearst and company, but the justifications they've cooked up since do hold water. Whenever an individual reporter becomes associated with trustworthiness, they become harder to control. The more anonymous the news becomes, the easier it is for Media Control to guide it in desired directions. No one cares where Internet news comes from, and Media Control likes it that way.

schemes of the Financiers. It denounces crime, turning criminals into terrifying boogymen and law enforcement as the unquestionable heroes of civilization; Enforcers find both these themes convenient for its operations. And above all, it covers up and smooths over any appearance of the paranormal or supernatural, which earns it favors from the rest of the Union. In less than a century, Media Control became the darling of the Union, absolutely necessary to the functioning of the entire conspiracy.

The recent growth of social media was not according to Media Control's master plan, but it's been quick to subvert and subsume its operation. Through user-facing services like its own Shareopolis and through invisible back-end services like Plexic, Media Control works tirelessly to compress and trivialize its nemesis: user-generated content. To illustrate, one of its studies discovered that the threshold for reliably meaningful communication hovered around 150 characters in most languages in the world, and so microblogging was born. At the same time, Media Control uses its backdoors in Plexic to selectively filter and re-present content originally posted to social media in approved and controlled forms. The rest of the Union thinks of social media as some sort of wild card, but Media Control likes it just the way it is.

## ORGANIZATION

Film, television, mass-market fiction, music, video games, even radio plays are all the purview of the **Effects Division**, who members describe themselves as "engineers of reality." It uses special effects, fabricated celebrity, invisible market research, and autotune to create its vision of reality and broadcast it 24/7 to the world. Effects Techs (as they call themselves) portray a world where consumption equals happiness, where products will make you young and happy and beautiful, and where heroic defenders of the status quo will keep you and your children safe from harm. It also has a sideline in diluting and trashing anything outside of the Technocracy's master plan: the supernatural, paranormal, and spiritual are routinely debunked, maligned, and dismissed by its square-jawed heroes and slinky heroines. After all, what the Masses watch is what the Masses believe.

The **Spin Division** takes the news of the world, re-contextualizes and repackages it, and then provides it to news organizations to distribute to the rest of the world. Its members are experts, reporters, news agency darlings, and celebrities. It minimizes bad press, quashing stories about the limits of technology or the shortsighted nature of international markets, assuring the viewing populace that everything will be just fine. Alternately, it directs all the frustration, anger, and desperation of modern life onto the targets of its choosing: shaky homeopathic medicine schemes, religious figures with suddenly-exposed skeletons in their closets, and political figures who in the past refused our perfectly reasonable offers.

Advertising is much more than laying out the benefits of a product to consumers. It concerns the appeal, the style, the sexy allure of the hot new thing, and that's what the **Marketing Division** provides. Marketeers are the primary pipelines through which the Technocracy's vision is communicated to the Masses. Whether through explicit advertisements, stealthy product placement, or "lifestyle promotion events," these masters of human desire slowly make the world comfortable with the future that the Technocracy will provide. Using fronts like Eris Design, Marketeers create the way things "should" look, feel, and operate, consistently selling a future where sleek, affordable technology works in seamless synchronization with the rest of the world's computers (which the Syndicate maintains and monitors).

## CONVENTION

After a hundred-year rocket ship ride straight to the top, Media Control is facing an obstacle that is implacable, incomprehensible, and impossible to pin down. Every

year, millions of dollars are poured into making carefully constructed spectacles to delight and distract the Masses. Said spectacles, however, are turning up elsewhere without authorization. Torrents, “pirate” sites, and peer-to-peer sharing allow unEnlightened users to copy and distribute media totally outside the bounds of Syndicate control. This must be stopped.

It’s not the money, even if that’s the story fed to news agencies and legal teams. Hollywood continues to make money hand over fist. What’s at stake is the distortion and subversion of Media Control’s message. Already pirated copies of popular media appear with subtitles and with fan-created commentary. “Mash-up” videos fold, spindle, and mutilate the delicately orchestrated media properties into new forms. It’s not long before the messaging worked into these shows is completely stripped away — or worse yet, replaced by narratives and memes created by faceless users and independent creators.

The Internet threatens to empower everyday people to create and distribute their own media, which is why Media Control has nothing but soul-wrenching hatred for everything online. It has tapped Enforcers’ Legal and Extralegal divisions to help contain the threat, but Legal is taking its time, mincing its way through red tape, while Extralegal can’t figure out how to insert itself into the non-commercial world of user-generated content. Media Control’s continued caterwauling has even prompted Entrepreneurs to create start-ups intent on capturing and commodifying this content, to little long-term success.

While many dismiss Media Control’s dire portents as the youngest Methodology throwing a tantrum at its first real obstacle, the captains of Spin know this for what it is: a direct and immediate threat to how the entire Union sells its vision to the Masses. If the wheels come off of this cart, there may not be any hope of repair.



# SPECIAL PROJECTS DIVISION

If you're reading this, then that means you've signed one hell of an NDA – and nothing quite like an NDA fused with Enlightened psychology to make sure you don't break it.

Either that, or an Enforcer is on her way right now to... make sure you sign one.

We in the Syndicate like to remind ourselves that we weathered the Dimensional Anomaly the best, that we're the steady rock of the Technocratic Union, that we're the anchors keeping the other Conventions in (relatively) safe harbor.

So the fact that we, among all of the five Conventions, *lost an entire Methodology* to the Anomaly is something that we don't talk about.

## Who Special Projects Division Was

There's a joke about Special Projects Division: "When a mommy corporation and a daddy investment institution love each other very, very much, they make a baby Methodology." (It's funnier if you say it in a baby voice to a SPD agent. At least, it was funnier.)

In 1893, there were a couple power players: Premium Oil Corporation and Proctor House of Boston. Premium started as a petroleum company, and took off after Ford's great invention hit the big time. (An aside: you're welcome.) It expanded rapidly, going from a commodity-focused operation into a holding company for a variety of small, rapidly expanding businesses.

The other side of that coin, Proctor House, was one of the Syndicate's oldest and most-lucrative American operations. With its investment acumen, it teamed up with Premium to discover and acquire a host of up-and-coming companies in various fields, notably technology and weapons manufacturing.

Premium and Proctor merged, becoming Pentex Incorporated – which I'm sure you've heard of. Within the Syndicate, the new corporation merged with our Clearinghouses, which back then focused on refining other Conventions' tech for the Masses. With that, Special Projects Division was born, and the Syndicate had its own in-house technology and weapons manufacturer.

Normally, that's the sort of thing that would be held liable to Financiers, since Pentex was about revenue flow. But the deal SPD struck with the Board involved keeping Financiers out of its business. Likewise, Disbursements doesn't ask questions regarding Pentex's expenses... partly because Pentex has, since 1893, handled its own fiscal requirements.

If it sounds like maybe SPD and Pentex are one and the same, and maybe they're separate, then you understand the relationship about as well as most Syndicate agents. It's best to think of them like a married couple: technically two separate entities, but everything's all intertwined.

Special Projects handled all sorts of technology and products meant for both Enlightened operations and use for the Masses: weapons, home entertainment, books and magazines, household appliances, computer systems, and so on. It didn't have a chance to get into the smartphone market, but SPD's efforts would likely have made NWO's Q Division look like last year's model.



As far as how the Methodology operated, no one can really say. Some older Technocrats were “apprenticed” in Special Projects but washed out, and they don’t have a lot of information to give about how the upper echelons worked. Full-fledged members were a secretive lot, almost more like a cult than a Syndicate organization. (And given that some cults are very profitable businesses, no one raised an eyebrow.) When you get down to it, we don’t know exactly how they worked on the inside. That might seem like a red flag in hindsight, but their hypertechnology and revenue were worth the secrecy.

## What Happened?

No one has a good answer to that question. We lost contact with some of SPD’s offices immediately following the Dimensional Anomaly. No surprise; the Big A had a number of “geocentric fallout events,” as our friends in the Void Engineers called them. People throughout the Union were lost, even planet-side. We’d get to them in turn.

Three months into the Reorganization, we tried to contact the executives in Special Projects. No calls were returned, no emails replied to. We went down the roster, from VP Sinclair on down, and no one was home.

Naturally, we went to do some house calls. Disbursements agents went to various Pentex holdings to find out what was going on. Two agents went into their Atlanta office. None came out. Two more went into their Paris office, same story. All four agents’ life signs went flat a few minutes into the visit. No other evidence — audio and video feeds cut out upon entering the building.

Teams of Enforcers came in to handle the job, simultaneously hitting D.C., Munich, Seattle, and Shanghai. The story’s almost the same as the first: their life signs lasted a little longer, and to make a point, one Enforcer’s head was mailed to the VPO of Finance’s office. Or, it’d be more accurate to say that the

box was sitting on her desk when she walked in after a five-martini lunch — no note, no sign of who left it there.

Here’s the funny thing: Pentex kept sending its quarterly dividends to the Syndicate. So, whatever process was in place to make sure the Syndicate’s cash flow wasn’t interrupted still worked, even if there wasn’t anyone around to deal with it. It still does today, a decade later. From that perspective, Pentex operates exactly as it did before the Anomaly, at least as far as the world’s concerned. However, it hasn’t delivered any hypertechnology since it went silent.

There’s nothing but questions: what the hell happened to Special Projects Division and what the fuck killed those highly trained Enlightened badassess?

The Board decided that the price for the answers was too high, especially since Pentex was still paying into the machine. The Bottom Line wasn’t being fucked with enough to risk a bigger operation. Certainly, we could mount one, but the risk isn’t about lives lost; it’s about the other Conventions finding out about SPD. That would tip the balance of power completely to NWO, and if that happens, the entire Union is lost.

Not many know about this... *situation*; certainly no one outside of the Syndicate. The VPO of Finance has a team of Enforcers, known as Special Information Security Division (SISD), whose sole job it is to handle any potential threats to that information.

One of the many side effects is that the specialized gear SPD used to maintain have mostly broken down in the last decade. The tech the Masses has accepted still works. As far as its last releases go, a few Technocrats know how to keep some of them running. But since keeping SPD a secret means not asking the other Conventions for assistance or for specialized gear that SPD used to provide, more gear breaks down every year.

CLASSIFIED: BLACK CLERANCE ONLY

## The Cover Story

Special Projects Division still exists, as far as everyone else is concerned. SISD operatives masquerade as SPD contacts when needed, whether interacting with other Conventions or with other Syndicate members. Due to the number of lives lost and reassignments after the Reorganization, no one questioned this staff change-up.

They turn down requests for assets and other assistance. Lately, the line's been about austerity measures within the organization. In the past, it's been about manpower shortages, raw material shortages, network communication issues, and so on. The goal is to get people to stop contacting Special Projects by making them look useless with each individual request. Though, after a decade, SISD's still playing this game.

The saving grace is that SPD never answered to Financiers or Disbursements, which means those bloodhounds don't sniff around SPD's corpse.

SISD also tracks down Special Projects gear that's prone to breaking down in

volatile ways, collecting it, and archiving it away in case SPD reforms.

## Rumors of Old

Even though others aren't able to snoop around, SISD spends its off time (which there's more of these days) piecing together information about Special Projects.

There's a large amount of damning evidence regarding SPD's connection with various Reality Terrorists, notably Nephandi. They've performed live human testing in secret. Much of their technology seems to be tainted with corrupted Deviant materials. It all reads like a caricature of Technocratic operations, something Traditionalists would make up to paint all Technocrats as baby-eating devils. It's hard as hell to stomach that we could let such a monstrosity live and thrive. There's a saying among SISD agents: "ignorance makes for damned fertile ground."

Special Information is always on the lookout for anyone in SPD's old files. Two of its former Chairs, Amanda Blacksin and James Overlook, were spotted in Singapore in 2007. Before SISD could react, they disappeared.

## What about Project Invictus?

In a classic case of the right hand not knowing what the left is doing, SISD operatives continue to clash with Project Invictus. What should be two groups cooperating has turned into a continued shadow war because Project Invictus doesn't know about SISD's true nature. SISD does know about Invictus, but the mandate from the VPO is that *no one* not personally cleared is to know about the ruse. That includes the Invictus operatives who want to kill them (and have killed some SISD members).

Instead, when possible, SISD captures Invictus agents and submits them for Processing. Because of this, there are fewer clashes with Invictus than in SISD's early days, but there are still those out there who hunt down those they believe are Special Projects Assholes.



## No, What Really Happened?

Nobody knows for sure, but everyone in the know has a conspiracy theory:

Werewolves finally ate them. It's well known, at least now, that they had their shadow-war with the Methodology. But that doesn't explain the continued payments, since no werewolf would want to keep the corporation going.

Another version of that story has the Dreamspeakers executing SPD executives. Of all the Traditions, they held a special hatred toward the organization, and after the Anomaly, many Dreamspeakers started leaving body counts that would make a Euthanatos blush. Again, they wouldn't stop short of wrecking Pentex.

It's common knowledge in the Syndicate that SPD worked with some Dimensional Science applications. Maybe some of those projects interacted with the Anomaly and caused this to happen. Not that that explains anything.

Same thing, but that project caused them to go Marauder. Makes about as much sense as Marauders in general.

Special Projects went full-Nephandi. That feeds into older rumors about them working with Nephandi and other nasty beings. Whether that explains nothing or anything depends on who you talk to.

One nut-job swears that SPD orchestrated the Dimensional Anomaly. No one takes that guy seriously.

Project Invictus actually won their little war, and no one bothered to send that memo to all the Invictus cells.

Finally, it's possible that nothing happened to Special Projects. It just rejected the Syndicate post-Reorganization, and is doing its own thing now. If that's true, you've really got to wonder why they're still paying into the system...

Those are all just guesses, though. If anyone actually finds out would, that person would get one hell of a promotion and bonus.

Due to the many Reality Toxins in much of SPD's line of products, what SISD reports as "archiving" Special Projects gear means, well, the term "Enlightened disposal methods" would be appropriate. The VPO of Finance is unaware that they've added this task their mission.

What does Special Information do with all this intel? Well, they're under NDA as well. But even if they weren't, none of them are foolish enough to spread a word to anyone. Too great a risk of the wrong people (read: non-Syndicate Technocrats) finding out.

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# CHAPTER THREE: POWER PLAYERS AND BLOWOUT DEALS

## MOVERS AND SHAKERS



### DIPTI PILLAI FINANCIERS, 2001-PRESENT

Leaders in today's world are not distant entities ruling on high from corner offices. They spend their days in nearby offices, or at desks in an open-concept space among their peers. They are engineers, builders and creators — passionate members of the team they ostensibly control. Dipti Pillai represents Syndicate stakes in the start-up culture.

Growing up in Bangladesh, Pillai was fascinated with technology and the ways in which it influenced the people around her — both of her parents worked for a local software company and the line between prosperity and poverty often depended on foreign business. Emigration to Silicon Valley in the 1990s put Pillai in direct

confluence with the growth of the businesses she was so obsessed with. At a young age, Pillai made a handful of very intelligent investments, managing to navigate the dot-com bubble and come out on top.

Pillai came to the attention of both the Syndicate and Iteration X around the same time — her obvious business acumen paired with her seemingly natural talent for computer engineering painted her as a resource of obvious value to both Conventions. In the end, it came down to a business arrangement — the Syndicate bought first contact with Pillai in exchange for accelerated funding of some Iteration X cybernetics projects.

Financiers met with Pillai several times over the course of 2001, under the guise of investment capitalists looking for a new project to back. Pillai presented a vision of the next twenty years that was unmistakably Enlightened. Disburse-





ments provided the capital she needed and in the five years that followed everyone of Pillai's projected investments became massively successful. Search engine technology, crowdfunding engines, and social media platforms: Pillai proved herself to be a visionary in every space that she touched.

Today, Pillai has developed a reputation for unmitigated success. She has a humble fervor that allows her to interface with both the boardroom and staff and inspires loyalty in everyone she meets. Preferring to work from the ground level, Pillai works directly in the hiring and setup of new organizations before moving to a new project. She has been a part of six different amalgams, two of them cross-Convention, and raised the net worth of each one dramatically before moving on.

Nearly everyone in the technology industry has a story about Pillai, an anecdote about how she saved their company or inspired their team to some new breakthrough. Her TED talk about the integration of family and work is among the most popular ever recorded. She now spends half of her time travelling, visiting other technically inclined amalgams and offering help and advice in building corporate culture. Pillai is, resultantly, well liked and has many friends throughout the Union. Dipti Pillai may

be among the best-connected members of the Syndicate currently operating.

## VANESSA "RED FACE" SHEN ENFORCERS, 1997-PRESENT

In the sixteen years since she joined the Convention, Vanessa Shen has been a force to be reckoned with. Raised in Hong Kong, the woman who would come to be known in triad circles as "Red Face" shook the power structure of the criminal underworld with both her vicious behavior and the mere fact that she was a woman in a position of power. Born to a family of triad gangsters, Shen took over smuggling and drug-running operations after the arrest of her brother by Interpol. Due to her efforts, profits of the 12K Triad nearly tripled. In part as a reward and in part because the traditionally minded triads were unable to accept a woman gaining such praise in their ranks, she went overseas in 1997 to oversee 12K operations in Vancouver. The Syndicate was there to meet her at the airport.

Shen was introduced to John Eaton Simcoe, leader of the amalgam known locally as the Pit Bosses. While Shen saw the potential in joining the Syndicate, she and Simcoe were immediately at odds. Simcoe, being both

traditionally minded and nearly a hundred years older than Shen, was less than respectful to this fiery, foreign woman. Shen worked with Simcoe for the first few years, suffering under his often-arrogant leadership while building her own web of connections. Simcoe discovered that Shen had “imported” a handful of Chinese Operatives from Hong Kong and assembled her own amalgam without his approval. The resulting power struggle resulted in the death of Simcoe and other members of the Pit Bosses and the seizure of their Construct, Diefenbakker’s Casino. Shen’s team set up shop and began a full-scale reconstruction of Syndicate operations in the city.

In ensuing years, Shen rebranded the casino, integrating it and local Syndicate operations into her connections with the Chinese-Canadian underworld. The casino underwent significant renovations, rechristened in 1999 as the Red Lion. Profits of the newly reopened casino are staggering. Once she had local Syndicate operations under control, she set about a particularly vicious attack on a number of competing Reality Deviants, even those with unspoken alliances with the previous management.

Shen represents a hybrid of legitimate business and underworld ties, and is, in many ways, an exceptional agent of the Enforcers. She embraces this dual identity and has recently been investing in local real estate, often leveraging her triad friends to forcibly encourage local government to approve otherwise unreasonable land deals. Shen is poised to seize total control of the city’s financial future, but her temper and violent nature has earned her many enemies, even within the Syndicate. Tori Whittingham, a surviving member of the Pit Bosses has supposedly been working in nearby Seattle to assemble resources for an aggressive re-acquisition.

With enemies on all sides, Shen remains implacable, and as long as her good work continues she has the support of her Methodology and of the Convention at large.

## SIR HARLAN SVENSSON MEDIA CONTROL, 1988-PRESENT

The phrase “human interface” doesn’t generally draw connections to the Syndicate. Industrial design and user experience was, historically, the province of Iteration X. New technology created to be functional first and sellable second. The Syndicate hasn’t had a tradition of being consulted during the engineering of a new product intended for the Masses. Harlan Svensson changed all that.

Svensson is an obsessive, driven, highly emotional member of Media Control. He considers himself an artist above all else. In his positions as the Chair of User Experience and a liaison to Iteration X, Sir Harlan believes that he is the bridge between raw engineering genius and the acceptance of the Masses of new consumer technology.

Svensson had a rocky start, as his obvious potential caught the attention of both the Union and a group of subversive Superstitionists. In his early 20s, Svensson’s industrial and technological designs were revolutionary and represented a potential danger to the Bottom Line—he advocated consumer control over technology and freedom from the “shackles of big business.” A background war was fought over the circumstances of Svensson’s life at the time, with Enforcers and the Virtual Adepts pulling strings. The move from Helsinki to London, acceptance to a prestigious university design program, family financial trouble, and even the death of Svensson’s father — all these were arranged by various powers at play. This last event prompted Svensson to start his own design firm to honor his father’s legacy as a watchmaker. Svensson dedicated his life to the craft of making beautiful designs that anyone could embrace, and his company, Mandarin Design, was successful almost overnight.

Media Control recruited Svensson in 1988, as part of a new program to influence technology. The phrase “user friendly” was only starting to become commonplace and the young Harlan managed to make it, and him, a household name. Operating primarily as a consultant, Svensson helped Iteration X-backed companies create technology that was not only functional, but also beautiful. After a decade of turning personal computers, media players and other personal electronics into art, Svensson was knighted for his “contribution to culture” and his firm, Mandarin Design, was granted a number of exclusive contracts.

There isn’t a person in the first world that hasn’t held a Svensson-designed technology in their hand. His work is pervasive and while it still carries a “revolutionary” edge, it’s tempered and unthreatening. The man is driven to work for the greater good — acceptance of the new into the lives of the otherwise static Masses. He is a true paragon of the new way Media Control operates; an operative who is able to create pure desire — to take something created by Enlightened Science and make every man, woman, and child who comes into contact with it feel that it’s suddenly and absolutely something they cannot live without.

# LEGENDS



## THE GODFATHERS

Reginald Proctor is the closest thing our Convention has to a canonized saint, and with damn good reason. His efforts created the modern Technocratic Union, and not indirectly: he sold the fucking Union to Queen Victoria and Basil Rathbone. He sold everyone else on joining up.

Saint Proctor is the godfather of the Technocracy, and that makes him nothing less than the godfather of Consensual Reality. Let that sink in.

A number of Syndicate executives across the various Methodologies have formed a secret society that takes inspiration from Proctor. They call themselves the Godfathers (though there are women in the group as well, they keep the name in honor of their hero), and their overall goal is to heal the rift between the New World Order and the Syndicate. Just as Proctor and Rathbone worked in concert until Proctor's suicide in 1918, they see a time when the two most important Conventions in the Union can be copasetic partners again.

However, being nice isn't working. NWO is just as antagonistic as the Syndicate, and it takes two to tango. So they have a different tactic: they use sabotage and subterfuge to create situations where agents on both sides have to cooperate, and where higher-ups have to share information. During these moments, the Godfathers work to promote Unity through civility and the free flow of resources, encouraging the other Technocrats to follow suit under the guise of emergency cooperation. Their idea is that if this happens enough, it won't need to take an emergency to get the Union back together.

The Godfathers crafted emergencies through encouraging Traditionalists (or framing them) for massive bank heists — thus getting NWO-controlled federal law enforcement mixed with Syndicate-controlled banks. They engineer crises for mixed amalgams, or for NWO or Syndicate amalgams that are due for a visit from the other side. And they do this by using Entropy Influence to determine what situations will return the highest social capital dividends.

This got on the Board's radar when they discovered Financier executive Ben Warren's manifesto, Putting the Union back in the Technocracy. Warren states that this is no different from Proctor and Rathbone forming to defend the Masses from Reality Terrorism. To the Board, this is terrorism, and they're doing what they contain

the situation before NWO discovers the nature of these incidents or, worse, cause a global Market Correction (accidentally or intentionally).

Godfather Disbursement executives are equally dangerous in the Board's eye, because they have a habit of greenlighting projects that others wouldn't, for the "cause of unity." However, the Godfathers don't have meetings or even work in cells — it's just a name to a Syndicate philosophy, so no way for Enforcers to round them up. (And no way to know if the Enforcer you're giving an order to is a sympathizer.)

Rumor has it they're looking for likeminded people in NWO, and have even connected with a few. If that's true, that means NWO's likely aware of the situation, and is just holding off on using that against the Syndicate. All the more reason for the Board to worry, but some higher-ups wonder if the Godfathers are onto something.

## THE FLASH CRASH

The Masses do not truly understand the stock market. Most assume that the financial operation of the world's corporations is done by men in blazers shouting orders at each other over the trading floor. The reality occurs on a much smaller scale. The stock market operates in infinitesimally small units of time — nanosecond transactions performed by the billions over the course of a trading day. These transactions are controlled by automated algorithms programmed to maximize profit, buying and selling in fractions of a cent. The economy takes place at a speed outside of standard human comprehension.

This speed is the result of years of hard work by Syndicate Financiers and Iteration X Time-Motion Managers. Without them, the economy would have stagnated, trapped by human physical limits. Talented cross-Convention amalgams created the computer systems that let the economies of the world operate at the speed and volume with careful application of Enlightened software. We manage and monitor the stock system at an unheard-of level of complexity.

In May of 2010, an algorithm placed a single \$4.1 billion-dollar trade that would bring down the entire system. The trade algorithm that placed the bid caused a cascade of price misidentification. Futures dropped, and every other operating algorithm in the system caught on immediately, selling off their stocks. Within minutes, the entire market was poised on the edge of the most destructive crash it had ever experienced. The Masses went into panic mode.

An on-shift team responsible for monitoring of the market stepped in, working Time Adjustments to combat the algorithm and repair the system. To the Masses, the shutdown protocol lasted exactly 5 seconds. To them, the market rebooted and it was as if nothing had ever happened. The operation to contain and rewrite the algorithm lasted hours in subjective time. Three Union operatives died as the algorithm lashed out in self-defense. In the end, it was reported as a “technical glitch” and the Securities and Exchange Commission closed the case — as we instructed.

The truth of the Flash Crash is still uncertain. The algorithm that caused it did so with such lethal precision that there’s no question it was a concerted attack. Theories abound; terrorist action by the Virtual Adepts, an artificial intelligence gone rogue or something else yet unknown. What is certain is that despite the Syndicate’s best efforts, the stock market represents a dangerously under-defended system. For now, executives man the walls and keep watch, in case whoever caused the Crash makes another attempt.

## JUICE

When the global economy took its most recent nosedive, the company line was that it was an anticipated setback. It was the result of an experiment and that sometimes experiments fail. We would recover and move on. New and exciting opportunity awaited us as we rebuilt what had failed. Not everyone in the Syndicate believed that rebuilding was enough. One Austin amalgam decided that this was the final straw, that the time for a cashless world has come.

In 2009, the amalgam created a startup to pursue their new project, called “Juice.” Juice is social. Juice is reputation currency. Juice is the new model for human worth. The team, made up of Financiers and Media Control executives, immediately set to filtering through the social media space, looking for net celebrities who would become their early-adopting elite. These individuals (known as “Juicers”)

would serve as the test group. They were movers and shakers in social media — popular vloggers, meme-creators and influencers. When Juicers speak, people listen.

Juicers were rewarded, at first, with property: if your Juice Score reached a certain level, you were entitled to electronics, designer clothes, and free meals at new restaurants. As Juice grew, the reward structure that its users responded best to seemed to prove the amalgam’s theory. Juicers didn’t want new things, they wanted opportunity. Today, Juicers are given the chance to participate in software betas, attend media events and access Juice seminars.

The Juice team has invested in restaurant review sites, job hunting boards, and dating sites. “What’s your Juice?” is becoming a commonly asked question on first dates and at interviews. Juice represents a revolutionary idea that is growing in the Syndicate. Reputation and social currency might be as important as cash. The Masses can look at their Juice score and know, without hesitation or uncertainty, just how much they’re worth. Juice tells you exactly how important you are: a clear, public indicator of where you stand in the universal hierarchy. Unlike cash-based economic models, the Syndicate has direct control over Juice. They can increase or decrease a user’s score, change the reward structure, or create a scarcity of Juice whenever they like. It’s a closed system in which the user has granted utter trust and control.

The Syndicate is able to monitor a massive amount of data via Juice. It knows immediately what its users want — what they’re watching, eating, and buying. Adjustments worked using the Juice database can track behavioral trends both current and projected, and can be used to pinpoint individuals likely to be Extraordinary Citizens based on their unconscious Mind and Entropy Influence.

Between this side-benefit (which allows the Syndicate to find potential recruits before NWO does) and a Financier study determining the risk to global Market Correction is minimal, Juice has been allowed to remain operating. For now.

# MACROECONOMIC FRONTS

A SHORT LECTURE BY ANTON OSEI, FINANCIERS



Sometimes, the Technocracy is so convoluted that it doesn’t even know what it controls. The New World Order debates its past and present influence, not as a self-indulgent academic exercise, but because the Union is truly a fractal organization — filled with double agents, secret societies, black budgets, and big,

lying egos. It’s hard to figure out what everyone is up to, and easy to imagine Enlightened patterns in world events (and in places where there aren’t any).

But the known facts don’t lie. We wrestled the Union into an expansive political economy capable of shaping the world with more than technological trinkets. We invented a distribution system to spread our toys far and wide, and a value system that teaches people to love

them. When the Masses adopted our technology, they made themselves capable of reproducing gifts from our fellow Conventions, along with the materialistic values that turned them from tool users into consumers: people capable of truly loving material culture.

We made the world this way. Us. So we need to watch every corner of our planet on a scale that defies the hard social controls favored by others in the Union. As a Syndicate executive, you'll monitor our world, keep economic fundamentals strong, and combat the ascetic superstitions that threaten human prosperity. Look everywhere. See everything. Run the numbers.

## AFRICA

If you grew up in the West, you probably don't know anything about Africa. Media Control reinforces the old colonial biases to maintain a paternalistic perspective, because Africa's resources demand worldwide management. I don't agree with the strategy, but I'm not exactly a VPO. The continent hosts many thriving, innovative economies that we almost lost due to isolationist and socialist anti-colonial revolutions. After that, it gets complicated — so complicated I can't do my home continent justice in the time we have. So once you learn about Africa, you'll be able to point out specific cases that defy the trends I'm talking about.

The Syndicate focuses on multi-tiered development to fix the damage done by colonial and post-colonial upheavals and develop connections with the global economy. One of our strategies in the region is to encourage Chinese investment in African resources, a situation that demonstrates how we leverage historical synergies. Under Maoism, China aligned itself with African communist regimes. China switched to a "socialist market economy," but maintained its African connections. We simply arranged a reunion between old friends who'd grown apart, and needed to be shown they could take the relationship further.

Most of the Syndicate's agents in Africa are Africans, removing the last serious blemishes of colonial bias from the Convention. Before we all congratulate ourselves for being so forward-thinking, remember that the Africans led the way by asserting their independence, even if some of us flirted with command economies and other idiocies first.

We still have an image problem. NWO believes in imposing a utopia, then using government force to conjure productivity. I said "conjure," because this is a form of magical thinking, if one highly appealing to liberals concerned with democracy and free speech. But it is simply impossible. Food, water, and shelter precede justice. As pragmatists, we develop economic prosperity first, knowing that social change will follow. We still need to crack

a few tough cases — Zimbabwe comes to mind — but our global marketplace punishes the isolation that goes along with tyranny, so it's just a matter of time.

## THE MIDDLE EAST

This area's a flashpoint for us for the same reasons it is for the Masses, with the added issue of Primal Energy hypereconomics derived from the petroleum industry. The situation with Iran and other would-be nuclear powers shows us the paradoxes Syndicate advisors encounter. To switch from a petroleum energy system, we need the producers to benefit from alternatives like nuclear power — but to succeed, they need technologies that could be used to develop nuclear weapons. This generates political instability and drives up petroleum futures, simultaneously making energy more expensive and petroleum more economically attractive. So moving forward takes us several steps backward, but at least allows us to profit from the regrettable bubble.

Of course, it doesn't help that various factions really would love to bomb the each other. But I digress.

## THE AMERICAS

The Americas are the children of invasion and disease, but gave colonial Technocrats the opportunity to mold new nations from their first days. This is not to say that the indigenous presence has vanished — in fact, as the world becomes more aware of its finite material resources, governments discover that the original inhabitants have maintained critical rights to the land. This is as true in Canada as it is in Peru. We must shoulder part of the blame for this embryonic crisis. Our High Guild predecessors treated them monstrously. We set the stage for systematic abuses, and governments continued them until... well, they haven't stopped. Unless we align indigenous varied interests with the Syndicate's, a subsequent conflict will disrupt the Time Table. And if they turn away from the global market, Reality Deviants stand ready to lead them astray.

Nevertheless, North America remain our stronghold, particularly through the tripartite power of Canadian natural resources, Mexican industry, and U.S. consumer demand.

Honestly, at this stage one wonders what to do with the United States. It integrates the global economy with an insatiable demand for every product and service imaginable, but what does it provide besides desire? We moved from a manufacturing to a service-based economy, but what's next? Turn everyone into financial workers? Remote managers? Like all businesses, nations have life cycles. When their time passes, it's time to arrange mergers and liquidate assets. It might be time to wind down America as a first power, just like we did with the UK.



## ASIA

Asia is the battlefield. Everyone knows it, even the Traditionalists — not that they have a chance. The region used to be a little friendlier to them because a cultural offshoot of the Technocracy called the Elemental Dragons used to exert a great deal of influence. They were more interested in power than a rational culture however, and allowed several folk beliefs to prosper. In the 1990s, VPO Choe Yo'ng engineered currency collapses to undermine their traditional business networks. She shook up the status quo; anyone who wanted to stay in the game harmonized policies with the mainstream Union. This transformed the balance of power in China, South Korea, and throughout Southeast Asia. These days, calling yourself an "Elemental Dragon" is like saying you belong to a country club or follow a particular football team.

China resisted VPO Yo'ng because, with NWO assistance, the PRC had already eradicated most of China's politically influential Reality Deviants. The Maoists instituted a command economy and ran that country into the ground while NWO cheered. Yo'ng helped rebuild China by using the classic Syndicate strategy: prosperity before idealism. She convinced China's trading partners that a prosperous China would naturally adopt liberal values. This opened the door that Deng Xiaoping unlocked, and slipped beneath the notice of his economically illiterate NWO advisors. Fortunately, those operatives were amenable to retraining. Most of them work for the Syndicate now, and not as distrusted probationers. They're valued cross-disciplinary experts who know how to join totalitarian power to a market economy.

Despite the fact that it rivals China in population and importance, India, Pakistan, and the rest of the South Asian cluster often elude detailed analysis. This is a testament to the Syndicate's past shortcomings. Like other post-colonial scenarios, the Masses agitated for their own prosperity, but we came late to the table. Our predecessors were too heavily invested in the British Empire, and adopted its racist, shallow analysis of the situation. I've read some ridiculous reports written by Financiers in the 1940s. They thought British India would collapse into anarchy, and panicked aristocrats would beg them to come back. Instead, they threw off the largest empire in history. NWO claims responsibility, but I don't believe it — India didn't turn into China or Russia. And despite decades of growth, we've barely reestablished ourselves, though we do benefit from having devised the global economy that Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, and others must utilize to drive growth. Other analysts disagree, but I suspect that another faction of hypereconomists is shaping the region for its own purposes.

## EUROPE

Europe is our oldest victory, and where the Convention put down its most enduring roots. This is where we've applied the most sophisticated, longest-running hypereconomic initiatives. We tried to take the European Union to the next stage, where cascading virtuous cycles would open the door to tremendous wealth. Unfortunately, we couldn't trust the Masses to implement them. We created interdependence so that the Western powers would not only lay down their arms, but limit themselves to mutually beneficial policies. They can't hurt each other without hurting themselves. We explained this to all the right people.

But executives at the top of their game always wonder if they're smarter than you. They always test you, and sometimes they think they can cheat. Ambitious men and women always fight attempts to regulate them. As far as the Syndicate is concerned, the real crime is being stupid about it. We assumed competition would produce leaders with foresight. We were wrong.

Matters have not been helped by the fact that as a collection of colonial beneficiaries, Europe has had centuries to develop a culture of entitlement, based on the fact that the world ships its wealth to European shores. These tendencies not only fuel superstitionism among its jaded Masses, but fuel distractions in our own Union. Just as Asia's Elemental Dragons strayed from Technocratic values, European agents have been known to join neo-Templar organizations and Masonic lodges — I hear there's even a ridiculous secret society based on the Knights of the Round Table somewhere in the UK! This concerns the Syndicate because these groups always support aristocrats in one form or another, and aristocrats are a drain on the economy. They produce nothing.

At least the crisis gives us an opportunity to renegotiate the relationships between states and corporations. Corporations can grow too big to fail, but states can't. We can rebuild financial systems with the help of governments. And after their deficits rise, they'll ask the banks (and thus us) to take over functions they can no longer afford. It's a socialist's nightmare, but a victory for open markets. A victory for the Syndicate in the long run.

## THE PACIFIC

The Pacific Ocean embraces hundreds of critical, diverse areas, though many of them act as appendages to former (and arguably, current) colonial powers. Most of those don't concern us; an atoll in the middle of nowhere imposes certain limits on growth. The Philippines, Indonesia, and Singapore all contain critical industries and

ambitious consumers. After an injection of 21st Century deregulation, Australia and New Zealand have matured, and we foresee slower growth until we engineer a hypereconomic liftoff based on lessons from the U.S. and Europe.

If we want island-bound economies to grow, we need to fuel them with sovereign energy and mineral harvests. The other Conventions have yet to develop the Correction-

free beamed power they promised decades ago, and the Masses stick to national identities, complicating trade. The Void Engineers might earn their funding by discovering underwater wealth (or the Progenitor's "Biosphere Explorers" accidentally might). If that happens, we can use that to shake up the dynamic in the region and mold it into what we need.

## SYNDICATE AMALGAMIS



Like most Union terms, "amalgam" is an awkward historical compromise. Scientists liked the chemical allegory (amalgamation the combines an element with Mercury – the metal of Hermes to an ordinary element). NWO Psychologists wanted it to imply that Technocrats sacrificed individual aims to serve a higher purpose – a notion that annoys Enlightened capitalists. The Syndicate uses the term nonetheless, but its managers feel the way an Iteration X designer might if she was asked to use a crayon to design a circuit board. Experts want the right tool for the job. Syndicate executives are experts at organizing people to get things done not out of collective guilt, threats, or desperation, but shared ambitions.

When the Convention organizes all-Syndicate amalgams, it dispenses with crude generalities and applies management science to define their tasks and structures. This leads to the following classifications.

### CREWS AND TEAMS

The Syndicate distinguishes between hierarchical crews and semi-egalitarian teams. A crew has a hard-coded command structure that gives one agent global authority over the rest, and assigns everyone specific tasks. Enforcers often use crews to minimize confusion during violent operations. Team personnel possess fluid responsibilities and relative equality, except for the team's lead agent, who is responsible for keeping the team focused and organized. Team leads get a bit of extra authority, but belong to the same management tier as the rest of the amalgam.

Most player groups will prefer teams to crews, but be warned that the Syndicate doesn't tolerate the idea that nobody's really in charge. You need a team lead to at least define consensus decisions. Crews offer a change of pace, with defined power relationships that suit fast-paced stories, where characters need jump into action instead of debate strategy.

### EXECUTIVE, COMMAND, AND WORKING AMALGAMIS

Theoretically speaking, no Syndicate amalgam works in isolation, but in a post-Anomaly world, personnel shortages and communications problems have increased front line autonomy. Nevertheless, the Syndicate recognizes executive amalgams that answer to the Board, command amalgams that fine tune executive decisions to pass down the line, and working amalgams that, well, do what they're told.

Nowadays, the flow of instructions and feedback might not be as constant or strongly hierarchical, but every Syndicate group maintains one of these relationships with at least one other amalgam. Map these situations to develop stories about internal Syndicate workings, but don't be afraid to leave some areas blank. Your amalgam's official supervisors might have lost contact, or the Storyteller might want to fill that detail in later.

### DEPARTMENTAL AND ENTERPRISE AMALGAMIS

The Syndicate uses the same business structures it promotes among the Masses. Most amalgams influence at least one commercial front: a tech startup, union local, manufacturing plant – one amalgam in the American Southwest even runs a biker gang. The Convention recognizes departmental amalgams that deal with part of a larger corporate entity, and enterprise amalgams that run their entire companies, gangs, or other concerns.

Large fronts often have multiple departmental amalgams, each one overseeing one of the front's aspects. The organization's structure often sets amalgam pecking orders but not always – some senior agents avoid the limelight by running things from the mailroom. Enterprise amalgams (including PAXCorp, p. 68) run leaner ventures, suitable for one small group of Enlightened managers.

Many players will prefer enterprise amalgams that allow them to completely control a business front – who doesn't want to be their own boss? – but some groups

## THE POWER OF CORPSPEAK

A Syndicate-focused game gives you an opportunity rip creative inspiration out of some decidedly prosaic sources, such as job boards and corporate websites. In the World of Darkness, the Syndicate profoundly shaped modern businesses — every communiqué, position statement and memo can fuel your game, including the following:

**Job Descriptions:** Most amalgams develop formal job descriptions for each member. In fact, when amalgams belong to the same chain of command, agents might even transfer from one to another based on the defined qualifications of each role. You can assume this paperwork exists in the background, but for extra detail players might write job descriptions for their agents, and the Storyteller can list what the Syndicate wants out of anyone looking for a promotion. Use real job listings to develop a format.

**Mission Statements:** Company handbooks and Mob initiations both showcase mission statements designed to sum up the organization's goals — though

for the Mob, it might be as simple as “Don't go against the family.” Mission statements guide members, and justify discipline if you violate core values, or go against the family. Every Syndicate amalgam probably has a mission statement. You can assume it's there but never refer to it, or define it to develop the group's identity.

**Policies and Procedures:** Policies should apply the mission statement to practical situations but in the end, most bow to pragmatic interests. The Syndicate is no different. It wants achieve utopia through capitalism, but not every policy exists to further that noble goal. The Syndicate's “employee handbooks” (in reality, operations manuals customized for each amalgam) cover everything from workplace harassment to how to deal with vampires. The Convention's Board issues general policy expectations that get further defined down the chain of command. Get your hands on a real corporate employee manual and add a little Enlightenment: a Conditioning step for each infraction, or Data monitoring for thieves and harassers.

might be willing to take on the distinctively Syndicate-flavored option of a departmental group, to experience the joy of Enlightened office politics.

## CROSS-DIVISION AMALGAMS AND TASK FORCES

Most Syndicate amalgams are cross-divisional, containing personnel from multiple Methodologies. To smooth inter-Methodological relations and harness their combined expertise, most of these groups are teams, not crews, with the special proviso that team lead status belongs to the Methodology best suited to a particular task. If the amalgam investigates a missing shipment of uranium that was supposed to arrive at an Iteration X facility, the Disbursements agent takes point. If someone starts shooting, an Enforcer steps up to the plate.

Single-Methodology task forces aren't as common, and are usually organized for a specific purpose. No Methodology wants to concentrate personnel in one place — it's inefficient, and exposes them to danger. Task forces are often short-lived crews, focused on a defined objective. This isn't always true, however; Disbursements runs task forces as teams to keep one agent from using her authority to conceal fraud from the rest, and some Enforcers belong to permanent strike teams.

Cross-divisional amalgams are the classic type for most chronicles, since they allow for more varied characters and the chance to rotate the spotlight according to story events. Storytellers should devise events that shift focus from one character to the next. Don't be afraid to state outright when it's time for the Financiers to take the lead. Syndicate agents are pros — they can see who should step up even when their players can't.

# PAXCORP



The Syndicate believes in the concept of intellectual property, though its members engage in the same debates the Masses do about how to manage it. But even Financiers ready to profit from an open source future draw the line at sharing anything that could endanger the Time Table or Masses. Syndicate agents suppress mundane nuclear, biological and chemical warfare weapons research, but save their strongest efforts for hypertechnologies that slip out of Technocratic control.

The Patent Assurance Executive Corporation (PAXCorp—branding skips the E) deals with these problematic intellectual properties. The Masses call PAXCorp “patent trolls.” The corporation certainly looks like one; it doesn’t invent anything or even keep known science and engineering professionals on staff. It’s a team of lawyers and managers who file lawsuits and close deals to stop alleged infringement. PAXCorp buys software patents, obscure trademarks, and copyrights for nearly abandoned works. It launches annoying litigation efforts whenever its lawyers can throw together a damages claim.

These are cover operations, however. PAXCorp stops the infringements it really cares about using bullets, memory wipes, and sabotage.

From its foundation in 1990 to the occurrence of the Dimensional Anomaly, PAXCorp essentially functioned as a military-espionage amalgam—as the Ascension War’s major battles spiraled away from Earth, it defended the Time Table back on the home front. That continues today: buying out companies with Extraordinary Citizens proposing work that could lead to Market Corrections, doing hostile takeovers of influenced by Virtual Adepts and other Traditionalists (but especially VAs), and even combatting errant Technocrat fronts with the power of almighty litigation. And when legal and financial means don’t work, PAXCorp is not above direct and violent action, for the sake of the Masses.

## ORGANIZATION

Registered in Delaware and Singapore, PAXCorp is privately held corporation with publicly declared interests in technology development, civil law and real estate investment. The Syndicate arranges for it to show profits and losses consistent with its known activities and the overall economic climate. On paper, PAXCorp receives oversight from a board of executives from Plexic, AEZIR, Mercury Logistics, and other Syndicate holdings.

In practice, PAXCorp’s Syndicate agents manage themselves like a small law firm — or would, if lawyers routinely led hit squads. The company keeps anywhere from five to ten Enlightened “full partners,” a handful of staff for each, and around two dozen “associates” qualified in a combination of intellectual property law, asset management and close quarters combat. PAXCorp thus provides the following pooled Backgrounds for agents, when their players invest in them through Background or Experience Traits:

- Backup 3, in the form of armed lawyers and managers.
- Laboratory 2, accessible in PAXCorp’s Singapore and New York offices.
- Resources 4, due to licensing fees from successful lawsuits and licensing schemes. This doesn’t include funds devoted to employee wages and business expenses.
- Spies 3, employed in various Traditionalist rogue Technocratic fronts.

These Backgrounds may rise or fall according to PAXCorp’s current management.

## THOR VESTERGAARD MANAGING PARTNER

After a decade as the de facto head of PAXCorp, Thor Vestergaard is ready for new, less violent challenges. He feels pigeonholed by his reputation as a heroic, effective Enforcer. He’d rather stick to his desk. Still, he’s an ideal fit for his current duties. The son of Minnesota factory workers, Vestergaard joined the Army and served in Iraq and Afghanistan, but turned down an O-4 commission with USSOCOM to go to law school. Foot patrols in Afghanistan’s mountains taught him to love wild places, and he wanted to protect them as an environmental lawyer. He graduated near the top of his class at Yale.

Before he could join an NGO, the Pentagon reactivated him for the Army’s Future Soldier program. He evaluated contracts as a lawyer, and assessed gear like an infantryman. Vestergaard isn’t sure exactly when he became Enlightened; he’d always been just a bit brighter and more determined, but by the time AEZIR GmbH reached out to him, he had almost subconsciously taken control of the Future Soldier program; it collapsed for a year after AEZIR arranged his discharge.

He spent a year working for AEZIR, teaching agents to use hypertechnology weapons in the field while campaigning for a position overseeing clean energy, carbon trading, or



anything else that fit his actual interests. Then he took a position offered in PAXCorp. This pleased him until he learned that this “promotion” meant his work would involve more shooting. Vestergaard would drop fieldwork completely, but feels responsible for his subordinates, most of whom lack his talent for tactical violence. Syndicate management made it clear that until he finds a worthy successor, he’s stuck serving papers and shooting Deviants.

**Image:** Thor Vestergaard is a ripped, square-jawed Danish American with a blond crew cut and dark brown eyes. Excellent posture makes him look taller than his 6’3” stature. He wears plain, well-tailored blue suits less out of a minimalist aesthetic than a lack of sartorial imagination. He directs meetings with brief, emotionless sentences, doesn’t smile, and responds to social conversation with an expression of mild irritation.

This all goes out the window when he’s in the field, directing paramilitary operations. In such contexts he belts out motivating speeches at the drop of a helmet, swears, and tromps through dirt and blood to support his staff. He uses a briefcase, backpack or webbing to carry his Apparatuses: chemical cocktails, explosives, tools, and useful mechanical components.

**Roleplaying Hints:** You believe in the Syndicate; why doesn’t it believe in you? You know the system

works, because you lifted yourself up from a dead end into executive privilege, but you don’t believe that wealth is the only measure of success. You’ve earned the freedom to do as you please, and that’s guide the Masses to an environmentally stable, prosperous future. Whenever upper management tells you need to sacrifice your aspirations for a greater good, they’re failing to uphold Syndicate ideals. You don’t like combat, but you’re good at it — you learned the necessary skills with the same determination you’ve applied to everything in life. Saving brothers and sisters in arms satisfies you, but that’s it. You’re afraid that you’ve invested so much of your Enlightened focus in a military past that it won’t let you move on.

You use Inspired Science to build or modify gear out of anything you can find, carry, or collect through hyper-economic commerce. You’ve just started to explore biology and ecology through Life, but don’t get to apply it as much as you’d like.

**Methodology:** Enforcers

**Eidolon:** Questing

**Methodology:** Enforcers

**Nature:** Crusader

**Demeanor:** Manager



**Attributes:** Strength 4 (Lifting), Dexterity 4 (Avoiding Fumbles), Stamina 4 (Marching), Charisma 4 (Commanding), Manipulation 2, Appearance 3, Intelligence 4 (Logic), Wits 2, Perception 3

**Abilities:** Alertness 4 (Outdoors), Awareness 1, Brawl 3, Dodge 4 (Taking Cover), Intimidation 3, Leadership 3, Drive 3, Energy Weapons 3, Etiquette 1, Firearms 4 (Assault Rifle), Hypertech 2, Melee 2, Stealth 4 (Wilderness), Survival 4 (Mountains), Computer 2, Finance 3, Investigation 2, Law 5 (Environmental), Linguistics 2 (Pashto, Danish), Medicine 1, Science (Chemistry) 3

**Backgrounds:** Construct 3, Genius 3, Library 2, Requisitions 3, Secret Weapons 3. In addition, Vestergaard's Inspired Sciences allow him to build Extraordinary Devices alone or in conjunction with other Technocrats.

**Enlightenment:** 4

**Inspired Sciences:** Life 2, Matter 4, Primal Utility 4

**Willpower:** 8

**Primal Energy:** 3

**Market Correction:** 0

**Resonance:** Windswept (Dynamic), Cadenced (Static)x2

## EXTRAORDINARY PRODUCTS, ENLIGHTENED SERVICES



The Syndicate respects scientific cloisters and think tanks as birthplaces of innovation, but remade the world to bring these visions to market — that's where the Convention operates the most, and where it puts its hopes for Ascension. For centuries, fellow Conventions treated innovation as a way to control the bulk of humanity, but the Syndicate has made that crude authoritarianism obsolete. Give peace a price, and

it can be paid by Enlightened and ordinary people alike, working together in the spirit of free exchange. Syndicate Genius expresses itself in these relationships. Agents distribute extraordinary technologies through consumer culture. They concentrate productivity into “magic” that doesn't require special education, mystical delusions or self-discipline — the Syndicate respects human nature as it is. Self-interest blazes a trail to utopia.

Unfortunately, the system isn't perfect yet. It requires enforcement. Heroism. Procedures. Risk.

### SOURCES OF INNOVATION

Other Conventions love their lasers, nanite swarms, mutagens, and self-organizing code. Syndicate agents can get all these things, but pride themselves on working Procedures up from the technologies and systems the Masses use. Convention agents believe they made the modern world — why turn their back on its potential? Enlightened engineers develop prototypes, but leave Financiers to research the market to see what the Masses will accept, and expect Disbursements to funnel the proceeds back into Union operations. While their cousins explore pure research and sharpen the cutting edge, the Syndicate turns Technocratic brilliance into everyday products.

Search engines? Home 3D printing? Digital photography? You're welcome.

In the process, agents prepare mundane products for Enlightened applications. Media Control tells the Masses about heroes and villains. It tells them the Market's not a human invention, but a natural law. Financiers add secret rooms to buildings. Enforcer-owned factories produce exceptional weapons. Every Methodology plugs into the world's economic pulse, shaping profits to inspired ends.

### INFRASTRUCTURES

The Syndicate rarely put members on the boards of famous corporations. Those organizations need other businesses: outfits that provide so-called “plain label” solutions. They build the reference designs tech corporations modify into market-leading devices. They manage code banks for licensing, and other things the average consumer never directly sees but unknowingly utilizes. An agent doesn't need a hypertech computer when she enjoys back end access to Plexic servers. She doesn't need to teleport gear when Mercury Logistics offers same day (and even same hour) service to any set of GPS coordinates.

To use an infrastructure Apparatus, the player describes how his agent accesses the “back end” of a product or service, or requests help from a Syndicate-controlled organization. Use the list on p. 71 as a starting point.

### PERSONNEL

Every Convention values sympathizers and Extraordinary Citizens. Syndicate agents manage them with superior ability. Supervision is a science. By fostering capitalism, they created the basic expectations and reward systems used in organizations around the world, and gained a foothold into the modern mass psyche. Syndi-

## SYNDICATE CORPORATIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS

The following organizations aren't the only ones Syndicate Methodologies use to for hypertechnology or hypereconomic functions. Storytellers can develop others or work with players to invent them on the fly.

**AEZIR GmbH:** This German arms designer holds key patents for modern rifling, aerospace guidance systems, and dozens of other essential defense technologies. Many firearms began as licensed AEZIR prototypes, but the firm reserves Mjollnir and THOMAS and other selected models for Syndicate operatives.

**Eris Design:** Eris is a small marketing and design firm. Just a dozen Media Control "cool hunters" and "design narrators" influence what people wear, the user interfaces they click or tap, and the stories they associate with everyday objects.

**Iridium Medical:** Iridium Medical's cutting edge insurance policies serve as models for the rest of the industry. The company directly serves wealthy clientele interested in performance enhancement and anti-aging regimens, but provides doctors and policy consultants to dozens of other corporations.

**Mercury Logistics:** Mercury pioneered the information and transportation systems modern couriers and retailers use, but save their best services for Technocrats. If you need gear dropped by drone

into the middle of the Arctic Ocean and know the access code, Mercury can do it.

**Plexic:** Plexic provides source codes, or "black boxes," for installation in data centers. Decades ago, the Syndicate acquired the fundamentals of search and semantic analysis from Iteration X. Plexic licenses them to virtually every search engine and complex data management systems. Agents use this infrastructure in ways that would disturb the licensors — destructive consciousness uploads aren't standards-compliant.

**Shenzhen Tianming:** This Chinese state corporation manufactures consumer, industrial and military electronics, split between reference designs for other firms and their own assembly lines. Shenzhen Tianming products include additional, Syndicate-ready features activated by code or hardware key.

**The Understanding:** Conspiracy theorists believe there's a United Nations of organized crime. They're almost right about that; after World War II, Enforcers killed a few hundred "problem managers" from various groups. This helped the rest agree to a few ground rules about territory and business, with the understanding that in exchange for a few exceptional services, they'd help Syndicate agents carry out critical tasks, no questions asked, for a token fee.

cate management helps ordinary people work harder, innovate, and combine their efforts to achieve incredible productivity. Agents grow miracles in cube farms. Extraordinary Citizens (those capable of using "Paths" of limited hypertechnology) act as consultants outside the normal management structure. Ordinary doctors, scientists, and executives benefit from motivational techniques and Syndicate vision to perform incredible feats. Thus, a Syndicate agent doesn't need to be a skilled surgeon to perform Life Procedures — he uses his knowledge to help an ordinary surgeon do amazing things. Unskilled labor takes care of the repetitive scut work needed to get a Procedure off the ground. They help agents perform ambitious Procedures that require data entry or manufacturing.

To use personnel as an Apparatus, an agent organizes a team to complete a Procedure, while her player describes in general terms how the team acts under the operative's command. (Storytellers, don't be too demanding with specifics — the agent is a management genius, but the player isn't.) Personnel can't be turned into living Extra-

ordinary Devices without the highest understanding of Primal Utility.

### EXPERTISE

Syndicate agents work for the same technological utopia as the rest of the Union, but take pride in being the least dependent on gadgets. Since the days of Renaissance Ars Cupiditae, the Syndicate has cultivated self-reliance, wisdom and sensitivity to the human condition. They want a world where everyone succeeds or fails on their own merits. To justify this vision, they need to show the Masses greatness: extraordinary feats of discipline and discernment that anyone can accomplish.

Syndicate operatives study mathematics, psychology, management theory, culture, athletics — anything to unlock their potential. They apply innovations from other Conventions to their personal development. Progenitor studies show them how to diet and exercise. Iteration X math unlocks hypereconomic theory. Even NWO helps with its social sciences. The Syndicate sets itself apart by applying

these disparate fields to the human condition not with the goal of creating some post-human, “rationalized” self, but to empower individuals in pursuit of their own desires.

As an Apparatus, expertise manifests when an operative attains four or more dots in an Ability. She now understands the Enlightened implications of her training, and can merge it with Syndicate theories of peak performance and applied psychology — modern versions of the *Ars Cupiditae*. Expertise cannot be channelled into an Extraordinary Device through any means known to most operatives, though a bizarre conjunctural Procedure might allow it.

## MONEY

Ancient alchemists used volatile, superstition-tainted chemistry to turn lead into gold. Financiers buy gold for the price of lead. All Syndicate agents use abstract wealth to perform Enlightened Procedures. This keeps with Convention beliefs that currency, credit debit, and the reduction of value to an elemental property are the engines that power all innovation. This fully expresses itself through hypereconomic Procedures, but agents use money to numerous ends, opening opportunities unavailable to the Masses.

To use money as an Apparatus, an operative uses Resources or another financial support to acquire the material and social precursors for a Procedure. She can bribe key individuals for extraordinary access to these things, or acquire exotic items to make a Procedure possible. Money often works hand in hand with other Apparatuses. Operatives buy access to infrastructure, employ the right people for the job, or pay for elite training.

## ADJUSTMENTS

Syndicate Procedures demonstrate the Convention’s focus on application over theory and human nature over idealism. Operatives use the hypersciences as skilfully as allies in other factions, but prefer to unlock the potential in ordinary technologies, social organizations and ideas. Syndicate lingo refers to such Procedures as “Adjustments.”

## ADVANCED THERAPIES (LIFE ●●●)

When medical hypertechnology crawls toward mainstream acceptance, it begins with athletes, actors and the wealthy. We can see the results in shattered sports records and movie stars who may not exactly look normal any more, but don’t look old. Sleepers accept the posthumans in their midst as possible, but expensive.

Syndicate agents use this Adjustment to attain their privileges, using medical training and connections to formulate a personalized physical enhancement regimen. None of it requires hypermedical equipment — steroid

injections and plastic surgery are venerable techniques — but unEnlightened minds lack the ability to personalize or access these technologies to the same extent.

This Procedure produces the effects of *Better Body (Mage: the Ascension Revised, p. 171)* but requires extended planning and cannot be used to acquire unnatural features such as claws or gills. This is an extended Procedure requiring two hours of exercise, minor surgery, and drug therapy per day, and an Enlightenment roll every week for at least four weeks. At the end of that period, spend successes to increase any of the following Attributes, individually: Strength, Dexterity, Stamina, and Appearance. Spend successes on Effect duration to make the effort worth it, but note that Advanced Therapies never acquire permanency unless the agent spends Experience on enhanced Attributes.

Advanced Therapies are usually stable, coincidental Procedures, but agents should expect side effects, including:

- Acne, irritability, and trouble sleeping.
- Pattern Bleeding: one level of aggravated damage per day, the agent retains enhanced Attributes, unless he spends a point of Primal Energy.
- Market Correction in the form of physical breakdowns occurs at extreme levels of enhancement. Agents suffer one point of permanent Paradox for each Attribute rated 6 or higher. This Paradox doesn’t discharge until the enhancements fade.

## BRANDING (MIND ●●)

Psychology, marketing, and semiotics unite in an Enlightened agent’s mind, allowing her to adjust attitudes toward a target by drawing attention to his possessions. Precise words note a bespoke suit, implying that the owner deserves deference, or tells observers to insult anyone wearing off-brand shoes. Syndicate agents play it the other way too, to upbraid a target for dressing above his station or praise budget-branded working class virtue.

By referring to a target’s material accoutrements — his car, clothes, phone, and more — a Syndicate agent can alter observers’ attitudes toward him. This emulates the Effect Empathic Projection (*Mage: the Ascension Revised, pp. 176-177*). This Procedure can’t be used to incite murderous rage or fear unless the operative uses a particularly appropriate object. Well-known pistols and rifles might do the job. This is usually a coincidental Procedure.

## CROWDSOURCED COMBAT (CORRESPONDENCE ●●, FORCES ●, MIND ●)

Centuries ago you needed a maestro, sifu, or hardened veteran to teach you to fight. Body and mind strained to

absorb a trickle of knowledge from a single stream. But the modern world doesn't do single streams. It associates, aggregates, and converges on command. Accordingly, this rote collects fighting techniques from thousands of hours of recorded MMA bouts, martial arts instructional videos, military manuals, and police reports. It feeds them through Progenitor-supplied biomechanical analyses and Iteration X tactical simulations, and matches them to the situation at hand. Some Enforcers use an electrode mesh to prompt the correct movements; others read an intuitive color and shape code projected on wearable displays. An Enlightened Enforcer processes this information fast enough to read these signals and deliver the right punch, stab or shot for the occasion.

Each success devoted to the Effect reduces the difficulty of a Dexterity + Brawl, Dexterity + Dodge, Dexterity + Firearms or Dexterity + Melee roll by 1, to a maximum benefit of -3. Divide Effect successes between the Abilities you want to enhance, and then devote the remainder to duration.

This Procedure is usually coincidental but if it remains in effect for too long, the "Domino Effect" may kick in — the Enforcer's techniques look too perfect for anything but an action movie.

## DOWNVOTE

(CORRESPONDENCE •••, ENTROPY •••)

When over eighty percent of web searches never look past the top ten results, why censor anything? Censorship attracts civil liberties activists and conspiracy theorists, so it's better to manage data in such a way that it doesn't get removed, but pushed down to the bottom of all possible searches and ratings.

This rote distributes a specialized worm through Plexic servers that seeks out specific information and uses whatever methods exist on a site or service to downgrade its visibility. It seeds websites with spam so search engines kick them to result 100,000 or so. It creates accounts to downvote articles on social media sites, lodges complaints with forum administrators, or automatically generates DMCA takedown letters. When necessary, it suppresses information with DDoS attacks.

Each success spent on the Effect applies a dot of Arcane to a defined collection of information. By default, this obscures a minor chunk of data that could be found by a research who knew what she was looking for, such as the name of a rank and file employee. The player may spend additional successes to obscure more



prominent information. Use the guidelines for magical feats in **Mage: the Ascension Revised**, p. 208. Obscuring information about an actor who had a second string role in a cult TV show might require 3 successes. Doing that to the show's star might demand 5 to 10 successes, while hiding biographical information about a U.S. President could need 20 or more.

### FORECASTING (ENTROPY ••, TIME ••)

The universe is a lot less random than people think. Every action is the sum of countless factors that if detected, can be modeled. An agent capable of transferring the relevant data to Syndicate cloud servers can simulate multiple future actions and choose the most effective option. Audio, video, and GPS feeds are usually good enough inputs for a firefight. Business strategies, market forecasts, and large-scale assaults might require access to specialized databases and personnel records.

A Technocrat can spend a turn inputting data and adjusting the forming simulation. At the end of that turn, the agent spends one success to roll dice for her agent's next action ahead of time, and each additional success to roll dice for one alternate next action. The agent's player can't roll for the same action twice, but can explore the probability of another option's success. For an extended action, spend successes on the Duration it would require to complete.

For example, if an agent wants to see whether she'd be better off shooting a Traditionalist, talking him down, or running for cover, the player would spend three successes, roll standard dice pools for each action, and picks the outcome she prefers (or none of the above if she wants to ignore every forecast). If she picks a simulated outcome, the player doesn't roll dice — she uses the successes she rolled during the simulation. If an intervening event would make one of the options impossible, those pre-rolled successes are no longer available.

### HIDDEN FEATURES (VARIES; SEE BELOW)

Other Conventions equip themselves with complex, expensive prototypes, wearable labs and bionic implants. The Financiers built more cost-effective solutions into global supply chains. Numerous weapons, vehicles, personal electronics and software tools possess useful undocumented features introduced by Syndicate management. An agent looking for an edge only needs to consult a Syndicate database to find it hidden in common gear, vehicles and even buildings.

If a Syndicate corporation had a hand in manufacturing an item, the agent can use a secret code or quick field modification to activate its hidden capabilities, provided

he possesses the listed Sphere ranks. Spend successes on features such as (but not limited to) the following:

- **Buildings (Matter ••••):** Hidden safe rooms (capacity one person per success), armored doors and walls (add 2 soak dice or 1 level of automatic soak per success), secret exit (1 success), weak points that can cause collapse (spend successes as an attack to damage those caught inside, or based on the size of the building as per Magical Feats on p. 208 of **Mage: the Ascension Revised**).
- **Computing Devices (Data •••):** Improved hacking capabilities (-1 to hacking roll difficulties per success, maximum -3), improved security features (+1 to incoming hacking roll difficulties per success, maximum +3), projection capabilities (1 success, usable as a Forces apparatus to create illusions), enhanced networking/processing speed (each success cuts hacking roll times in half), remotely control machinery (1 or more successes depending on the machine, based on the Storyteller's judgment).
- **Firearms (Forces •• or Matter •••):** An integral flash and noise suppression — witnesses roll Perception + Alertness (difficulty 6 + 1 per success spent) to detect a discharge — or a fully automatic rate of fire (spend 2 successes).
- **Vehicles (Forces ••• or Matter •••):** Armor (add 2 soak dice or 1 level of automatic soak per success), automatic driving (each success gives the computerized driver 2 dice for maneuvers), extreme fuel efficiency (1 success), improved speed (+10% per success) and enhanced maneuverability (increase the vehicle's Maneuver rating listed on p. 224 of **Mage: the Ascension Revised** by 1 per success).

The more extreme the feature, the more likely it is to provoke a Market Correction. These capabilities aren't built to last; most degrade after being used unless the player spends successes on Duration.

### HYPERNARRATIVE INFLUENCE (MIND ••••)

Ever heard of the Hero's Journey? Narrative arcs? Do you believe they're archetypal or instinctual? How many times have you heard the phrase "let the girl go" in a movie, anyway? Through repetition and immersion, media structures events into what knowledgeable agents call hypernarratives. Media Control didn't create them all, but reinforces them so that people think their lives are Heroes' Journeys. They form plot arcs, provide morals, and demand certain actions.

When a media-savvy agent recalls these elements with key phrases and actions, he forces the target to act



accordingly. If he grabs a hostage, he can force a Traditionalist with psychically enhanced aim to ask him to “let the girl go” instead of shooting him. He can generate attraction between two people who survive a harrowing experience, or urge multiple targets to “split up and cover more ground” in defiance of common sense.

Using applied psychology (and occasionally psychoactive chemicals) to improve his authenticity, the agent re-enacts a common mass media motif with such fidelity that his target feels compelled to play her part. This requires a successful Manipulation + Performance roll (difficulty 6). The agent defines an implicit mental command. This is a coincidental Effect unless the target’s culture makes it unlikely she’s encountered the invoked narrative. This is normally a short-lived Procedure, but it’s theoretically possible for an agent to play the villain, comrade, mentor or lover for an extended period of time, urging appropriate responses. Extended or repeated use courts the “Domino Effect” and Market Correction but until then, Hypernarrative Influence is a coincidental Procedure.

### SEMIOTIC COMMUNICATION (MIND •• [MATTER ••])

Ignore Traditionalists who say mass culture is simplistic and banal. Ad agencies, industrial designers, and intellectual property holders deposit layers of meaning. Every color and shape sends a deliberate message. Trained agents understand graffiti, logos, and carefully placed products as skillfully as their forebears knew the secret language of flowers. Media Control operatives deal in pop culture references. Enforcers take signs from organized crime and secret societies. Financiers utilize symbols employed by modern aristocrats: ties, business cards, and the panoply associated with extreme wealth.

Agents who know how to manipulate symbols use them for secret communications. The operative alters her favorite signs to mesh with the recipients’ cultures and psychological characteristics so that only they know what it means when she spouts a line from that movie and puts on those glasses.

This Procedure takes two forms. In the first, an agent Adjusts cultural signs, putting them into a particular context with words and actions. This sends a secret message to its intended recipients. Spend one success to send the message, and further successes to target recipients. The second version also utilizes Matter. The agent inscribes or places symbols (graffiti or a store window display, for example) to send a message intended recipients will understand once they come across it. In this case, spend successes on Duration — after it expires, the cultural

zeitgeist passes, or something obscures or damages the setup. Variants using other Spheres might place secret messages in websites or ads.

Unless it sends an implausibly complex message to a Sleeper, Semiotic Communication is coincidental. The agent’s chosen symbols may restrict what she can say or who she can say it to. Internet memes don’t work on hunter-gatherers.

### WORKFLOW (MIND ••, TIME •••)

Iteration X pioneered time-motion studies by measuring everything from average stride length to corpus callosum throughput. The Syndicate removed demoralizing and repetitive activities, made considerations for culture, and treated the end result as a fundamental part of the process, not a mere industrial “output.” Nowadays, Agents with Time management expertise develop Enlightened workflows for all kinds of activities. They plan the most efficient way to do something and provide the training and supervision people need to follow through.

Players spend successes on the duration of the work period, a number of people (Area in **Mag: the Ascension Revised**, p. 209) equal to the size of the team, and the power of the Procedure. Divide the time between intervals on mundane, extended teamwork rolls by its power. For example, if the Enlightened manager’s player spends two successes on Duration, four on Area, and three successes on Power, he can lead a team of four people to work three times faster than normal over the course of a day. This is typically an extended Procedure; the agent plans, and the player rolls Enlightenment in 10-minute intervals.

This Procedure works best on less physically intensive tasks — such as programming and data entry — where all but the most extreme effects avoid Market Correction. Assembly lines, warehouse work, and other physically intensive environments run workers into the ground. Laborers attack their work with enthusiasm (or at least grumbling assent) until they collapse, break bones, or inflict an industrial accident on their manager.

### EXTRAORDINARY DEVICES

Like other Technocrats, Syndicate agents want reliable hypertechnology by their side. Procedures fail, call for exotic precursors, and risk Market Correction in strange environments — and sometimes you just want to shoot someone in the face without running the numbers first. Besides, using an Extraordinary Device might act as a bit of viral marketing so that in time, hypertechnology becomes the standard. It happened with smartphones, didn’t it? In these cases, agents use the Extraordinary Devices below.

## EXTRAORDINARY DEVICES VERSUS APPARATUSES

What's the difference between a Procedure-enhanced gun and one that's an Extraordinary Device? Beyond rules considerations, Procedures always possess an experimental, risky quality. Even common rites need to be tweaked to work outside of controlled labs and boardrooms. They're acts of Enlightened jury-rigging and grimy field science.

Extraordinary Devices are purpose-built, field-tested closed platforms for a few automatic Effects. They still require Genius to build and maintain, but get the job done without forcing a Technocrat to drive around all night looking for LSD precursors, radioactive materials or dodgy financial instruments.

Technocrats often design Procedures for eventual inclusion into an Extraordinary Device. These are "unstable builds" they eventually refine into "release candidates." It works the other way around, too; agents reverse engineer Procedures from Extraordinary Devices to understand them better.

## MULTI-INVESTMENT DERIVATIVE ASSIGNMENT SWAP (MIDAS) CARD (0 BACKGROUND POINTS 1 PRIMAL ENERGY)

Rebuilt from the ground up with the latest hypereconomic theories, MIDAS is a financial instrument and credit system issued to every Syndicate agent. Other Technocrats only get them as rewards for exceptional service to the Syndicate.

MIDAS is a swarm of financial products that constantly splits, recombines, buys and sells on international stock markets at the behest of automatically managed corporations that similarly split and merge as strategy demands. These companies pay dividends to a series of numbered accounts that can be accessed by MIDAS card anywhere that accepts credit or debit.

A MIDAS card contains 1 point of Primal Energy. Its owner may spend this at any time, but keeping it in the card allows owner to make an unlimited number of Resources 1 daily purchases (roughly US\$20.00 or equivalent local purchasing power). This draws Market Correction (and confiscation from Disbursements) if its owner tries to accumulate funds to purchase a single item

that would require multiple Resources 1 expenditures. Any purchases carry the card's unique Resonance and can be tracked with Data/Primal Utility Procedures.

Spending MIDAS' Primal Energy eliminates its purchasing power.

MIDAS is also "smart card" with numerous mundane features. It requires its owner's fingerprint to function, contains a built in GPS and can be remotely de-authorized.

Some senior Syndicate members have MIDAS cards with more Primal Energy and higher purchase limits, but many prefer to work with the same financial system as Sleepers — its integrity is vital.

## AEZIR PROTOTYPES

As one of the world's leading arms patent holders, AEZIR GmbH keeps hypertechnology systems in its vaults to awe military and police buyers, but says these prototypes aren't quite ready for the market. Syndicate agents are welcome to these technologies if they're willing to plod through waivers and Disbursements forms for the sake of superior firepower.

## MJOLLNIR V (2 BACKGROUND POINTS)

Very large caliber handguns are nothing new — some models shoot .410 shotgun shells with reasonable accuracy. The Mjollnir Mark V fires these too, but turns into something truly special when loaded with its own electrically fired two-stage warheads. These rounds activate internal shock suppression systems that make Mjollnir as accurate as a police sidearm. It's still as loud as hell, however — only the Huginn Suppression System (see p. 77) tames its thunder.

Mjollnir's a huge goddamn handgun. It's got a thick banana magazine filled with gyrojet bullets. Its rifling, ammunition, and other systems focus Forces to put big holes in tough things. Roll the user's Enlightenment and split successes between Forces damage (inflicted in addition to the gun's standard damage) and reductions in the weapon's difficulty to hit (-1 per success, to a maximum of -3). Use these successes to modify a standard Dexterity + Firearms attack using the weapon's basic profile, below:

Damage	Range	Rate	Clip	Concealment
7	100	1	10 (or 6 in barrel)	T

The Masses can't use Mjollnir's special ammunition. A six-shot barrel attachment delivers standard loads. While employing these, the weapon uses the basic weapon profile above.

## THOMAS II INDIVIDUAL URBAN COMBAT SYSTEM (ENLIGHTENMENT 3, 6 BACKGROUND POINTS, 20 PRIMAL ENERGY)

Look at THOMAS II and you'll see design DNA from automatic shotguns, squad-level weapons and next-generation assault rifles, but the basic shape is pure Tommy gun. THOMAS II's drum magazine is actually a nanoscale ammunition factory capable of designing rounds to order.

AEZIR submitted the system for confidential pre-trials of the doomed Objective Individual Combat Weapon, but refused to budge on a high five figure price per unit – and that would be after taking economies of scale into account. Nevertheless, it fulfilled its purpose by inspiring innovation in the less Enlightened arms field, and its prototypes see use during major Enforcement operations.

Spend 1 point of Primal Energy, roll the Device's Enlightenment rating, and allocate successes on one or more of the following benefits:

- Accuracy: Each success reduces the difficulty of the next Dexterity + Firearms roll employing THOMAS II by -1, to a maximum -3 benefit.
- Area: An explosive or multiple-warhead attack strikes one additional target per success.
- Energy: Spend one success to carry electrical, incendiary or cryonic (cold) effects to a target.
- Force: Spend successes on bonus lethal damage as if using a Forces Procedure (two points per success, plus one point).
- Stun: Spend one success to convert all damage to bashing damage. You may also spend additional successes on bonus bashing damage as if using a damaging Forces Procedure (two points per success, plus one point).

These benefits enhance shots fired using the weapon's basic profile, listed below.

Damage	Range	Rate	Clip	Concealment
8	300	3	60	N

The THOMAS II is capable of three round bursts, sprays, and fully automatic fire using the standard rules in **Mage: the Ascension Revised**. The Device's special benefits apply to one attack per turn, not individual rounds of ammunition.

## HUGINN AND MUNINN SUPPRESSION SYSTEMS (2 BACKGROUND POINTS, 10 PRIMAL ENERGY)

These systems combine flash suppressors with an outer shell that silences AEZIR's extraordinary firearms.

The Huginn system works with the Mjollnir V; Muninn silences the THOMAS II.

Both systems eliminate muzzle flash and reduce their weapons' discharge sounds to a dim cough. They don't do anything for the effects of impact, however. This makes Muninn a particularly impractical choice when an agent programs her THOMAS II's ammo to burn, flash, or explode. Each attack these systems suppress consumes one point of Primal Energy.

## HEIMDALL V LEADSTOPPER (2 BACKGROUND POINTS)

Heimdall is what AEZIR calls an "aspirational prototype." No army can afford to coat its soldiers in fine heterodiamond-palladium glass chainmail. AEZIR keeps one vest on display at its Hamburg office. The Enforcers store dozens more, tagging them with Mercury Logistics codes for delivery anywhere in the world.

The Leadstopper acts as Class Four armor (see **Mage: the Ascension Revised**, p. 244) but doesn't penalize movement or physical coordination-based dice pools. It requires virtually no effort to conceal because it's about as bulky as two t-shirts. It can be painted any color, but always carries a shiny, scaly sheen, like technical athletic wear.

## FROM ERIS DESIGN

The prescient tastemakers at Eris Design influence dozens of powerful brands. Thousands more emulate these leaders, never knowing that the colors, modern lines and fruit silhouettes they look to for esthetic guidance originate in Enlightened minds. Media Control crunches social statistics, adds the breath of Genius, and dictates civilization's look and feel. Thus, Syndicate members rarely use products sporting Eris' own branding, but Eris-influenced "special editions" from better known companies.

## EDG VIRTUOUS EXECUTIVE SMARTPHONE (4 BACKGROUND POINTS)

As the most prestigious smartphone brand, the Eris Design Group's Virtuous doesn't need high tech specs. Anyone rich enough to buy a Virtuous can already afford next generation mobile computing and paste on all the bling they want. Anyone with a Virtuous tells the world that wealth is her technology: one she uses to connect, direct, and master human potential.

The Virtuous isn't a powerful smartphone, but benefits from handmade toughness and elite materials, including synthetic diamond touch screens and a titanium body screwed to an osmium alloy skeleton.

In 2013, it cost \$99999. Syndicate agents allow influential people to buy them – Eris regrets that the phone

is “out of stock” for everyone else. The device uses last generation smartphone technology but provides 24 hour a day concierge service, so an owner always has access to the best theatre seats, restaurants, hotel suites and other perks. None of this involves hypertechnology.

Syndicate operatives with access can monitor the user using Data •• (see sidebar) at any time, and can utilize subliminal images and sounds to influence the user’s emotions, as per the Mind •• Effect Empathic Projection (**Mage: the Ascension Revised**, pp. 176-177).

Rich Citizens see the EDG Virtuous as a status symbol, but in the Syndicate, getting assigned one is a low level punishment: an indication that Convention executives need to micromanage errant agents. Agents often requisition them as gifts for status-conscious supernatural beings that fall under “monitor, do not engage” policies. Vampire nobles in particular appreciate the craftsmanship.

### ELITE BUSINESS ATTIRE (6 BACKGROUND POINTS)

Although the “power suits” of the 80s gave way to business casual, corporate clothing never really embraced egalitarianism. Instead, variety introduced new unwritten rules about attire. Eris-trained stylists cut through the confusion. They connect executives to bespoke fashions, including tailors who can support an Enlightened operative’s rough and tumble requirements.

## THE DATA SPHERE

Several Syndicate effects refer Iteration X and New World Order’s alternative theory of Correspondence: Data. In this view of Correspondence, information is the base unit of special relations. You can find that write-up in **Convention Book: N.W.O.**, pp. 74-78. If you don’t have access to that book, treat as standard Correspondence.

Elite Business Attire looks good enough to generate a constant two-success Branding Adjustment (p. 72) that influences anyone the wearer speaks to. His clothes demand respect. Exquisite tailoring, special materials and convenient pockets also produce minor effects equivalent to Parlor Tricks (**Mage: the Ascension Revised**, p. 294). These clothes never wrinkle or stain – a quick shake and brush removes most dirt. Their wearer never fumbles objects in its pockets forgets them, or fails to notice when they’ve been removed. Finally, Elite Business Attire acts as Class Two armor (**Mage: the Ascension Revised**, p. 244) due to a ballistic cloth lining, not Enlightened Science, but tailoring removes penalties for physical actions.

## HYPERECONOMICS & PRIMAL UTILITY



Every other Convention is wrong about Prime.

Do they know that? Possibly. Syndicate representatives sit in on all the debates. Iteration X calls it the basic unit of information in a computational universe. Void Engineers talk about exotic particles of the Prime Element. Progenitors associate it with evolutionary signalling. The New World Order’s psionic theories aren’t bad. These models suffer from greedy reductionism, defining Prime so sharply some of its functions escape rational explanation.

The Syndicate takes Prime at face value. Prime is useful. It’s the basic psychological-mathematical junction between reality and human desire. It’s pure, philosophical utility – Primal Utility – and thus, the basic unit of hypereconomics. The Syndicate recognizes Primal Utility as the core Sphere involved in hypereconomic Adjustments. Thus, they can manipulate Prime in ways other Technocrats can only learn by becoming hypereconomists themselves.

### ECONOMIC REALITY

Enlightened Scientists may accuse Syndicate agents of avoiding the question by refusing to define Prime as a strictly physical phenomenon, but can’t deny the fact that Primal Utility theory fits known phenomena exceptionally well. Hypereconomists concede that Primal Utility is ultimately constructed, as it emerges from other phenomena, but that it is so essential to way humans perceive reality that it’s inevitable. There’s no other way to understand fundamental value.

Prehistoric tribes met on neutral ground, traded material and labor, and created value out of that efficiency. In doing so, they learned that there was an abstract interface between dissimilar goods and services – an invisible power basic to both. People define Primal Utility. That’s why it collects in psychologically significant places and objects. In Ancient empires, Enlightened traders discovered it also manifested in labor, and abstract exchanges of power. Superstitionists took a parasitic posture toward Prime. Their cults collected value under false premises. This has



always been a problem. The Masses can't exercise wise self-interest because they not only lack the intellectual tools to do so, but are too easily deceived by false promises. This is why marketing and other cultural work is so important — it "fights fire with fire," seducing the Masses back on to the right path.

Hypereconomics is the Enlightened Science of identifying true value and manipulating market forces to make it happen. True value is Primal Utility. It diffuses through the world to create its material foundations and generate its inhabitants' prosperity. It quantifies happiness, and that's where it challenges Syndicate agents. Happiness is subjective and culturally flavored, but there's still a pure, capitalist path to attain it. The Masses need to believe they deserve prosperity, or self-imposed want will drag them back to an age of superstition and crude barter.

## PRIMAL UTILITY

Primal Utility represents the Syndicate's approach to the Prime Sphere. It replicates many of the ordinary Prime Sphere's functions, but modifies them to fit the Convention's paradigm. The Syndicate perspective unlocks possibilities that other approaches can't use, but it also makes Procedures that rely on physicalist or psychic models of Prime a bit more difficult to develop.

Primal Utility is a counterpart to Void Engineer Dimensional Science (the Enlightened Science explanation of superstitious "Spirit") and the New World Order's Data theory of Correspondence. Unlike these Technocratic Spheres, it has not been adopted as widely. Holding a torch for socialism, NWO issues propaganda against "naive theories of Prime." Pure scientists in Iteration X and the Void Engineers don't care for this "philosophy over reality" model either, even if the math works. Some Syndicate operatives try to spread the word, but the Convention doesn't care about their success much. The Masses already believe — and besides, special access to Primal Utility represents a competitive edge.

### • ASSESS PRIMAL UTILITY, DEPOSIT PRIMAL UTILITY, EXPLOIT PRIMAL VENTURE

Elementary hypereconomic theory fulfills the promise of homo economicus: the ideal, rationally self-interested actor. The Masses can't assess elemental value so as far as they're concerned, Homo economicus is a theoretical convenience.

Once a hypereconomist attains this rank in Primal Utility, she can perform the following tasks.

**Assess Primal Utility:** The Technocrat can assess Nodes and other sources of Primal Energy. She can sense



Enlightened utilitarian activity in the form of superstitionist “magic” and Technocratic Procedures. She can also sense more exotic, exceptional influences through their subtle, statistically unlikely effects on the environment. Some Technocrats see colors and flows of energy, but everyone knows this is a reflexive visualization, not a true representation. The Technocrat also senses psycho-cultural bias in the distribution of value. The slang term “Resonance” is an acceptable way to identify her ability to “feel” the hypereconomic environment.

**Deposit Primal Utility:** The Technocrat can store Primal Energy in excess of her Genius rating. She does not gain new methods for storing or spending Primal Energy, but thanks to lifestyle improvements, investments, and shrewd management, she’s better prepared than an economically illiterate counterpart.

**Exploit Primal Venture:** The Technocrat can sense and withdraw Primal Energy from Primal Ventures: exceptional situations that generate Prime much as Nodes do. Stock markets, corporations and natural resource exploitation all generate Primal Ventures for Technocrats able to detect them. Enlightened Scientists and “mages” who haven’t studied the Primal Utility Sphere cannot sense or utilize Primal Ventures. Unlike Primal Opportunities (see below), Ventures can be harnessed by anyone trained in Primal Utility. (See p. 81 for more information.)

## •• CREATE GADGETS, PERFECT MATERIAL EXPLOITATION, PRIMAL INNOVATION

By assessing situations in economic terms and investing effort, a hypereconomist can improve the utility of material objects. This provides the following abilities.

**Create Gadgets:** The Technocrat can invest Tass to produce temporary Enlightened Devices agents call Gadgets. Once used, they lose their special abilities. Hands-on Technocrats manufacture these themselves, but hypereconomists usually direct personnel to perform the labor, managing them so that the Tass is restructured appropriately.

**Perfect Exploitation:** The Technocrat invests Primal Energy in a manufactured object by creating or modifying it. This extra effort makes the object function more efficiently, closer to its Platonic ideal. Weapons gain the ability to inflict aggravated wounds. Other equipment functions more reliably, closer to peak efficiency. The Technocrat may even invest Primal Energy to regenerate spent economic assets, including the Resources and Requisitions Backgrounds. Each function requires 1 point of Primal Energy. In the case of Backgrounds, the Technocrat must spend one point of Primal Energy per dot, up to the limit she already has access to.

**Primal Innovation:** The Technocrat can “create something from nothing” by channeling Primal Utility through a moment of Genius. During coincidental Procedures, a hypereconomist finds what he needs through economic transactions and an Enlightened degree of observation. If he wants to risk Market Correction, he creates perfect mathematical models that spontaneously instantiate in material reality. In any event, the Technocrat can use Matter and Forces conjunctions to create Patterns out of “nothing,” or other Spheres to generate new objects within their categories — free standing memes with Mind, for example — though he cannot create Life.

Unlike conventional Prime, Primal Utility does not teach Technocrats to create weapons or other objects out of pure Primal Energy, including Prime Weapon ability listed on p. 180 of **Mage: the Ascension Revised**.

## ••• CREATE STABLE EXTRAORDINARY DEVICES, LIVING ASSET EXPLOITATION, USE TASS AND PRIMAL STORAGE

The hypereconomist can now convert Tass into Extraordinary Devices. She can also inspire excellence in underlings, giving them remarkable abilities, or she can profit from their deaths.

**Create Stable Extraordinary Devices:** The Technocrat now possesses the economic and managerial skill to create permanent Devices. A team of experts assembles the device under the hypereconomist’s management. The Technocrat must utilize Tass to supply the necessary Primal Energy. Unlike conventional Prime users, the Technocrat can create both Inventions (Technocratic Artifacts) and Devices that replicate innate Genius (what superstitionists call Talismans) at this rank.

**Living Asset Exploitation:** The Technocrat can apply economic and managerial acumen to living beings. Specialized training programs and applied sciences turn subjects into “living Gadgets” with short-lived extraordinary abilities. The Technocrat can also generally improve a target’s competence, or turn her into a dangerous combatant, capable of inflicting aggravated damage with unarmed blows. On a darker note, the Technocrat can also harvest Primal Energy from deceased living things, such as specially raised livestock or employees he literally works to death. The Technocrat cannot “drain life” directly, but seizes its power at the moment of death.

**Use Tass and Primal Storage:** The Technocrat can use Tass (solidified Primal Energy) to charge her personal supply of Primal Energy. He usually does this by selling the Tass object or using it as fuel. He can also drain or refill Primal Energy from Extraordinary Devices and Primal Energy batteries called Matrixes. The Technocrat

can also withdraw Primal Energy from an Enlightened individual or deposit Primal Energy into one, but the target must be a willing participant.

#### •••• CREATE TASS, EXPLOIT OPPORTUNITY, LIQUIDATE ASSETS

Hypereconomists masters personal economic objectives. The Technocrat identifies material assets and situations that under his management, can fuel amazing achievements. He can also eradicate value with destructive investments, managerial sabotage and esoteric mathematics.

(Note the those trained to this rank in the conventional theory of Prime may create Extraordinary Devices out of any form of available Primal Energy, but hypereconomists may not. Hypereconomists accept a lot of strange phenomena, but draw the line at the notion that you can just shove power into an object without some kind of material exchange. They must always use Tass to create Devices. Fortunately, they can now create it.)

**Create Tass:** The Technocrat can create Tass by infusing nonliving matter with Primal Energy. Hypereconomists use this process on precious materials, fuels, art objects, and currency. A rank 3 Procedure releases its Primal Energy for use; the Technocrat spends or consumes the Tass in a fashion appropriate to its manifestation. He powers engines, trades gems, and sells bearer bonds. The Tass' nature determines its size per Primal Energy unit, from a single gem to a barrel of oil.

**Exploit Opportunity:** A situation that aligns with a Technocrat's psychological characteristics creates a Primal Opportunity – what Superstitionists call a Wellspring (**Mage: the Ascension Revised**, p. 184). These areas are not Nodes, but places where human excellence manifests so strongly that a hypereconomist can use it to turn a quick Primal profit. If the Technocrat's psychological Resonance matches the situation, he can withdraw Primal Energy for later use. For example, a hypereconomist can siphon Primal Energy from the trading floor when his stocks rally, or a factory producing the first run of a product he developed.

**Liquidate Assets:** The Technocrat can convert Matter and Forces Patterns or economic structures into Primal Energy. Unfortunately, the Technocrat cannot harvest this power, as it immediately enters the Consensus' economic flow. Two successes destroy the equivalent of one dot of Resources or its equivalent value in matter or useful energy, up to a volume of 500 cubic feet. The Technocrat can stretch the limit of material volume by spending one success per additional 250 cubic feet, as long as the total remains within the Resources limit set by other successes. Coincidental Procedures sell off assets or dissolve objects

with chemicals. Vulgar Effects use particle beams, psychokinesis, and computational “rewrites” of reality.

#### ••••• CREATE LIVING ASSETS, CREATE PRIMAL NODES AND VENTURES, LIQUIDATE LIVING ASSETS, MARKET COMPENSATION

A hypereconomist at this rank can create living Extraordinary Devices but purchasing the finest training and science-based modifications possible. He can also unlock the Primal Energy potential of places and organizations. Finally, he's always prepared for the so-called “black swans” of Market Corrections.

**Create Living Assets:** The Technocrat can create living, permanent Extraordinary “Devices.” She can gather the training resources and expertise to imbue living beings with the powers of Enlightened Science. The subject suffers Statistical Inevitabilities where applicable, including Permanent Paradox for abilities that are always active. These might include construct and cyborg Flaws listed on pp. 132 and 168-170 of **Guide to the Technocracy**. The Technocrat must expend Tass to create a Living Asset just as for any other Extraordinary Device.

**Create Primal Nodes and Ventures:** The Technocrat can release the Primal Energy potential in special locations and human efforts, turning them into Nodes and Primal Ventures. These require a great deal of investment to convert into permanent sources of Primal Energy (5 successes per Node or Primal Venture rank), so hypereconomists usually create short-lived versions, creating a spike of utility to harvest. The Technocrat improves an existing venture or starts a new one.

**Liquidate Living Assets:** The Technocrat can reduce living beings to raw flows of Primal Energy. This usually requires vulgar Enlightened Science with lasers or brain-shaking mathematical formulae. These Procedures inflict one point of aggravated damage and release one point of Primal Energy for absorption per success.

**Market Compensation:** The Technocrat can spend Primal Energy to counteract Market Correction (a.k.a. the Paradox Effect). Each success allows the hypereconomist to spend one point of Primal Energy to nullify one point of Paradox.

## PRIMAL VENTURES

To the Syndicate, Primal Energy represents how human beings find value. Therefore, it doesn't make sense that it would only spring from “sacred places” or Technocratic reactor facilities. Thus, hypereconomists identify human activities they call Primal Ventures and learn how to claim a share of their profits.

To use a Primal Venture, a Technocrat must possess at least one dot of Primal Utility, not the standard Prime Sphere. If she develops a personal connection with it, she can harvest its Primal Energy as if it was a Node. Consult the following table for the rewards and requirements.

Not every successful organization possesses Primal Venture status. It needs to embody the principles of human innovation in some truly exceptional fashion. Also, note that governments and other non-commercial institutions might claim Primal Venture status as well, but Syndicate agents rarely make use of these — they stick with businesses and organized crime. (A few NWO agents trained in Primal Utility do make use of these, however. Enforcers keeps an eye on these agents, as potential sources of economic sabotage.)

If the Technocrat creates or reinforce the required connection and examines the organization's status in a near meditative state, she may harvest its Primal Energy. If she harvests an entire week's supply, the organization suffers from uninspired management and setbacks until the next week. If she drains it dry so that it can't recover, the organization suffers serious setbacks, shrinking or breaking up. See the guidelines for Node ratings by chronicle on pp. 122-123 of **Mage: the Ascension Revised**, and use the same settings for Primal Ventures.

## HYPERECONOTIC PROCEDURES

With their understanding of Primal Utility, Syndicate agents can perform a number of unusual Procedures that transmute Primal Energy to mundane credit and back again. Their unique approach also finds profits others miss when they focus on Prime as a parapsychical energy source.

## WHY MONEY IS IMPORTANT

Let me break this down for you in a way even a NWO prole can track with:

Money is the measure of wealth. It isn't prosperity directly, but it is how people can tell whether you're prosperous. (Or, more accurately, the effects of money are how they can tell.)

Prosperity and wealth are the engines of Primal Ventures and Opportunities.

These in turn generate Primal Energy — dividends, if you will.

So it's simple: money goes in, Primal Energy comes out. This is why the Syndicate invests in the Masses. This is why the Syndicate exists in the first place. And you wonder how we got all those resources to win the Ascension War.

At the risk of being a broken record: you're welcome, fellow Technocrats.

## AN UNCONTROVERTIBLE COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE (LIFE •••, MIND ••••, PRIMAL UTILITY •••)

When you need to get the job done, need the strength to do the next job, and you don't give a damn how it gets done, this is your go-to management Adjustment.

Primal Venture Scale	Equivalent to Node Rated	Required Connection*
Successful local business, small factory, large farm, street gang	•	Visit facilities, gang hood, make a purchase, Resources • investment.
City-wide market leader, city mob, large agribusiness facility, medium-sized factory, common resource extraction operation (oil, iron, etc.)	••	Entry level position, mob runner, contract relationship attend a stockholder meeting, Resources •• investment
Regional market leader or organized crime council, rare resource extraction (gold, diamond, uranium), large factory	•••	Junior management or foreman, "made man," consultant, Resources ••• investment
National market or organized crime leader, ultra-rare resource extraction (iridium, tanzanite, etc.), factory city	••••	Middle management, senior consultant mob enforcer or "senior brother," Resources •••• investment
International leader, international criminal conspiracy,	•••••	Executive, consigliere, board member, Resources ••••• investment

\* Each dot of Primal Utility above the first reduces the required connection by one step on this table.

First, the player must spend successes equal to or greater than the highest Willpower among all targets, and successes devoted to Effect duration. Each success spent after that reduces a target's difficulties in a single mundane Attribute + Ability dice pool by 1, to a maximum benefit of -3. Under Technocrat management (which ensures that even unwilling "associates" must obey his commands) the target works harder than he's ever worked before. For every hour spent in this state, the target suffers one level of aggravated damage due to the physical and psychological stress of unnaturally focused performance. If the target dies, the Technocrat acquires 5 points of Primal Energy – less than the 10 found in human Life Patterns, but it would provide nothing at all if aggressive Mind management didn't attune targets to the Technocrat's desires.

Fortunately, targets can roll Willpower (difficulty 8) to resist this Procedure after suffering each level of aggravated damage, as well as whenever they're asked to perform a blatantly self-destructive or Nature-defying act. Each opportunity is an interval on an extended roll; when the accumulated successes exceed the successes spent to match or exceed targets' Willpower scores, the victim breaks free. Unfortunately, Sleepers (not the Enlightened) must spend 1 Willpower point on each roll as well, and this does not provide an automatic success (see **Mage: the Ascension Revised**, p. 152).

### ECONOMIC WARFARE (PRIMAL UTILITY ●●●●)

Even capitalism's enemies need money. This Procedure takes it away. After making face-to-face contact,

a Financier or Enforcer sends the victim's biometric and behavioral profile to financial managers, fixers and thieves around the world. These proxies rip the victim off, even if he normally hides his wealth through false identities and secret accounts.

After spending successes on Procedure duration (see **Mage: the Ascension Revised**, p. 209), each additional success drops the target's Resources Background by one dot for that period of time. Alternately, you may permanently destroy Resources dots. If you go this route, every two Procedure successes permanently reduces the target's Resources Background by one dot.

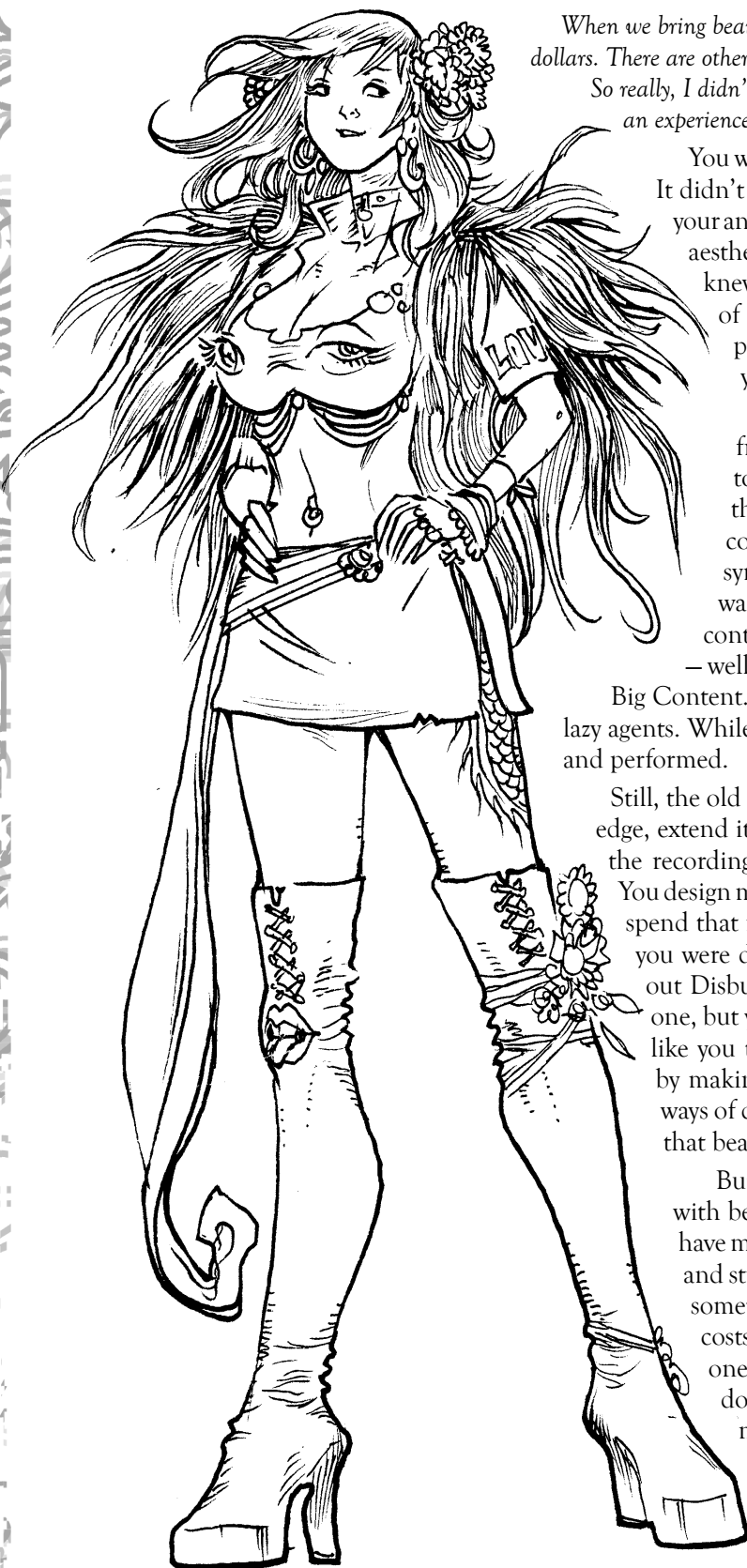
### PRIMAL CREDIT RATING (DATA ●●●, PRIMAL UTILITY ●●●, ENTROPY ●●)

Not all beings capable of manipulating Primal Energy are deserving of it. Certainly no Traditionalist is, and some wayward Technocrats waste it on frivolous projects that don't benefit the Technocracy or the Masses. This Procedure compensates by limiting these individuals' access to Primal Energy. The agent issues credit alerts and eliminates factors that would let the target acquire Primal Energy at maximum efficiency. This may make Nodes unsuitable by imperceptibly altering their Primal Resonance, or disturb the target through psychological manipulation (angry phone calls from collections agencies often accomplish this).

Spend successes on duration and the Procedure's power; each success devoted to the latter blocks the absorption of 1 point of Primal Energy every time the target might collect it, actively or passively. The Primal Energy doesn't vanish – it just refuses to enter her Pattern or any object with Rank 1 Data Mastery sympathy.



# CROWDFUNDED DIVA



*When we bring beauty to the world, we shouldn't worry about trading for dollars. There are other ways we can earn a living and share with each other. So really, I didn't ask the brass section to work for free – I traded them an experience.*

You were a musical prodigy with a flair for the theatric. It didn't make you popular, but people paid attention to your antique clothes, complicated lyrics, and finely honed aesthetic sense. Even though you fronted a band, you knew that you weren't just a musician, but a nexus of cultural forces. You could Adjust the combined package and basically make people do whatever you wanted them to do.

This might be why you quietly stepped back from the leftist pose other people in your scene took. They only raged about social justice because they knew they couldn't really change minds. You could. You can. An intuitive master of cultural symbols, you became exactly what a select segment wanted to see and hear, and that got you a record contract. That put you in touch with the Syndicate – well, the boring Syndicate that still paid attention to Big Content... because let's face it, that's a retirement gig for lazy agents. While they gathered dust at their desks, you went out and performed.

Still, the old executive class helped you formalize your knowledge, extend it, and take it to the point where you could leave the recording industry and went into business for yourself. You design multimillion dollar crowdfunding campaigns, and spend that money however you damned well please. Maybe you were different because you're not an "agent." You fill out Disbursements forms and use your MIDAS card like one, but you're an artist first. The Syndicate needs people like you to keep the Masses invested in society not only by making it beautiful, but also by kicking over the old ways of doing business whenever they threaten to destroy that beauty.

But is that art, or is that Media Control? The trouble with being a Syndicate artist is that its goals and yours have merged so completely that sometimes, at TED talks and streaming shows, you're not sure why you're saying something. You know the Syndicate wants to drop labor costs, and you know you like to save money. Which one drove that comment about working for free? It doesn't matter. Everybody knows you're cool – you made yourself that way.



# CONVENTION BOOK SYNDICATE

NAME:  
PLAYER:  
CHRONICLE:

NATURE: *Entertainer*  
EIDOLON: *Questing*  
DEITEANOR: *Gallant*

DIVISION:  
CONCEPT:  
ATTALGAM:

## ATTRIBUTES

### PHYSICAL

Strength \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Dexterity \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Stamina \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○

### SOCIAL

Charisma \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●●○  
Manipulation \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●●○  
Appearance \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●●○

### MENTAL

Perception \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Intelligence \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●○○  
Wits \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●○○

## ABILITIES

### TALENTS

Alertness \_\_\_\_\_ ●○○○○  
Athletics \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Awareness \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Brawl \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Dodge \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Expression *Singing* ●●●●○  
Intimidation \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Leadership \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Streetwise \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Subterfuge \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

### SKILLS

Drive \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Energy Weapons \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Etiquette \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●○○  
Firearms \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Hypertech \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Melee \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Research \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Stealth \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Survival \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Technology \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○

### KNOWLEDGES

Academics \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Computer \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Enigmas \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Finance *Crowdfunding* ●●●●○  
Investigation \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Law \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Linguistics \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Medicine \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Politics \_\_\_\_\_ ●○○○○  
Science \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

## SPHERES

Data \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Dimensional Science \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Entropy \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

Forces \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Life \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Matter \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

Mind \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●○○  
Primal Utility \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Time \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

## ADVANTAGES

### BACKGROUNDS

*Genius* \_\_\_\_\_ ●○○○○  
*Influence* \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
*Resources* \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●●○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

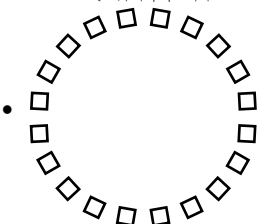
### ENLIGHTENMENT

● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

### WILLPOWER

● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○  
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

### PRIMAL ENERGY



### OTHER TRAITS

\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

### HEALTH

Bruised -0 ☐  
Hurt -1 ☐  
Injured -1 ☐  
Wounded -2 ☐  
Mauled -2 ☐  
Crippled -5 ☐  
Incapacitated ☐

### RESONANCE

Dynamic \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Entropic \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Static \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

### EXPERIENCE

### MARKET CORRECTION

## GOD OF GAMBLERS

*Never ask "do you feel lucky, punk?" When your back's against the wall and all the chips are down, the only thing you have is luck. I've been there, staring down the barrel of a gun and wondering if I'd see tomorrow. Of course, the difference between me and those marks out there is that I make my own damn luck.*

Luck is for suckers, but you know how to simulate it with flair so that most people don't take it the wrong way when you beat them at... well, just about anything where money's on the line. It's always been this way for you. Your Genius didn't strike in a flash, but built in grade school onward. You knew that the dice weren't really random, but obeyed the laws of physics in ways ordinary people were too lazy to track. You won every dice game because you weren't lazy. Other games proved just as easy to master.

By the time you were a teenager, you had fake ID and a tour route that took you to casinos around the world. (You finished school by correspondence — it was a joke, especially math.) You read about what happened to people who were too lucky, so you never stayed in one place for too long. Your parents worried, but they still cashed the checks you sent them. Nevertheless, you figured there must be someone out there who tracked people like you. You were right.

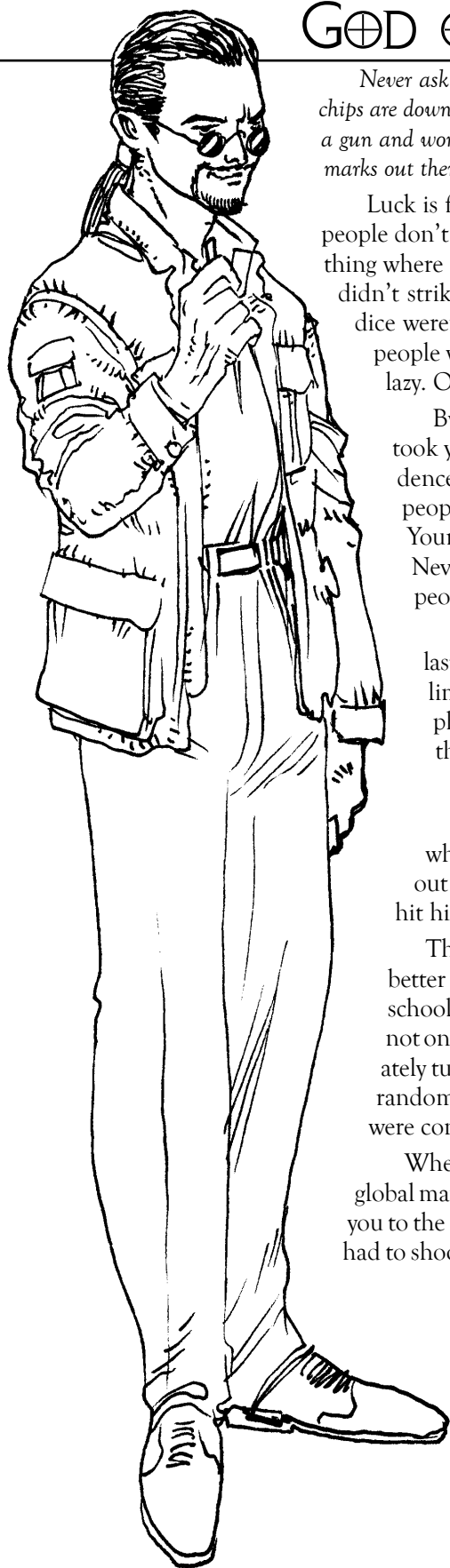
How were you supposed to know the Gam Lung had a stake in the last three places you played blackjack? They were mad — gun-shooting, limb-chopping mad. But you weren't so lazy you forgot the hidden physics of the situation. You spun out of a grip, helped one guy stab the other, and shot a third.

Admittedly, that was pretty awesome. You kept the gun.

But the next guy also wasn't lazy. You could tell that right away when he ripped a steel door of its hinges and grabbed a fucking bullet out of the air. Thank God that the other guys tracking you stepped in, hit him with a grenade, shot him, and hit him with a grenade again.

Those guys, your Syndicate, weren't lazy. And their math was even better than yours. You went from being an international shark to a real schoolboy. They introduced you to probability and systems theories that not only answered your last questions about "chance," but could be immediately turned around into practical techniques for influencing just about any random-looking phenomenon, along with a few things lazy people thought were completely deterministic.

When you mentioned that a team of folks trained this way could crack global markets, your teachers agreed. They gave you your gun back and assigned you to the Enforcers to find just those sorts of people. Fortunately, you've never had to shoot anybody. You just give would-be economy wreckers really bad luck.



# CONVENTION BOOK SYNDICATE

NAME:  
PLAYER:  
CHRONICLE:

NATURE: *Perfectionist*  
EIDOLON: *Dynamic*  
DEITEANOR: *Bon Vivant*

DIVISION:  
CONCEPT:  
ATTALGAMI:

## ATTRIBUTES

### PHYSICAL

Strength \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Dexterity \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Stamina \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○

### SOCIAL

Charisma \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Manipulation \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Appearance \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○

### MENTAL

Perception *Visual* \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Intelligence *Calculations* \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Wits \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○

## ABILITIES

### TALENTS

Alertness \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Athletics \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Awareness \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Brawl \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Dodge \_\_\_\_\_ ●○○○○  
Expression \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Intimidation \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Leadership \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Streetwise \_\_\_\_\_ ●○○○○  
Subterfuge \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○

### SKILLS

Drive \_\_\_\_\_ ●○○○○  
Energy Weapons \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Etiquette \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Firearms \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Hypertech \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Melee \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Research \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Stealth \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Survival \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Technology \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

### KNOWLEDGES

Academics \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Computer \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Enigmas \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Finance \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Investigation \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Law \_\_\_\_\_ ●○○○○  
Linguistics \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Medicine \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Politics \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Science *Probability* \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○

## SPHERES

Correspondence \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Dimensional Science \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Entropy \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○

Forces \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Life \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Matter \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

Mind \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Primal Utility \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Time \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

## ADVANTAGES

### BACKGROUNDS

*Cloaking* \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
*Genius* \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
*Resources* \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

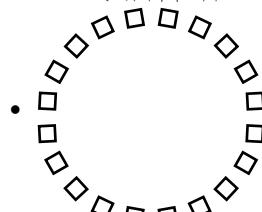
### ENLIGHTENMENT

● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

### WILLPOWER

● ● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○  
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

### PRIMAL ENERGY



### OTHER TRAITS

\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

### HEALTH

Bruised \_\_\_\_\_ -0 □  
Hurt \_\_\_\_\_ -1 □  
Injured \_\_\_\_\_ -1 □  
Wounded \_\_\_\_\_ -2 □  
Mauled \_\_\_\_\_ -2 □  
Crippled \_\_\_\_\_ -5 □  
Incapacitated \_\_\_\_\_ □

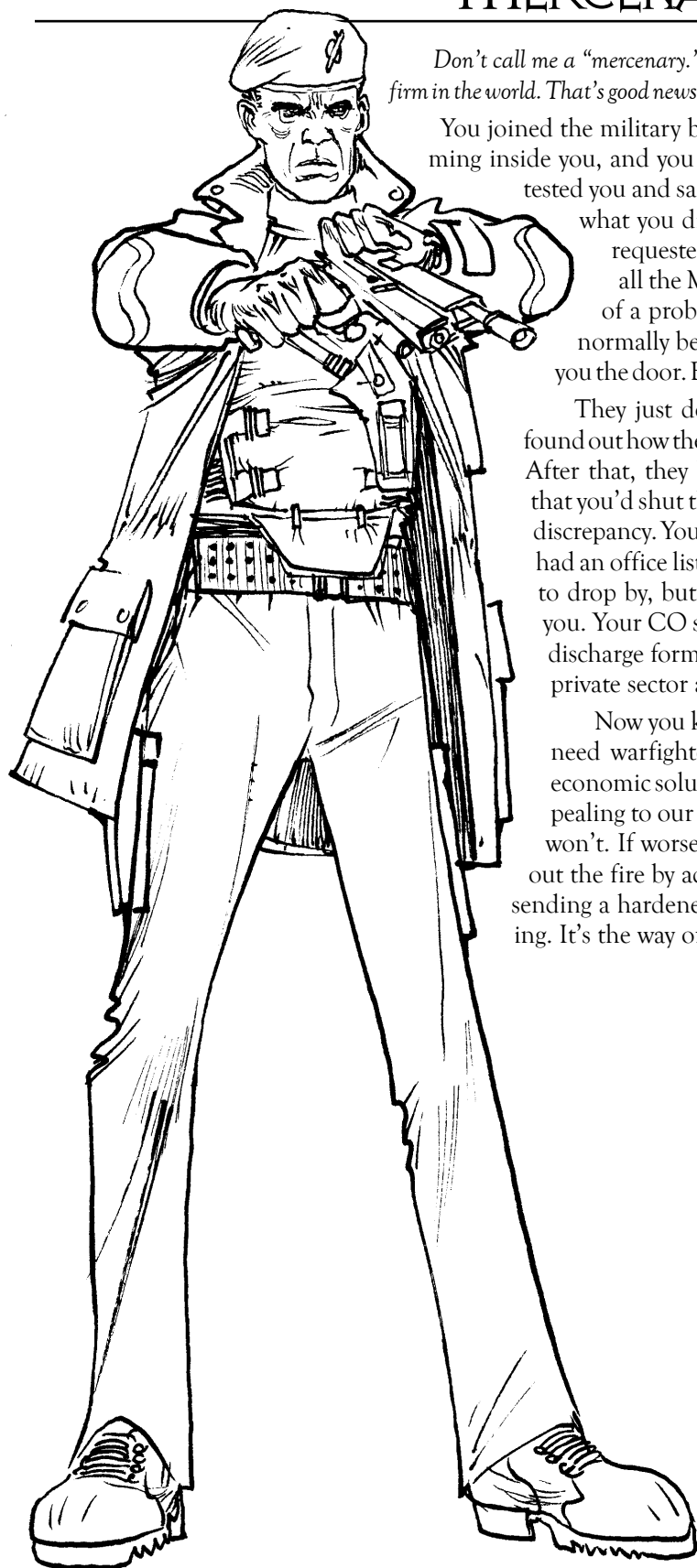
### RESONANCE

Dynamic \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Entropic \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Static \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

### EXPERIENCE

### MARKET CORRECTION

# MERCENARY



*Don't call me a "mercenary." I'm a managing consultant for the best private military firm in the world. That's good news for you. War is expensive, General. Management is cheap.*

You joined the military because you were restless — you felt potential brimming inside you, and you didn't want to wait for college to let it out. They tested you and said you could do just about anything. That's exactly what you did: any job in the service that interested you. You requested transfer after transfer to different fields, and took all the MOS qualifications you could. That presented a bit of a problem for the higher-ups. Somebody like you would normally be flagged as unfocused, and they'd eventually show you the door. But you did a good job no matter where they put you.

They just decided to not promote you — well, not until you found out how the money earmarked for vehicle armor "disappeared." After that, they kicked you up the chain with the understanding that you'd shut the fuck up. You did, but you kept investigating that discrepancy. You uncovered payments to numbered companies. One had an office listed near the base. You don't know why you decided to drop by, but when you arrived, they were obviously expecting you. Your CO sat there like a beaten dog as a woman handed you discharge forms and a job application. You were destined for the private sector after all.

Now you know the Syndicate groomed you for this job. They need warfighters who can run the numbers, so they can find economic solutions to violent conflicts. That's going to work — appealing to our better nature or threatening international censure won't. If worse comes to worse, your corporation is there to put out the fire by advising the right side and when nobody's looking, sending a hardened "security detail" to do some high quality shooting. It's the way of the future.

# CONVENTION BOOK SYNDICATE

NAME:  
PLAYER:  
CHRONICLE:

NATURE: *Architect*  
EIDOLON: *Questing*  
DEITEANOR: *Survivor*

DIVISION:  
CONCEPT:  
ATTALGAMI:

## ATTRIBUTES

### PHYSICAL

Strength \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●●○  
Dexterity \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●●○  
Stamina \_\_\_\_\_ *Endurance* ●●●●○

### SOCIAL

Charisma \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Manipulation \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Appearance \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○

### MENTAL

Perception \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●○○  
Intelligence \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●○○  
Wits \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○

## ABILITIES

### TALENTS

Alertness \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Athletics \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Awareness \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Brawl \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Dodge \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Expression \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Intimidation \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Leadership \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Streetwise \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Subterfuge \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

### SKILLS

Drive \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Energy Weapons \_\_\_\_\_ ●○○○○  
Etiquette \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Firearms \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Hypertech \_\_\_\_\_ ●○○○○  
Melee \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Research \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Stealth \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Survival \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Technology \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

### KNOWLEDGES

Academics \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Computer \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Enigmas \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Finance \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Investigation \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Law \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Linguistics \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Medicine \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Politics \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Science \_\_\_\_\_ ●○○○○

## SPHERES

Data \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Dimensional Science \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Entropy \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

Forces \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Life \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Matter \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

Mind \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Primal Utility \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Time \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

## ADVANTAGES

### BACKGROUNDS

*Backup* \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●○○  
*Genius* \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
*Requisitions* \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
*Resources* \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

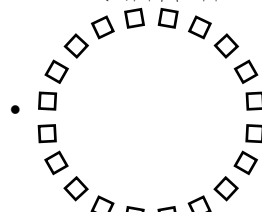
### ENLIGHTENMENT

● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

### WILLPOWER

● ● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○  
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

### PRIMAL ENERGY



### OTHER TRAITS

\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

### HEALTH

Bruised \_\_\_\_\_ -0 □  
Hurt \_\_\_\_\_ -1 □  
Injured \_\_\_\_\_ -1 □  
Wounded \_\_\_\_\_ -2 □  
Mauled \_\_\_\_\_ -2 □  
Crippled \_\_\_\_\_ -5 □  
Incapacitated \_\_\_\_\_ □

### RESONANCE

Dynamic \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Entropic \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Static \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

### EXPERIENCE

### MARKET CORRECTION



# MICROFINANCE MOGUL

*Handouts don't work. Imported Marxism doesn't work. People want to prosper. Instead of swiping your ATM card without really thinking about it, look at all those funding opportunities that connect these people to the global marketplace.*

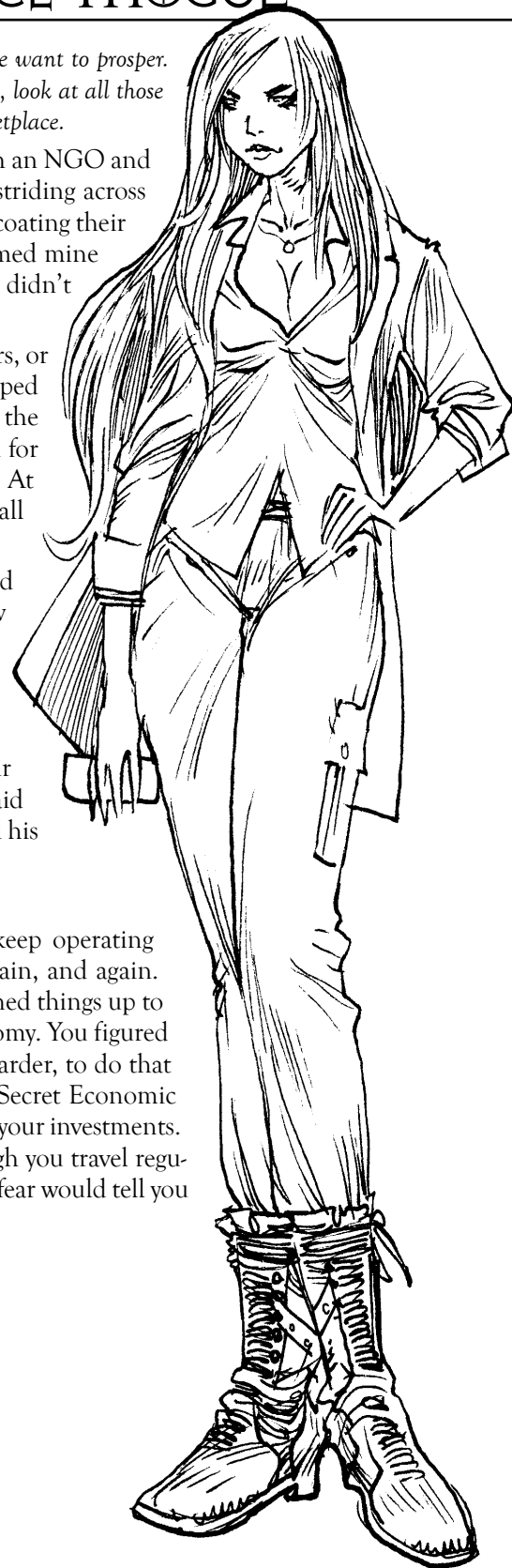
How the hell did you get into finance? You interned with an NGO and toured the satanic mills of modern industry. You saw kids striding across landscapes of broken electronics, carcinogenic carbon black coating their faces. You snuck across borders and matched stares with armed mine security in West Africa. You filed reports on everything. You didn't change anything.

The bad guys got better at hiding what they did to workers, or made themselves essential to business partners in the "developed world" by cutting prices — and that made it even worse for the people you really cared about, since the bosses compensated for their losses by making life even worse for their employees. At least you got familiar with the numbers, and that's where it all started to come together.

You left the nonprofit sector burned out, but still obsessed with those numbers. When you got drunk and looked the flow of capital late at night, you could see your salvation in there, halfburied in the spreadsheets. Frankly, you were a little bit buzzed when you sunk your savings into half a dozen obscure companies, and got a hold of that aid worker you met in Bangladesh — the cute guy. He was trying to help folks keep their farms instead of running to the textile mill. You called him, said a bunch of socially awkward things, and promised you'd fund his project. For some reason, you knew you'd have the cash.

Lo and behold.

In 72 hours, you made enough to help his farmers keep operating through shortages. That made you feel good. You did it again, and again. You incorporated and rented an office. By the time you opened things up to crowdfunded donations you sensed secret actors in the economy. You figured they'd shut you down eventually, but that made you work harder, to do that food you could in the time you had. But when one of the Secret Economic Masters showed up, congratulated you and offered to double your investments. You just had to join them. So you're in the Syndicate, though you travel regularly and stay far away from the creepy managers you secretly fear would tell you something so awful, you'd just crawl back into the bottle.



# CONVENTION BOOK SYNDICATE

NAME:  
PLAYER:  
CHRONICLE:

NATURE: *Manager*  
EIDOLON: *Questing*  
DEITEANOR: *Crusader*

DIVISION:  
CONCEPT:  
ATTALGAM:

## ATTRIBUTES

### PHYSICAL

Strength \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●●●  
Dexterity \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●●●  
Stamina \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●●●

### SOCIAL

Charisma \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●●●  
Manipulation \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●●●  
Appearance \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●●●

### MENTAL

Perception \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●●●  
Intelligence *Cram Session* \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●●●  
Wits *Compensating for Drunkenness* \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●●●

## ABILITIES

### TALENTS

Alertness \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Athletics \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Awareness \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Brawl \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Dodge \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Expression \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Intimidation \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●●●  
Leadership \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●●●  
Streetwise \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●●●  
Subterfuge \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

### SKILLS

Drive \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●●●  
Energy Weapons \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Etiquette \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Firearms \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Hypertech \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Melee \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Research \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●●●  
Stealth \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●●●  
Survival \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●●●  
Technology \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●●●

### KNOWLEDGES

Academics \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Computer \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Enigmas \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Finance *Microfinance* \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●●●  
Investigation \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●●●  
Law \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●●●  
Linguistics \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Medicine \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Politics \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●●●  
Science \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

## SPHERES

Data \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●●●  
Dimensional Science \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Entropy \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

Forces \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Life \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●●●  
Matter \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

Mind \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Primal Utility \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●●●  
Time \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

## ADVANTAGES

### BACKGROUNDS

*Allies* \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●●●  
*Hypercram* \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●●●  
*Genius* \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●●●  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

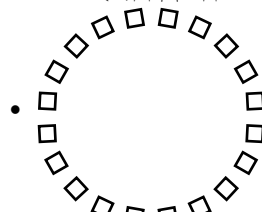
### ENLIGHTENMENT

● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

### WILLPOWER

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ○ ○  
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

### PRIMAL ENERGY



### OTHER TRAITS

\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

### HEALTH

Bruised -0 ☐  
Hurt -1 ☐  
Injured -1 ☐  
Wounded -2 ☐  
Mauled -2 ☐  
Crippled -5 ☐  
Incapacitated ☐

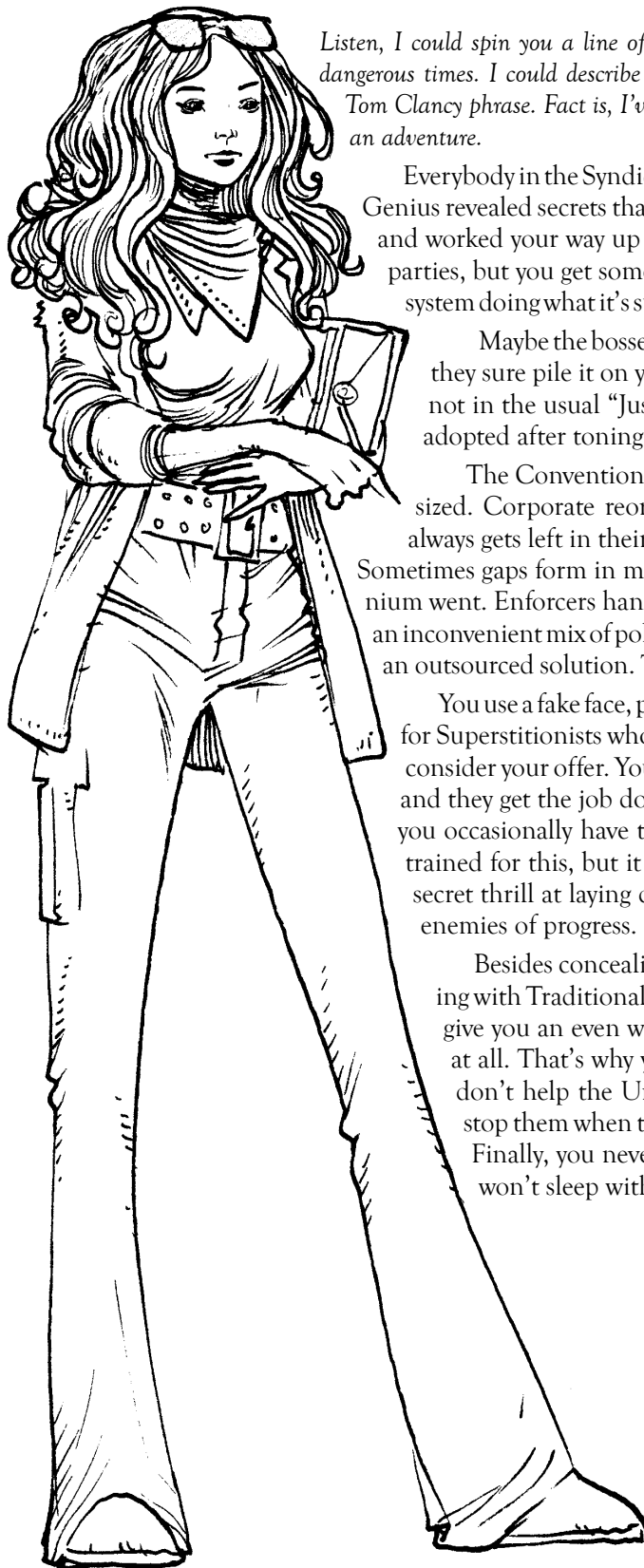
### RESONANCE

Dynamic \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Entropic \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Static \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

### EXPERIENCE

### MARKET CORRECTION

# Ms. J.



*Listen, I could spin you a line of bullshit about mutual self-interest and sticking together in dangerous times. I could describe this work as a “clandestine operation” or some other shiny Tom Clancy phrase. Fact is, I’ve asked you all to come to this bar so I can hire you to go on an adventure.*

Everybody in the Syndicate seems to have a strange story about how they joined. Genius revealed secrets that led them to its doorstep. Not you; you got a steady job and worked your way up to management. Your induction story isn’t any fun at parties, but you get some prestige out of the fact that you’re an example of the system doing what it’s supposed to do. You got Enlightened through capitalism.

Maybe the bosses thought your lack of weirdness was a problem, because they sure pile it on you now. You have to deal with the Traditionalists, and not in the usual “Just get the fuck out of our way” MO that the Syndicate adopted after toning down the Ascension War. Nope — you’re their boss.

The Convention’s been overhauled and in one particular sector, downsized. Corporate reorganizations never go off without a hitch. Somebody always gets left in their cube, forgotten, collecting a check for doing nothing. Sometimes gaps form in managerial oversight, and nobody knows where the uranium went. Enforcers handle most of these problems themselves but sometimes, an inconvenient mix of politics, strange hazards and sheer fucked-upedness require an outsourced solution. That’s your job — you’re the company lunatic-wrangler.

You use a fake face, pick a surname like Johnson, Jampana, or Jiang, and look for Superstitionists who’ve adapted to the post-Anomaly world well enough to consider your offer. You give them money, Tass, or some vaguely defined favor, and they get the job done. You usually just handle briefings and payouts, but you occasionally have to micromanage them, and join the operation. You’ve trained for this, but it still scares the shit out of you, except when you feel a secret thrill at laying down covering fire so a half-mad psychic can burn the enemies of progress.

Besides concealing your identity, you cling to a few other rules for dealing with Traditionalists. You never screw them out of their payment. That’d give you an even worse reputation than the one you battle to do this job at all. That’s why you don’t trick them into suicide missions either. You don’t help the Union persecute your contractors, but you don’t try to stop them when they do — a fact you make clear to every “mage” you hire. Finally, you never make friends with Traditionalists, and you certainly won’t sleep with one, not after what happened last time.

# CONVENTION BOOK SYNDICATE

NAME:  
PLAYER:  
CHRONICLE:

NATURE: *Crusader*  
EIDOLON: *Questing*  
DEITEANOR: *Manager*

DIVISION:  
CONCEPT:  
ATTALGAM:

## ATTRIBUTES

### PHYSICAL

Strength \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Dexterity *Accurate* \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●○○  
Stamina \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○

### SOCIAL

Charisma \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●○○  
Manipulation *Negotiation* \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●○○  
Appearance \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●○○

### MENTAL

Perception \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Intelligence \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●○○  
Wits \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○

## ABILITIES

### TALENTS

Alertness \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Athletics \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Awareness \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Brawl \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Dodge \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Expression \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Intimidation \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Leadership \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Streetwise \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●○○  
Subterfuge \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○

### SKILLS

Drive \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Energy Weapons \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Etiquette \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Firearms \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●○○  
Hypertech \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Melee \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Research \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Stealth \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Survival \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Technology \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

### KNOWLEDGES

Academics \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Computer \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●○○  
Enigmas \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Finance \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Investigation \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●○○  
Law \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Linguistics \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Medicine \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●○○  
Politics \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Science \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

## SPHERES

Correspondence \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Dimensional Science \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Entropy \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

Forces \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Life \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●○○  
Matter \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

Mind \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Primal Utility \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●○○  
Time \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

## ADVANTAGES

### BACKGROUNDS

*Genius* \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
*Requisitions* \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●○○  
*Secret Weapons* \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●○○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

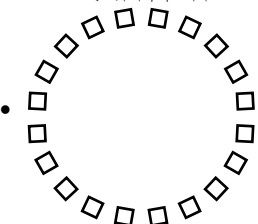
### ENLIGHTENMENT

● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

### WILLPOWER

● ● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○  
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

### PRIMAL ENERGY



### OTHER TRAITS

\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

### HEALTH

Bruised -0 ☐  
Hurt -1 ☐  
Injured -1 ☐  
Wounded -2 ☐  
Mauled -2 ☐  
Crippled -5 ☐  
Incapacitated ☐

### RESONANCE

Dynamic \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Entropic \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Static \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

### EXPERIENCE

### MARKET CORRECTION

# THE SOCIAL NETWORKER

*The music industry, publishing, Hollywood – they all existed to create comfort, community, and the impression that someone was looking out for the most unloved, ugliest assholes in the world. We changed that. We gave people a way to really comfort each other, and participate in all the drama they used to just consume. So when you talk to me about selling these people something, like they belong to a double-verified email list for widgets and porn, I don't give a shit. I want to know what you're giving them that will help them connect in new, cool ways.*

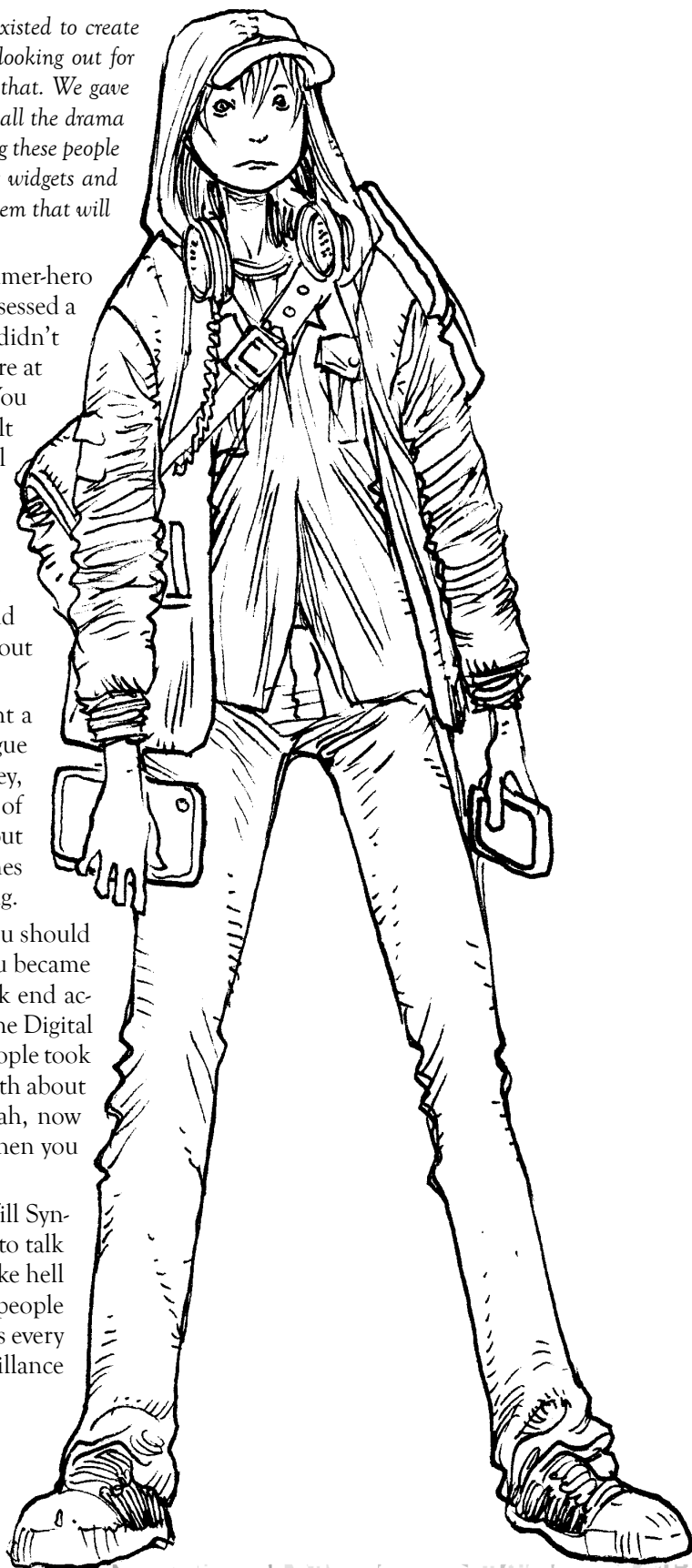
You were a pretty good coder, but not the programmer-hero who replaces five mediocre guys in a pinch. Yet you possessed a talent for interfaces and human factors your colleagues didn't have, and mostly didn't care about – the better they were at the back end, the less they cared about look and feel. You studied design, registered some domain names and built a few web sites about your hobbies. You still love model trains and racquetball.

It only took a little word of mouth promotion for the traffic to break your hosting plan. It's not as if you wrote amazing things about HO scale model trees and court flooring, either. Visitors loved the layout and community tools. Half the time, they didn't even talk about the sites' actual topics.

You consolidated your websites, cut the fat, bought a better hosting plan, and hired a couple slick Ivy League developers to work for you. When you ran out of money, they connected you to Plexic for funding. You'd heard of Plexic. They supposedly licensed the code used for just about everything interesting on the Internet, like search engines and blogging platforms. They thought you were that big.

It disappointed you when they shut it all down. You should have read the fine print. But they offered you a job. You became a "Social Platform Guru" at Plexic. They gave you back end access to, well, everything, through a VR protocol called the Digital Web. You could rampage through that service where people took pictures of their food, or see if folks were telling the truth about their relationship status. You played around a bit. Yeah, now there's a model train fad, as there should be! That's when you became a certified Genius.

Now, you lay down trends like model track, to fulfill Syndicate aims and to introduce people to fun new things to talk about. You're playing with big stakes, and you'll fight like hell to keep Social media on the Syndicate path – where people monetize what they really love and discover novel things every day – and away from the NWO way of mutual surveillance and groupthink.





# CONVENTION BOOK SYNDICATE

NAME:  
PLAYER:  
CHRONICLE:

NATURE: *Hacker*  
EIDOLON: *Pattern*  
DEITEANOR: *Devil's Advocate* AMIALGAM:

DIVISION:  
CONCEPT:

## ATTRIBUTES

### PHYSICAL

Strength \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●●●  
Dexterity \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●●●  
Stamina \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●●●

### SOCIAL

Charisma \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●●●  
Manipulation *Online* \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●●●  
Appearance \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●●●

### MENTAL

Perception \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●●●  
Intelligence \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●●●  
Wits \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●●●

## ABILITIES

### TALENTS

Alertness \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Athletics \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Awareness \_\_\_\_\_ ●○○○○  
Brawl \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Dodge \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Expression \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Intimidation \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Leadership \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Streetwise \_\_\_\_\_ ●○○○○  
Subterfuge \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●○○

### SKILLS

Drive \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Energy Weapons \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Etiquette \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●○○  
Firearms \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Hypertech \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Melee \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Research \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●○○  
Stealth \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Survival \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Technology \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●○○

### KNOWLEDGES

Academics \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Computer *Social Networks* \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●●●  
Enigmas \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Finance \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●○○  
Investigation \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●○○  
Law \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Linguistics \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Medicine \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Politics \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●○○  
Science \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

## SPHERES

Data \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Dimensional Science \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Entropy \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

Forces \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Life \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Matter \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

Mind \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Primal Utility \_\_\_\_\_ ●●○○○  
Time \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

## ADVANTAGES

### BACKGROUNDS

*Genius* \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●●●  
*Resources* \_\_\_\_\_ ●●●●●  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

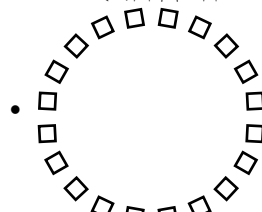
### ENLIGHTENMENT

● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

### WILLPOWER

● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○  
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

### PRIMAL ENERGY



### OTHER TRAITS

\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
\_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

### HEALTH

Bruised -0 ☐  
Hurt -1 ☐  
Injured -1 ☐  
Wounded -2 ☐  
Mauled -2 ☐  
Crippled -5 ☐  
Incapacitated ☐

### RESONANCE

Dynamic \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Entropic \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○  
Static \_\_\_\_\_ ○○○○○

### EXPERIENCE

### MARKET CORRECTION

# EPILOGUE: BUYER'S REMNORSE

## SHINJUKU WARD, TOKYO, JAPAN

The backlash from my little Mind trick hits me hard as soon as I'm back in the hotel, and I sleep free of nightmares about cancer patients and mad scientists who, in caring for said patients, seem less mad than me. Thank Reason for small favors.

The job is done, and I have a strict R&R policy, so I choose a new image before I go out to sample the bars of Golden Gai. A plain beige tank top, blue jeans, sneakers. Simple accessories — earrings, link bracelet, faux gold chain — that could have come from any of the sidewalk kiosks on the way from the train station to my hotel. It all suggests the absence of real money, and for me, the absence of work.

I snake through crowds dense and close enough to smell — body spray, hops, and halitosis clash for dominance. They leak out of tiny bars, little more than closets with beer taps or a single shelf of liquor, packed into the six main alleys and innumerable smaller ones that define this part of the ward. Dissonant bits of music overlap under an archway of signs, creating pockets of rock-punk-blues-rap-jazz that no one else seems to notice. Within each little drinking hole, they sway to the closest beat, walling the other sounds off through force of will.

I breathe it all in, let it go, and start following my own beat, the pulse of hypereconomics at work. Supply and demand resonate in my mind like a crystal lattice, giving me direction in the throng. I probably look drunk to onlookers, with no destination in mind and focus dropped from

my eyes. It's a bit touchy-feely as Enlightened Procedures go. One of my NWO counterparts calls it "capitalist zen." He intended derision but created enough value with the description that I've adopted it.

My colleagues often use this to feel their way toward the best place to be in any given hotspot of commerce. It's how we discover the trends of tomorrow, the cool you don't know about yet, the next thing we're ready for you to want.

Tonight, I use it to discover the opposite — a disturbance in the flow between potential and recognition, the largest imbalance between actual and perceived value.

I find it at a bar called Trail's End. The sign's done up like Dollywood, in a bed of glimmering LED cacti. A taped-on note tells me that they speak *and* read English here, a desperate plea to passing emissaries from "mom and apple pie" country. Old movie posters pepper the entryway, John Wayne and Gene Autry smiling in pastel.

Inside, the barman smiles at me, something between relief and gratitude. He's tall and broad-shouldered, taking up a whole side of the room, wiping down the counter that passes for a bar. Silvering hair, blue eyes, square jaw. Not from around these parts, as they say. I guess former military, given his build, and I guess American, given the theme of the decor. He doesn't have any bottles on display, and I wonder if his lack of customers is related to his lack of stock.

He ticks his head toward the only chair, and I sit. I lean against the wall opposite from him and am still close enough that he could hear me whisper.

"Ma'am?" With the drawl, right on cue. I try to hide the smile. He doesn't seem to mind.

"You tell me," I say.

"I'm bad at guessing." He leans down to fish for something behind the counter. "Prefer it when folks know what they're after."

"Me too. Tell you what... why don't you get me a glass of your best kept secret?"

He stops rummaging, looks up. "What makes you think I have one?"

I shrug, still smiling. "Hunch, maybe?"

He grunts and produces an unlabeled bottle of amber liquid, pours a shot, slides it over. I sip it, close my eyes. Definitely scotch, and one of the easiest drinking in recent memory. Not too much smoke, not too much wood, a touch of spice. Not a brand I recognize. Maybe not a brand at all.

I have a second. A third.

"This is the part where I'm supposed to say, 'Something on your mind?' and you tell me your problems." He's also sitting down now, and I realize I've been bad company, just staring into space.

"Let's change it up," I say, without thinking. "Tell me yours."

He chuckles, a polite way of letting me know what he thinks of that. I just stare at him, unsure of what I'm after, too damn cagey to let on. This is ridiculous. I'm supposed to be taking R&R.

He sweeps an arm out to indicate the room. "You can probably guess what my first problem is."

"How long's it been slow?"

"Since I got the place. Can't seem to figure out what'll get people in the door."

"You tell them about the scotch?"

He smirks, conceding the point. "I guess it won't be my best kept secret anymore, but I'll live. Hope it helps out in time to..."

His face seems to droop a bit, and I don't need the implants to analyze this, to figure out where this is going. I've seen this weight on hundreds of faces. It's part of why I changed Methodologies.

"Who do you owe?"

He starts chuckling again, despite the mood. "First customer in ages, and I end up telling her my life story. Go figure." He stands, goes into the back room, a closet within a closet. He comes back with a photo. Shows it to me. A woman. Delicate features. Bright smile.

"Wife," he says. "Near twenty years. She convinced me not to go back home after deployment. Probably the best choice I ever made." He pours himself a round of the scotch. There's a lot more to the story in his eyes, years of memories, but I don't want to push.

"Now what?"

"Pancreatic cancer. Stage three, now. Want to give her the best chances, so I went with a private hospital. They collect monthly. Most nights, the bar makes just enough to work things out." A pause. "Most nights."

He doesn't notice I'm holding my shot glass tight enough to make my knuckles turn white. It would have to be this, wouldn't it? Now I'm reviewing everything I said to Dr. Arai, to Director Cruz. I haven't written the report yet. I could still fund their research, take the risks. Save lives or create one of the biggest Corrections-related debacles since the damned Anomaly.

"Your turn," he says. Pours me a shot.

"Me?" What do I even say to him?

"Yeah. I'm the professional listener, remember? Figure I should do my job at some point tonight."

I realize that he's asking for a favor. A reclaiming of dignity. I realize I want to be listened to and not just obeyed. And here I'm the Enlightened operative, yet he's using the most powerful Mind Procedure there is on me: a sympathetic ear.

So I tell him almost everything — the Syndicate, the war on reality, the nature of my job, the hidden patterns of value that define the universe. The burden of having to protect the human race from itself, from Traditionalists, from monsters of legend, even from my compatriots. The difficulty in walking the line between helping humanity progress and enabling their dependence. I don't tell him about Enforcement, and I don't tell him about yesterday. But it's just enough venting for me to feel the weight lighten. I talk for hours, until the cacophonous uni-genre music in the streets and the shouts of young adults in various states of partying fall away.

"So that's my life," I say, taking the last sip of the last shot left in that bottle.

"Sounds complicated and dangerous," he says. That's it. No judgment, no visible suspicion I might be crazy. His expression is gentle, welcoming. He's not sure I'm done talking, maybe. I'm tempted to start the implants up, see inside his head. I'm thinking about my own dependence now, about when the tools of my trade started to stand in place of instinct, why I go to them with such ease.

He may think I'm a lunatic, talking about paradigms and conspiracies. It doesn't matter. He's giving me what I wanted, and that's enough. I appreciate, of all people, the sanctity of a just and fair exchange.

My superiors will agree with me — Cruz's work is too dangerous to fund. There'll be internal work, the witch-hunt to figure out who passed the venture through Iridium in the first place, because there must always be a scapegoat.

I stand. There's a little more wobble to the world than I want, but I accept it as the price of doing business. "Past my bedtime," I say.

He pulls out a notepad, scribbles the tab on it, slides it over. "Well, it's been a pleasure, ma'am. You're certainly not what I expected."

"Sometimes it pays not to be what people expect," I say. He's undercharging me, and I feel a flash of frustration — he doesn't have the kindness to spare.

I do, though. "Before I go, do you mind if I get a picture? For the virtual scrapbook?"

He smiles and indicates the empty bottle with a waggle, then holds it up in a pose. I key in a basic short-term memory wipe on my smartphone, trigger it to pulse with the camera flash, and hit the shutter. He blanks out, and I have approximately eighty seconds while his mind overwrites all the information that could put him in danger. He might remember a woman and an empty bottle. Knowing what tends to come from that combination, he won't ask too many questions. I draw a few hearts on the notepad, just to be sure, and this note: "Tell everyone about the scotch. It's great!"

I empty the cash in my wallet onto the counter. About 100,000 yen, slightly more than a thousand U.S. dollars. Tips are unacceptable here, but I don't think he'll mind.

It won't save his wife or end his struggle. It's not a handout, not what Director Cruz wanted. But it will give him another chance to aspire, to turn things around.

That's worth a disbursement.





# CONVENTION BOOK SYNDICATE

## MERITS & FLAWS

MERIT	TYPE	COST	FLAW	TYPE	BONUS

## PROCEDURES

PREFERRED EFFECTS

NOTES


## DEVICES

Name	Level	Enlightenment	Primal Energy	Appearance

## COMBAT

Weapon	Difficulty	Damage	Range	Rate	Clip	Conceal

ARTIST: \_\_\_\_\_

# CONVENTION BOOK SYNDICATE

## EXPANDED BACKGROUND

ALLIES

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CONSTRUCT

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ENHANCEMENTS

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LABORATORY

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MENTOR

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PATRON

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SECRET WEAPONS

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BACKUP

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COMPANION

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INFLUENCE

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LIBRARY

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NOTE(S)

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RESOURCES

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SPIES

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## POSSESSIONS

GEAR (CARRIED)

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FOCI

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EQUIPMENT (OWNED)

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STYLE

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# CONVENTION BOOK SYNDICATE

## HISTORY

EMPOWERMENT

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GOALS/DESTINY

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SEEKINGS:

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QUIETS:

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## DESCRIPTION

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Apparent Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Age of Empowerment: \_\_\_\_\_

Hair: \_\_\_\_\_

Eyes: \_\_\_\_\_

Race: \_\_\_\_\_

Nationality: \_\_\_\_\_

Height: \_\_\_\_\_

Weight: \_\_\_\_\_

Sex: \_\_\_\_\_

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## VISUALS

ATTALGATTI CHART

CHARACTER SKETCH





# NAIMON

THE DESCENT

COMING SOON

# CONVENTION BOOK SYNDICATE

## Advocate to the Masses

Of everyone in the Ascension War – Traditionalists, Nephandi, and even other Technocrats – no one gets humanity quite like the Syndicate. The Convention of Cash doesn't try to change people, and it doesn't have the hubris of believing it should make the Masses "better" as its fellow Conventions do. No, the Syndicate knows that the status quo keeps the world safe... and keeps them in the penthouse.

The Syndicate distributes money and Primal Energy through the Technocratic Union, and that gives it power over the Union's policies. But that might not be enough to prevent the New World Order and others from crippling the Masses worse than the Traditions ever could.

## A World Occupied

Between the lows – hypereconomics backlash and market crashes – and the highs – crowdfunding and the reputation economy – this is an interesting time to be in the Syndicate.

**Convention Book: Syndicate** updates Mage: the Ascension with fresh 21st century ideas of the Convention everyone loves to despise, in ways that will change how you see them.

MAGE<sup>®</sup>  
THE ASCENSION

