THE SPRAWL

TOUCHED
A DARKENING ALLEY

STEVE WALLACE, DYMPHNA, HAMISH CAMERON

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A DARKENING ALLEY

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A DARK MAGIC AND HORROR SETTING FOR *THE SPRAWL* RPG

ARDENS LUDERE

POWERED BY THE APOCALYPSE

CONTENTS

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A Rift-Touched World

> *"The shit-holes are getting shittier, and no one wants to talk about it. The town that disappeared, that video of a lady giving birth to what looked like an octopus, or the leaked corp files about a continuous human scream emanating from Jupiter. Why aren't the news feeds talking about this? What are the corps hiding?"*
>
> *–Antonio Alverez, editor-at-large THE CANT*

Touched is a series of dark magic settings for Hamish Cameron's cyberpunk tabletop role-playing game *The Sprawl*. The first in the series is *A Darkening Alley,* to be followed by *Touched Prime*.

A Darkening Alley is a low-magic setting for *The Sprawl*. Weird, magical rifts are starting to crack open and humanity is beginning to feel the effects. Strange happenings are becoming more and more common. The street-side prohpets are starting to sound a bit reasonable. The corporations smell power and have started pouring a lot of money into investigating and documenting these occurrences– that's where you come in.

Magical abilities become available to players through basic advances. Because players do not start with magical abilities, you can easily merge this setting with an ongoing campaign.

A Darkening Alley introduces the new **Antiquarian** playbook.

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THE SICK GET SICKER

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THE SICK GET SICKER

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1960

After Nixon won the 1960 election, he became convinced that the Vietnam War would turn into a quagmire that would destroy his presidency. His solution could be summed up in a catch phrase he used throughout his four terms as President, "The best cure for Communism is the Corporation!" He effectively privatized the war with the passing of the Corporate Cooperation Act (or CCA) which allowed corporations to wage war in the name of the United States without fear of prosecution, either at home or abroad. While this did not go over well with many of the allies of the US, it did play extremely well at home. After the CCA passed, all US Army personnel in Vietnam were replaced with corporate operatives.

The following year saw the largest campaign of bribery and assassinations in recorded history and the subsequent formation of the first corporate state, The Corporate Nation of Vietnam. The CNV immediately became one of the largest corporations in history. We now know that a consortium of five corporations, mostly from the telecommunications and weapons manufacturing sectors, funded the CNV and its brutal activities. When all was said and done, each of the five seed-corporations made billions in contracts and shares in CNV.

After such a rousing success, Nixon pushed other corporate associates to solve his "Latin America" problem. This led to the formation of a multitude of additional corporate states throughout South and Central America and the Caribbean. It wasn't long before the parent companies of these new corporate states had more money, resources and larger standing armies than the majority of nations. Natural resource exploitation became dramatically easier and more profitable when the corporations were able to craft their own labor policies with no additional oversight. While the marketing departments of the various corporate nations have whitewashed and de-emphasized the death tolls of these early endeavors, many historians believe Central and South America saw a loss of nearly half their population over a ten-year period, somewhere in the range of 100 million people.

1965

In 1965, Nixon had turned his attention to the perceived threat of Soviet space superiority. He expanded the CCA to include a clause allowing for a twenty-year exclusive lease on all mineral rights for the first corporation able to successfully land a man on the moon. Many corporations, fat from their South American affiliates, poured millions of dollars into the endeavor.

1970

By 1970, Miskatonic Amalgamated was able to not only land the first man on the moon, Buzz Aldrin, but to begin the construction of the first moon base, Asteria 1. Over the next ten years, Miskatonic Amalgamated focused heavily on exploiting their lease. This work ushered in the age of advanced computers and the first brain/computer interfaces and cyberware.

The 70's saw a massive surge in corporate power within US borders. State level power became nearly inconsequential as corporations began to buy governors and senators. Federal level positions didn't fare any better–corporate money was simply too powerful. By 1972, Nixon was able to call in enough favors with the corporations to have the 22nd Amendment overturned, and he subsequently ran for and won his third term as President. The following years saw an unprecedented growth of technology. Unfettered by regulations or moral codes, and with massive surpluses of cash and natural resources, the corporations raced to outdo each other. Computers, cars, cyberware, weapons, food, entrainment–everything became faster and more ostentatious.

It's now 1985, and all of this advancement has come at great cost to basic freedoms, human lives and ecosystems. The cities have sprawled out into multi-state behemoths eating everything in their paths. The New York Sprawl stretches from Old New York down all the way south to Washington DC and as far west as Hershey, Pennsylvania. The New England Sprawl covers most of Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Connecticut and Southern Maine. The Eerie Sprawl encompasses the entire lake shore, including Toronto, Detroit, Cleveland and Toledo, and as far south as Pittsburgh. Dozens of similar sprawls developed across the globe. While a lot of the folks living in these hemorrhaging megalopolitan organisms have relatively normal lives, down in the gutter it's kill-or-be-killed. Corporations are waging a constant war with each other, with mercurial allegiances and even more mercurial objectives, and they're using the folks in the gutters, the operatives, to do it.

In the past year, the intensity of this war has picked up. You've been noticing that the jobs have been getting stranger and stranger. There's something going on, something dark and weird, something that has broken a lot of folks you once knew to be as hard as nails. Artifacts have become a big business for some reason. You've been working with academic-types on runs far more often–folks who can shoot but also read Sumerian, that sort of type. Maybe it's not for you to understand. After all, the pay is still good. Who cares if one corporation wants more statues than another, right?

The matrix is lit up with weird happenings that those in the know have dubbed Events. The corporations are sending operatives to these Event sites on the regular and, from what you've been hearing around the bars, the survival rates are pretty low. The folks who have come back are a bit… different. Just seems to be a lot more broken-down operatives huddled in the corners of the low-rent dives these days. It's getting dark. Still, you need that cred.

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THE RICH GET RICHER

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THE RICH GET RICHER

MISKATONIC AMALGAMATED

Miskatonic Amalgamated was spun off from a technology research program at Miskatonic University. Currently headed by its founder and CEO Dr. Asenath Waite, Miskatonic Amalgamated focuses on a wide range of advanced R&D. These programs include investigations into advanced weapons technology, weather modification systems and "Neural Lace" computer-to-brain interfaces.

Representatives from Miskatonic Amalgamated's R&D division have been sighted at nearly every Event site over the course of the past year. Those in the know believe MA is working to harness the exotic energies left over after Events for use in advanced battery and weapons technologies.

CORPORATE STRENGTHS:
- Advanced Brain/Computer Interfaces
- Weather Control Tech
- Advanced Weapons Tech

CORPORATE MOVES:
- Deploy Weather Effect
- Reveal Wireless Brain Interface
- Reveal Advanced Weaponry

DMG INC.

DMG Inc. is one of the largest owners of land, buildings and mineral rights in the greater New England Sprawl. Founded in the early 1900s, the group made its early fortune on the instability of Eastern European and African governments. Whenever there was a war, coup or other instability event, they would rush in to secure land and mineral rights. These buy-ups led to massive profits, as rare minerals became critical to the technological advancement in the late 20th century. DMG Inc. bought out most of the larger chip manufacturers so that they could own the entire processor supply chain.

Recently, DMG Inc. has accelerated their land acquisitions; while seemingly random to the outside observer, those in the know realize these acquisitions are almost exclusively related to the Events.

CORPORATE STRENGTHS:
- Mineral Acquisitions and Sales
- Advanced Processor Technology
- Advanced AI

CORPORATE MOVES:
- Deploy Advanced AI
- Intervene in a Rival's Affairs
- Weaponize Advanced Mining Equipment

IMHP AQUATIC

IMHP Aquatic is a large aqua farming consortium on the coast of the New England Sprawl. The algae grown by IMHP Aquatic is used in thousands of foods as a protein base and binder. This deep integration into the world food supply has led IMHP Aquatics stock to soar over the past thirty years; they are now one of the most valuable corporations in the world. These massive profits have allowed the corporation to diversify into other, more esoteric, endeavors. Its board, composed of a mysterious group of members who are rarely seen in public, has focused aggressively on undersea resource gathering and excavation in the past ten years.
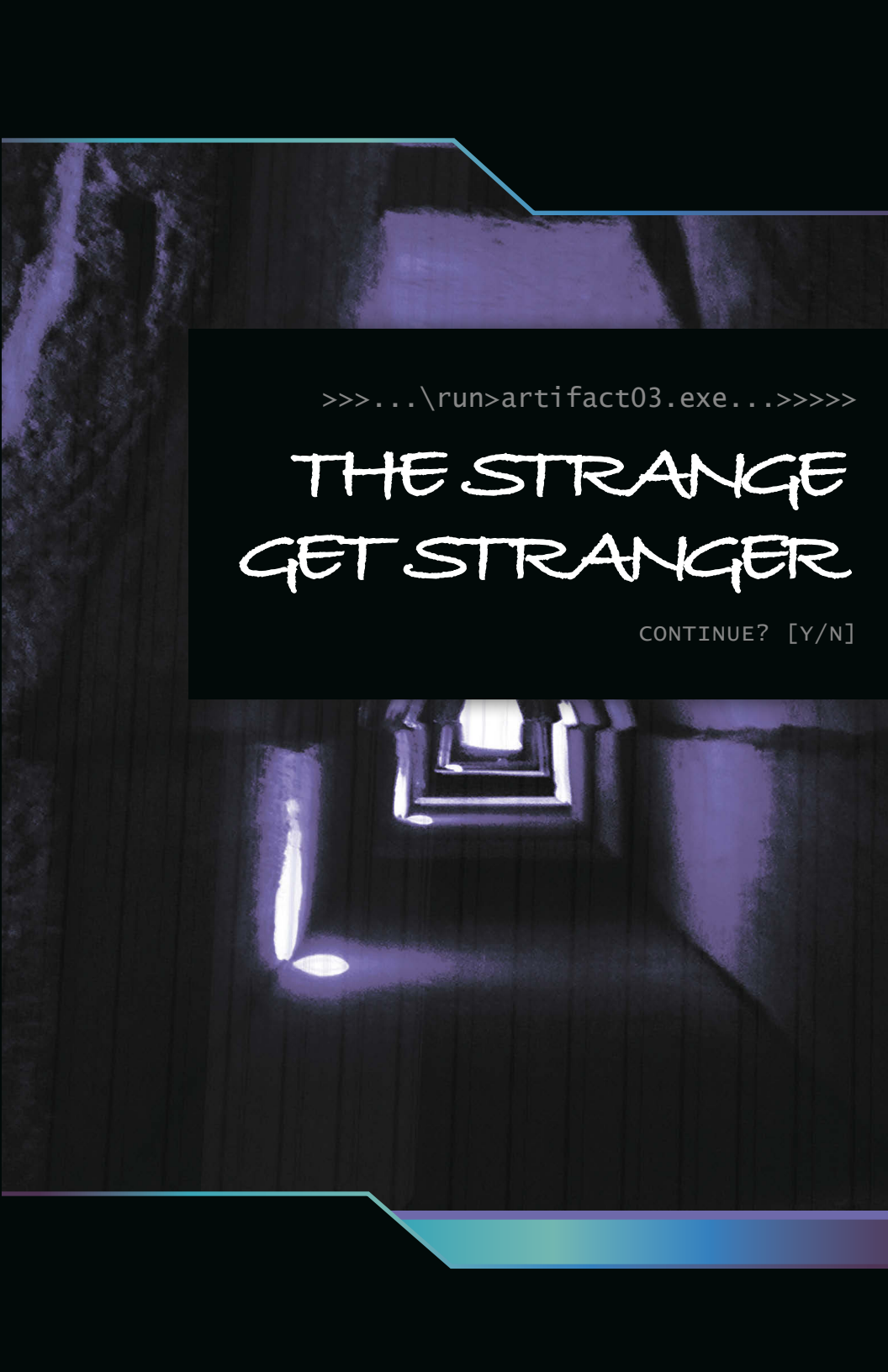
While there have not been any significant public announcements, many analysts have noted that year over year the funding for the associated departments seems to have grown exponentially.

CORPORATE STRENGTHS:
- Algae Growth and Harvesting
- Undersea Excavation
- Undersea Mining

CORPORATE MOVES:
- Deploy Algae-based Toxin
- Perform Aggressive Excavation
- Deploy Capital to Interfere with a Competitor

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THE STRANGE GET STRANGER

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THE STRANGE GET STRANGER

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A WORD ON THE RIFTS

The world of *A Darkening Alley* is a weird-horror infused sprawl. This weirdness comes mostly from the rifts, interdimensional portals to strange new worlds filled with beings and energies far beyond our understanding. All Events revolve around a rift and whatever has seeped through into our world. The corporations will always be interested in these Events and anything stemming from them that they may be able to exploit.

The corporations have started hiring Antiquarians to connect the dots between historical events and earlier rift Events. Stonehenge, the Egyptian Pyramids, the Nazca Lines, and hundreds of different artifacts all can be traced to one rift event or another. This research often triggers new missions to forgotten temples to recover powerful rift artifacts–the corporation with the most toys wins.

Below you will find a series of moves the MC can use to integrate the rifts into your game. These all directly involve **Rifts**, **Horrors**, or **Eldritch Trauma**.

RIFT MOVES

- » Followers of a **Horror** have found you.
- » You are overcome with a feeling of crippling dread.
- » You witness something mind shattering. Roll **Eldritch Trauma.**
- » Something dark has attached itself to you.
- » A being from beyond the rifts has learned your name.
- » The magic of the rifts explodes around you.
- » Your probing calls forth a great **Horror** from the rifts.
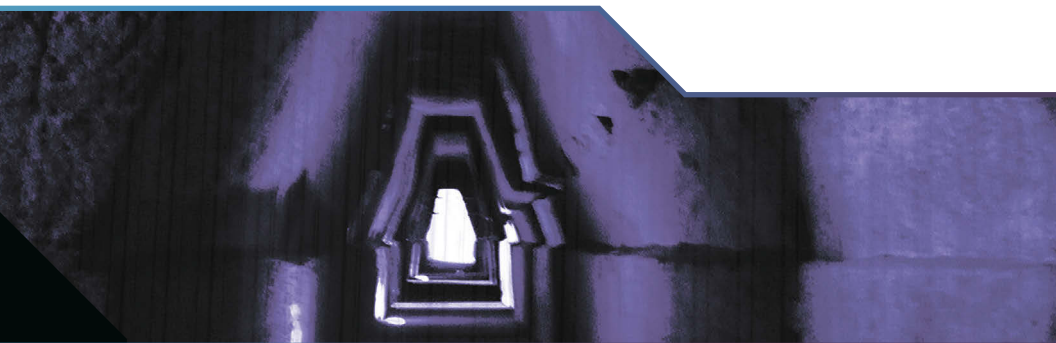
HORRORS

Horrors are rift-based entities that have taken interest in our world. Their motives are beyond our comprehension and their powers are beyond imagining. If you find yourself in their path, it's best to run away as fast as you can. Those who have faced some facet of a **Horror** are often left mentally and physically broken. Unfortunately, throughout *A Darkening Alley* more and more of your jobs will put you right smack in the middle of some **Horror's** schemes.

Horrors are rarely the centerpiece of a mission. Think of them as the winter storm, not the bear. They are a danger the operatives cannot hope to stop and can only hope to avoid or find shelter from. If they are caught in a **Horror's** path, the impact will be weird, horrific and likely catastrophic.

HORROR CLOCK

Throughout the game, a move may trigger the creation or advancement of a **Horror Clock**. A **Horror Clock** tracks the machinations of a rift-based entity directly or indirectly involved with the current mission. Create a **Horror Clock** in the same manner you create any other clock in the game. As a **Horror Clock** advances, increasingly weird manifestations of the **Horror's** influence will begin to intrude on the characters' reality.

When the clock advances to 2100 or beyond, those shadows at the edge of reality will start to manifest with increasing frequency–many will provoke **Eldritch Trauma**. When a **Horror Clock** reaches 2300, the players will be confronted with a servant of the **Horror** whose presence will directly influence the mission. When the clock reaches 0000, the **Horror's** current machination will be complete, intervening in the world in a way that is an immediate problem or danger to the characters. The nature of this intervention will vary based on your story, but it will be direct, meaningful and undeniably otherworldly. Under most circumstances, it will trigger an **Eldritch Trauma** roll.

ARTIFACTS

Artifacts are historical objects tainted by the rifts. They can be anything from a piece of Assyrian pottery used in an ancient cult ritual to the gun that killed Hitler. Artifacts are used to power **Rituals** and **Spells**. Artifacts may be bought from certain Antiquarian shops, stolen from wealthy collectors, robbed from the graves of the long dead, or acquired via certain moves.

Touched uses a special kind of hold, [artifact], which works like [intel] or [gear]. When you receive [artifact], you can immediately describe what it is or wait until you need to use it and describe it at that time. Antiquarians usually have a few [artifacts] on hand at any given time.

Equipment, including weapons, can also have the tag *+artifact*. This means that the item is magically significant in some way and can be used in **Rituals** that require the sacrifice of [artifacts].
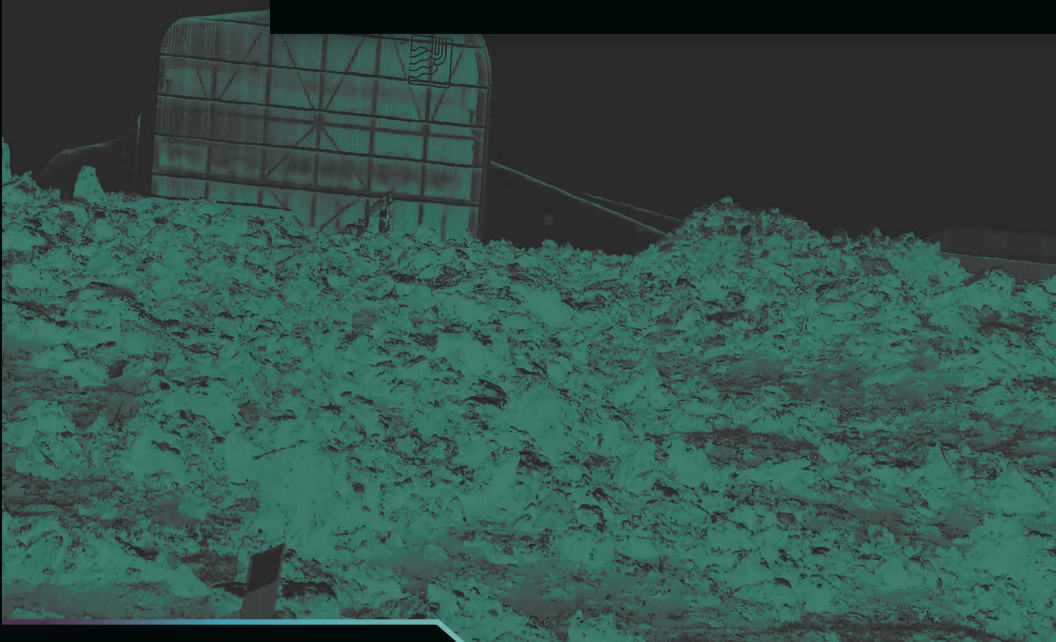
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THE WEIRD GET WEIRDER

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THE WEIRD GET WEIRDER

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ELDRITCH TRAUMA

No operative is prepared to have the entirety of their reality redefined by the eldritch creatures and forces that seep through the dimensional rifts. Facing the horrors of the rifts tests the mental fortitude of even the most grizzled veteran. Nearly everyone suffers some **Eldritch Trauma** from these encounters.

Everyone has different ways of reacting to and handling stress. When you create a new character in *A Darkening Alley*, or when you bring a character into *A Darkening Alley* for the first time, think about how your character reacts in distressing situations and choose two types of Coping Mechanisms: Avoidance, Control, Unreality, Internal Focus, External Focus. Each of these Coping Mechanisms has a list of specific Behaviours. When you encounter creatures or forces from beyond the rifts, the **Eldritch Trauma** move will prompt you to select options from those lists.

```
Zelia has two Coping Mechanisms: Control and Unreality. As a
horrific spiralling monstrosity uncoils itself from inside
the cybereye of the dead Miskatonic Amalgamated security
guard, she rolls an 8 to withstand Eldritch Trauma. She looks
over the lists of Behaviours under Control and Unreality and
marks "Verbally or physically abuse your teammates". For
the rest of the mission, when that Behaviour hinders the
mission, Zelia will mark experience.
```

TRAUMA TRACK

Every character in *A Darkening Alley* has a Trauma Track that looks like this:

☐ *take –1 to Eldritch Trauma*   ☐ *take –2 to Eldritch Trauma*   ☐ *take –1 to all moves*

As the trauma of encountering otherworldly horror overwhelms you, you will mark the boxes in this track. Mark the boxes from left to right. Only the rightmost penalty applies.
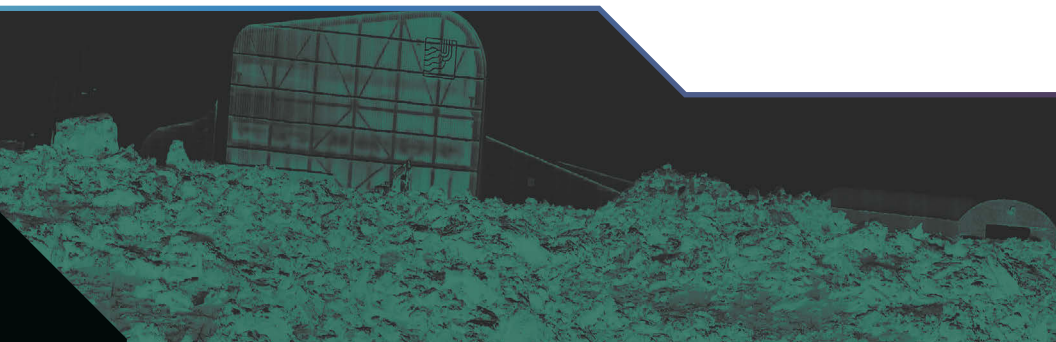
Note that the "-1 to all moves" applies to the harm move. Physical wounds sometimes seem less important when your mind is fixated on more pressing concerns.

Deep in the heart of an IMHP Aquatic aquaculture farm, Zelia watches with growing horror as the contents of an algae vat swirls into a whirlpool, folds in on itself, and falls through the bottom of reality, offering a vision of distant stars. She has a Touch stat of +1 and the first two boxes on her Trauma Track are marked. She rolls a 7 on the dice, adds one for her Touch stat, and subtracts two because the second marked box on the Trauma Track says "take -2 to **Eldritch Trauma**", for a final result of 6 (7+1-2). She chooses another Behaviour, marks the third box on her Trauma Track (she no longer has -2 to **Eldritch Trauma,** but instead has -1 to *all* moves), and waits for the MC to make a move.

Eldritch Trauma

When you face an eldritch creature or force from the beyond the rifts, roll Touch. If you don't have Touch, roll at -1.

10+: your mind rationalises the horror. Lower your Trauma Track by one

7-9: you can only cope with the otherworldly horror by engaging in one of your Coping Mechanisms. Mark a Behaviour from one of the lists associated with your Coping Mechanisms

6-: the sense of otherworldly horror is too great to be overcome. Mark a Behaviour from one of the lists associated with your Coping Mechanisms. Advance your Trauma Track. The MC will make a move

BEHAVIOURS

Behaviours act as the keywords in a special directive. When you have a Behaviour marked, you gain an additional personal directive:

⏻ **When a Behaviour hinders the mission, mark experience.**

> Behaviours don't always hinder the mission when they come up. Coping mechanisms and behaviours (whether permanent or not) are aspects of a person's personality or affect, and like any aspect of a character's experience or existence, they are part of how we as a table determine fictional positioning.
>
> This is *not* a space to grant "special powers" to the traumatised; rather, this is an encouragement to take a broad view of the ways that some manifestations of these behaviours and coping mechanisms can impact the life of the the person experiencing them in-person or second-hand.

RECOVERY

At the end of a mission, remove one of your marked Behaviours and unmark one of the boxes in your Trauma Track.

COPING MECHANISMS

Each of the five Coping Mechanisms has an associated list of Behaviours.

AVOIDANCE

» Keep calm when it is dangerous to do so (and not merely inappropriate)

» Insist that other people remain calm when it is wholly inappropriate to do (e.g., "you're overreacting" to a legitimate threat)

» Ignore a problem until it is too late

» Lie about something dangerous, because other people would be justifiably upset if they knew the truth

» Say whatever you think you have to say to get yourself out of trouble, even if it hurts someone else

» Run away from a dangerous situation, even if it puts your friends, teammates, or the mission in danger

CONTROL

- » Silence a legitimate concern with anger, violence, or mockery
- » Insist on maintaining a hierarchy when it is detrimental to do so, and punish people who disobey
- » Use excessive force when it is wholly inappropriate
- » Berate someone for being "too emotional"
- » Ignore something important because it wasn't your idea
- » Verbally or physically abuse your teammates

UNREALITY

- » Fail to notice something important because you're fixated on something insignificant
- » Assume that you are hallucinating when you are actually perceiving something important
- » Feel a deep and unsettling wrongness with the world that you cannot put into words; this feeling causes you to mistrust people who you should probably trust
- » Wildly misconstrue an ambiguous or nonthreatening stimulus in a way that puts you or the mission in danger or jeopardizes an important relationship
- » Hallucinate something distressing or distracting at a bad time

INTERNAL FOCUS

- » Blame yourself for things that are not your fault
- » Avoid standing up for yourself or your friends at an important time
- » Show passivity, hopelessness, or indifference in the face of a threat to yourself or others
- » Give up when a task proves difficult
- » Point out problems in other people's ideas; offer no solutions
- » Sacrifice yourself needlessly

EXTERNAL FOCUS

- » Project your feelings onto other people
- » Ignore your own shortcomings
- » Be vindictive and mean-spirited to a clearly unwarranted degree
- » Insist that any problem is someone else's fault when it is clearly yours
- » Insist that any problem is someone else's fault when it is clearly an external force
- » Assume that others are acting with malicious intent

TRAUMA DESIGN PRINCIPLES

These rules are meant to give players a way to model reactions to stress and trauma. This has been typically called "madness" or "mental illness" in other games.
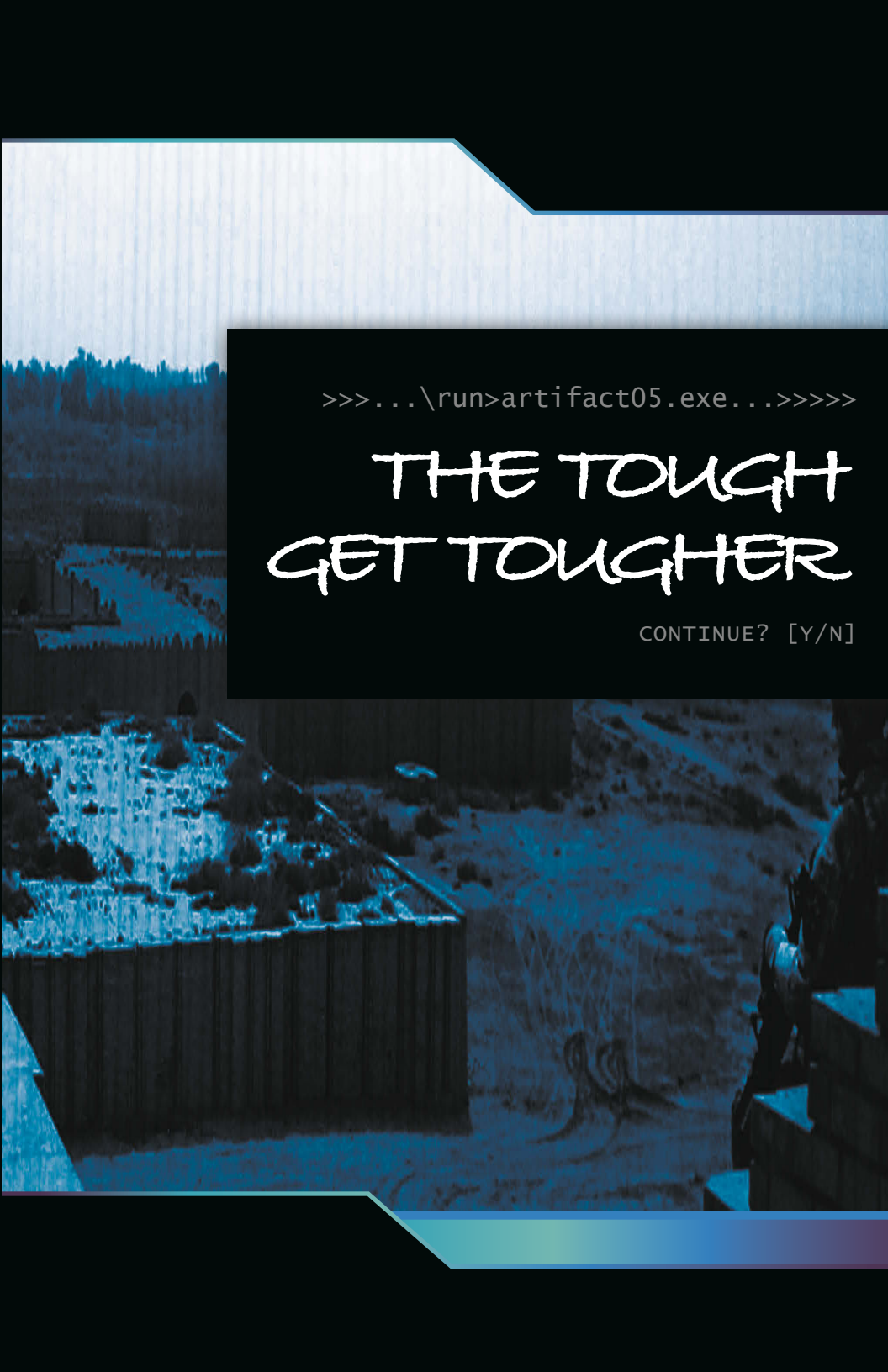
These rules work from the basis of several underlying assumptions:

» Having a mental disorder does not presuppose that someone will be incapable of functioning.

» Consequences are about how people act, and not about how they feel or what they think. There is not a right or wrong way to think or feel.

» No one is "too crazy" to be a playable character.

» There is not a quantitative or qualitative difference between "crazy people" and "normal people."

» Getting hurt follows a predictable pattern; healing is not as straightforward.

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THE TOUGH
GET TOUGHER

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THE TOUGH GET TOUGHER

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ANTIQUARIAN

The silence is golden
To books I am beholden
I know I'm bad,
'Cuz of the knowledge that I'm holdin'!

Library Rap, MC Poindexter & The Study Crew

Antiquarians have a deep and abiding love of history. They've likely spent most of their life in academia or related fields.

Antiquarians have a penchant for adventure and often participate in fieldwork to fund their research or recover artifacts.

It's likely that an Antiquarian has taken notice of the recent strange happenings and has started to see connections between them and many historical events.

NAME

Amelia, Bakhit, Bhagwan Lal, Cory, Evelyn, Gertrude, Giles, Gudrun, Guillemette, Hafez, Harry, Hamish, Harumi, Ida, Indiana, Iriaka, Kara, Lara, Malcolm, Marion, River, Sepideh, Shahina, Valeria, Zelia, an archaic name, a geographic name, a stuffy name

CHOOSE YOUR LOOK

Eyes: penetrating, calm, inquisitive, burdened, milky

Face: wizened, friendly, serious, scattered, nervous

Body: toned, heavyset, wiry, slight, ungainly

Wear: tactical, dandy, professorial, tattered, haphazard

Skin: artificial, otherworldly, asian, south asian, decorated, black, hispanic/latinx, indigenous, middle eastern, _____

Stats. Antiquarians start with the Touch stat. Assign each stat one of these numbers: +2, +1, +1, +0, +0, +0, -1; your Mind should be +2 or +1.

CYBERWARE

Choose one:

- ⏻ **Cybereyes:** When you have cybereyes installed, choose three of following tags: +*thermographic*, +*light* amplification, +*magnification*, +*flare* compensation, +*recording*, +*encrypted*, +*inaccessible* partition. When your enhanced sight helps, you may roll Synth for **assess**.

- ⏻ **Cybercoms:** When you have cybercoms installed, choose two of following tags: +*encrypted*, +*jamming*, +*recording*, +*satellite* relay, +*inaccessible* partition. When monitoring communications or giving orders in a tactical environment, you may roll Synth for **assess**.

- ⏻ **Neural Interface** with **Data Storage:** When you use research to search internally or externally stored data, gain an extra [intel] on a hit. Choose two of following tags: +*inaccessible* partition, +*encrypted*, +*high* capacity, +*high* speed. You may take the Hacker move **jack in** as an advance.

MOVES

- ⏻ **Academic research:** When you roll **research**, add the following questions to the list:
  - What is the historical significance of _____?
  - What other subjects have I researched that are related to _____?
  - What unexplained events surround _____?
  - What artifacts are associated with _____?

- ⏻ **Publish or perish:** Your research is leading you into some very interesting places and you've started to connect the dots. When you work to connect current events with historical precedent, roll Mind.

  This move creates a **History Clock**. This clock works like other standard clocks and is advanced through the usage of this move.

  10+: you've found a connection, advance this **History Clock**

  7-9: you get the evidence you need, but your research has opened you up to retribution by dark forces. Advance both this **History Clock** and the **Horror Clock**

  6-: you know too much—your mind recoils from the awful truth you glimpsed and purges it from your memory. The MC will advance the **Horror Clock** *and* make a move

  When a **History Clock** reaches 0000, you have connected a complex web that spans centuries; explain it to the group. The implications of this history will vary based on your story, but it should be significant and direct. It will expose some truth about the rifts and possibly about the **Horror** you're currently involved with. It may trigger an **Eldritch Trauma** roll; the MC will decide.

Choose one more:

- ⏻ **Quite the collection:** You have collected a number of unique items throughout your career. You gain 2 [artifacts] at the start of a new mission.

- ⏻ **Academic underground:** You know people who will do anything for a bit of knowledge. Once per mission you can exchange any number of [intel] for a like number of creds, or vice versa.

- ⏻ **It belongs in a museum!:** When you use **fast talk** to convince someone to hand over or provide information on an [artifact], you may roll with Mind instead of Style.

GEAR

Choose two weapons:

- ⏻ Ancient dagger (2-harm hand/close +*artifact*)
- ⏻ Flechette pistol (3-harm close/near quick flechette)
- ⏻ Hand taser (s-harm hand reload)
- ⏻ Light revolver (1-harm close/near reload)
- ⏻ Monofilament whip (4-harm hand messy area dangerous)
- ⏻ Shotgun (3-harm close/near loud messy reload)

Choose two:

- ⏻ Glasses or goggles (Choose one: +*light* amplification, +*recording*, +*magnification*)
- ⏻ Library card (once per mission, use the library to gain [intel])
- ⏻ Leather jacket (1-armour)
- ⏻ Recording equipment (+*audio*, +*video*, optional tags: +*simsense*, +*discreet*, +*encrypted*)
- ⏻ Trauma derms (allows you to **apply first aid** to characters at 2100 or less harm)

You start with 5 Cred.

DIRECTIVES

Choose two:

Academic addiction: When you put the pursuit of knowledge over the safety of your allies, mark experience.

Behavioral: Describe your ethical code. When adhering to your code hinders the mission, mark experience.

Well-respected: When your desire for the respect of your peers hinders the mission, mark experience.

ANTIQUARIANS IN *THE SPRAWL*

Antiquarians are crack researchers who can connect the dots between complex histories and the correlated events of the present. Their **academic research** allows them to add clarity to unusual information and to better understand its context within the wider picture. Their need to **publish or perish** drives them to create and test hypotheses and gives the team a leg up on others pursuing the same goals. Because they may have **quite the collection** of artifacts, they are the best suited to perform **Rituals** and interact with the rifts and the things that lie beyond.

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THE MEAN GET MEANER

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THE MEAN GET MEANER

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The two moves and one stat addition below are added as options to all players' **basic advances** list (p. 146, *The Sprawl*). Every time you mark ten experience, you may choose any advancement from the list of **basic advances**, including these three.

RITUAL

You've learned enough about the **Eldritch Horrors** beyond the rifts to entreat them for a boon of knowledge.

Ritual

When you perform a **Ritual** to seek knowledge from an **Eldritch Horror**, make an offering of as many [artifacts] as you feel necessary. Roll, adding +1 for each [artifact] spent.

> **10+:** your **Ritual** and offerings have pleased the **Eldritch Horror** beyond your wildest expectations. Describe the knowledge the **Eldritch Horror** has gifted you with; reality bends to make this knowledge true and actionable

> **7-9:** your **Ritual** and offerings have pleased the **Eldritch Horror** you beseeched. It gives you a deep insight into the knowledge you seek. The MC will tell you what this is; it will be actionable and helpful

> **6-:** the **Ritual** has burned through your [artifacts], leaving you significantly poorer but none the wiser

TOUCH STAT

You've gained familiarity with the magic of the rifts. This gives you a new stat called **Touch**. This stat starts at +0, and you add *"Add +1 to Touch"* twice as options on your **major advances** list. Antiquarians start with the Touch stat and have *"Add +1 to Touch"* once as a **basic advance** and once as a **major advance**.
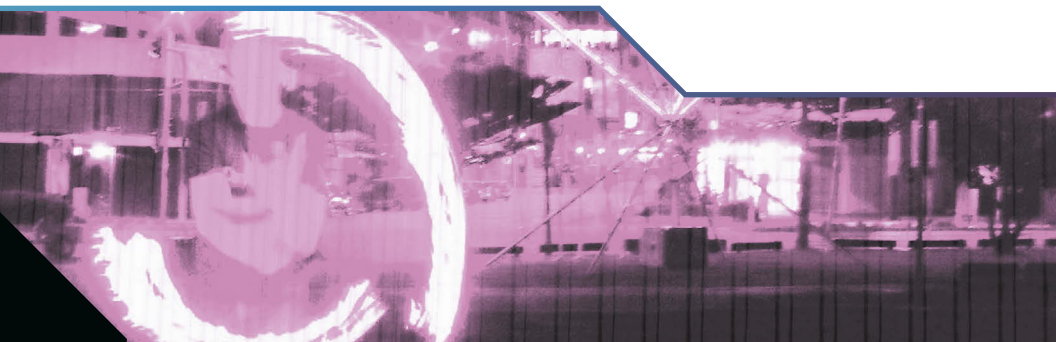
SPELL-CRAFT

In *A Darkening Alley*, **Spell-Craft** works by crafting phrases to describe the spell you are casting. If you roll a **7+**, you are able to create a **shape** of a certain **effect**–for instance a *ray* of *cold* or an *orb* of *darkness*. You have lists of both **shapes** and **effects** to choose from. You can combine any **shape** with any **effect**.

You *must* have the Touch stat to take this move.

Spell-Craft

When you use an [artifact] as a conduit to call upon the energy of the rifts to shape raw magic into physical effects, roll Touch.

> **10+:** you control the raw power of the rifts and create a supernatural **shape** of **effect**. Your [artifact] is not consumed
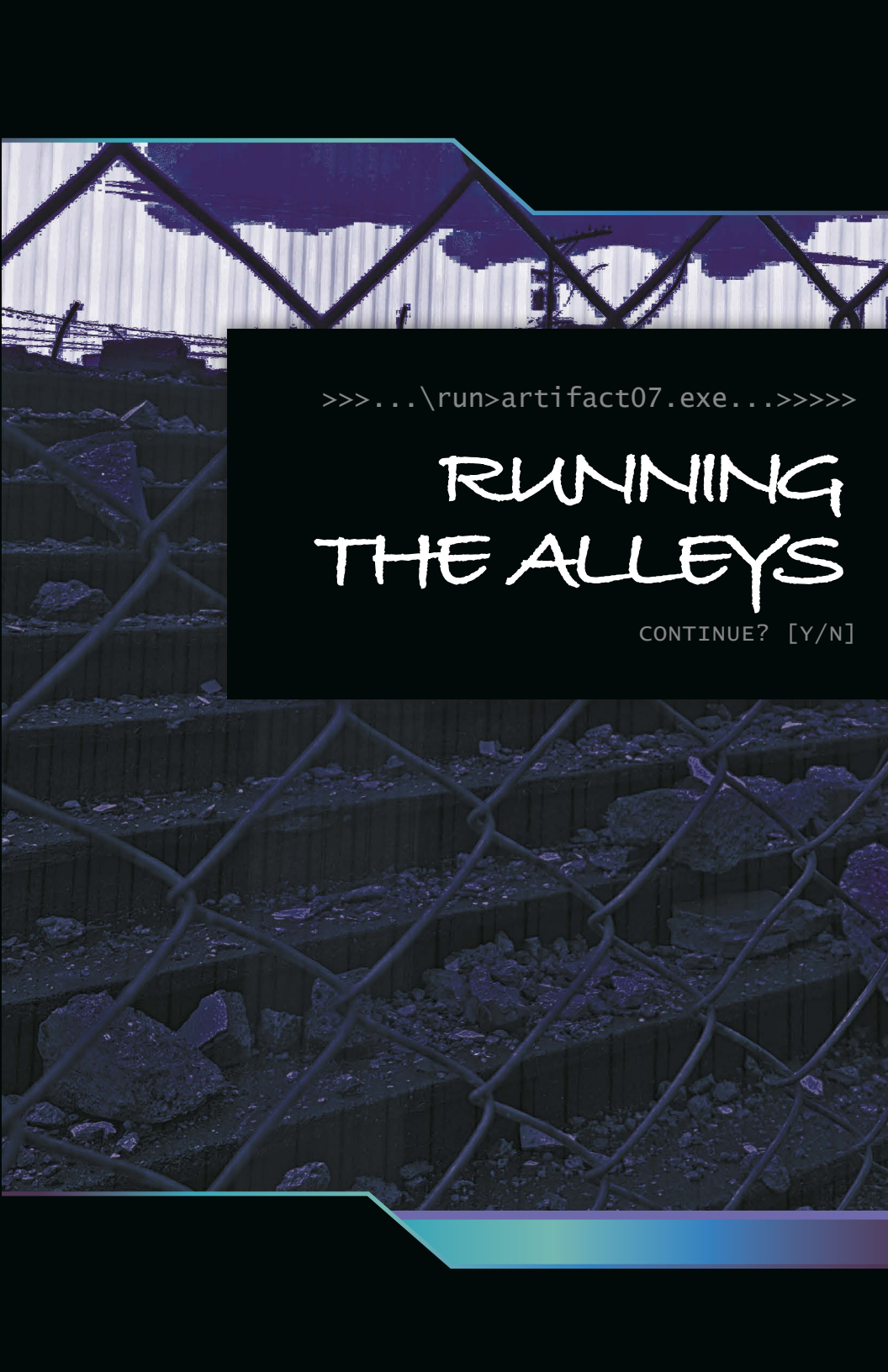
> **7-9:** you barely control the raw power of the rifts, but manage to create a supernatural **shape** of **effect**; your [artifact] is consumed

> **6–:** you fail to control the raw power of the rifts. Your attempts to draw on the otherworldly realm may fail completely, escape your control with disastrous effects, or attract the attention of something from beyond. The MC will make a hard move

Shape: *ray, orb, dart, slick, gas, cube*

Effect (1-harm)**:** *electricity, stunning, fire, acid, magnetism, cold, wind, light, disease*

>>>>...loading.input\\\decyphering.glyphs...>>>>

>>>...\run>artifact07.exe...>>>>>

RUNNING THE ALLEYS

CONTINUE? [Y/N]

RUNNING THE ALLEYS

A Darkening Alley takes place during a time of upheaval. The corporations are in the midst of becoming the real world power, and the surviving governments of the world are not particularly happy with that turn of events. This push-and-pull between the waning governments and the rising corporations will make running even more dangerous; corporate fixers may not be able to buy an operative out of jail or smooth things over with the local government.

The governments that still hold a bit of power are going to be flexing it like crazy, just to prove they can. What seems like a simple op might hit the fan when the local feds decide to stick their noses into corporate business.

On top of the upheaval, there are nascent rift magics to deal with. Most of an operative's work will revolve around checking out Event sites, places where rift activity has spiked. These have been happening with too much regularity and too much impact to only be the ravings of online conspiracy peddlers, so any corporation or government worth its salt will have operatives on the ground trying to exploit these sites.

The real threat is on the other side of the rifts, though—the **Horrors**. These are beings so powerful and so alien that humanity can't even conceive of their true intentions. We're ants to these things and, when they deign to show us attention, it's rarely going to go well for us.

Rift magic is wild and unchecked. Humanity isn't ready for it, but it's crashing the gates all the same. The operatives who get involved in this work are going to see things that are truly and utterly horrific, things no human mind should ever be asked to comprehend. Use the **Horror Clocks** and **Eldritch Trauma** to show the overwhelming pressure the rifts are bringing to bear. In *A Darkening Alley*, the mental stresses of these ops are more dangerous than any Killer's bullet.

The following books, movies and TV series are good touchstones for the sort of horror that you can work with: *As Above So Below, Cloverfield, Cloverfield Paradox, Dark City, Event Horizon, Hellraiser, Pontypool, Stranger Things, The Corridor, The Ritual, The Shrine, The Thing, The Void, True Detective Season 1, Yellow Brick Road,* as well as all the works of H.P. Lovecraft.

PHOTO CREDITS