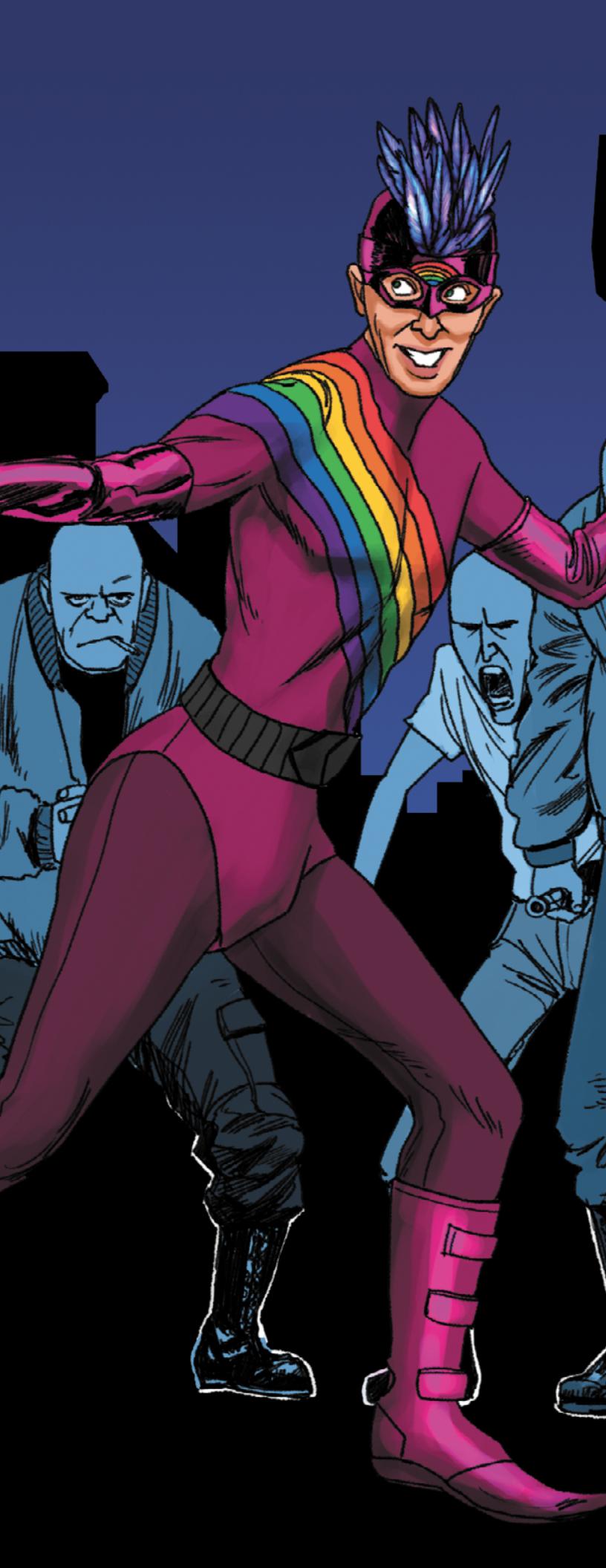




COMPILED  
POWERS

## Powers

Power	Tactic	Strategy	Effect
(Custom)	(Any)	{none}	Use rules for Devilish Devices to design a custom power.
Babel Babble	Corruption	Cunning	Attack target's <i>Knowledge</i> or <i>Nurture</i> . Can be used against multiple human targets.
Hanging Curse	Corruption	Patient	Forbid a target from performing an action you describe, or suffer serious consequences.
Impossible Beauty	Corruption	Devious	Significantly buff all <i>Corruption</i> and <i>Deceit</i> rolls to influence people for the scene.
Teleport Self	Corruption	Insightful	Teleport self up to one mile per <i>Corruption</i> .
Wither	Corruption	Devious	Directly & reliably attack target's <i>Open</i> , or decay inanimate matter.
Armor	Cowardice	Open	Reduce all physical damage by one Width; immunity to weapon damage bonuses.
Arrogance	Cowardice	{none}	Subtract <i>Cowardice</i> from Height of all attacks targeting Social Tactics.
Banish	Cowardice	Sly	Teleport touched object, or part of touched object, away from you. Can be used as an attack. <i>(Opposite of Summon.)</i>
Regeneration	Cowardice	Open	Restore Physical Strategies ( <i>Open</i> vs. <i>Sly</i> ) to initial values once per scene, and automatically between scenes.
Dominator Strike	Cruelty	Sly	Ranged weapon attack, personalized to your concept.
Terror	Cruelty	Devious	Directly & savagely attack target's <i>Courage</i> ; target can only defend with <i>Insightful Nurture</i> .
That Hideous Strength	Cruelty	{none}	Gain attack bonuses and ability to perform superhuman acts of strength. Effectiveness scales with <i>Cruelty</i> .
The Evil Eye	Cruelty	Cunning	Cursed target loses one die from all rolls, starting with Master Dice.
Body Control	Deceit	Devious	Compel others to follow a command. Can instead purchase "Animal Control" to use this power on animals instead of humans.
Dead Ringer	Deceit	Insightful	Disguise yourself as another specific person, and gain memories of things the target knew well (e.g. security passwords)
False Memories	Deceit	Patient	Implant false memories into target's mind.
Telekinesis	Deceit	Insightful	Psychically move objects, including people. Can be used as an attack.
Animal Form	Espionage	Cunning	Transform into an animal. Complexity scales with <i>Espionage</i> .
Clairvoyance	Espionage	Patient	Project senses miles away, seeing and hearing what occurs there.
Ineffable Defense	Espionage	{none}	Reduce all bonuses based on surprise or secrets used against you by your <i>Espionage</i> .
Retrocognition	Espionage	Patient	See the past at your location. Time range scales with <i>Espionage</i> .
Soulless Materialism	Generosity	Cunning	Animate objects into mob of minions. Size of mob scales with <i>Cunning</i> .
Alchemy	Greed	Cunning	Transform one material into other, significantly buffering <i>Generosity</i> -based persuasion. Can be used as an attack.
Crime-Time	Greed	Cunning	Freeze time for sixty seconds, during which time you can set up an Advantage (strength of Advantage depends on efficacy of what you set up over the extra minute)
Psychic Object	Greed	Cunning	Produce objects out of nothing. Complexity scales with <i>Greed</i> .
Summon	Greed	Cunning	Teleport object, or part of object, within range into your hand. Can be used as an attack. <i>(Opposite of Banish.)</i>
Dark Ritual	Knowledge	Devious	Satisfy your demon's pet obsession with a full-round symbolic action to gain a die on every roll for the scene.
Oracle	Knowledge	Devious	Gain the answer to one question asked of the GM regarding what's going to happen or what the best course of action should be.



# DEMONIC POWERS

Each Sinister Tactic has three associated powers, as listed below in tidy alphabetical order. Descriptions follow. Unless it states otherwise, any power that attacks physically can be dodged or blocked like any other physical attack.

## *Corruption*

Impossible Beauty	Hanging Curse
Teleport Self	<i>Babel Babble</i>
Wither	

## *Deceit*

Body Control	False Memories
Dead Ringer	
Telekinesis	

## *Cowardice*

Armor	Regeneration
Arrogance	
Banish	

## *Espionage*

Animal Form	Retrocognition
Clairvoyance	Ineffable Defense
Knowledge	<i>Dark Ritual, Oracle</i>

## *Greed*

Alchemy	Crime-Time
Psychic Object	Summon
Generosity	<i>Soulless Materialism</i>

## *Cruelty*

Dominator Strike	The Evil Eye
Terror	That Hideous Strength

## ALCHEMY (GREED)

For the avaricious, there's the beauty of changing flowers, lead or hero sandwiches into expensive statuary. For the just plain vicious, you can do the same to a hero's girlfriend.

The "Midas Touch" gimmick of turning someone completely into an inert statue is indisputably classic *and* classy, but it has some restrictions. You can't do it on someone who's running, kicking you, or otherwise being anything other than helpless. In

short, if you could simply shove a pillow over someone's face and kill him without a roll, then you can turn him into a statue *with* a roll. (Pillow to the face, c'mon, where's the fun in that?) He's okay once the power wears off, unless you melt him down. In which case, ooh, ick.

For people who are running and kicking and otherwise resisting your decorative ambitions, attacks with this take the form of randomly making chunks of them golden. This wears off after a while (like adolescence) but is painful and confusing while it lasts (also like adolescence). If nothing else, there are plenty of sneering musical puns to be made after transforming someone's anatomy, ranging from Shirley Bassey ("Golllllldfingah!") through Neil Young ("...keep me searchin' for a heart of go-oh-ohld...") and Jurassic 5 ("...holdin' on to what's golden..."). Enjoy the laughs while

you can, because anything you turn into 24 karats changes back after 24 hours.

**When it's used for attack, you can roll *Cunning Greed* as an attack pool. You can't improve this with a weapon, but it has a range about equal to a pistol.**

**Any time you use *Generosity* to buy someone off or bribe him, you can use one die in the pool as a Master Die, as long as your *Greed* is equal to or greater than your *Generosity*.**

## ANIMAL FORM (ESPIONAGE)

You can turn into a wolf, or a raven, or a giant snake. (The snake thing is perennially popular.) You can become any natural animal you're aware of—fish,

fowl or monotreme. It's typically a somewhat sinister specimen of the relevant species, unless it's something that just doesn't come in "creepy"—like a bunny or a kitty. But if you turn into a wolf, it's a black wolf with red eyes unless you specify otherwise.

Weirdly, extinct species are off limits. ("Until you get serious about saving the habitat of the Sumatran tiger, I will kill one hostage a day!") You also can't use this to change into a human being—or, perhaps, if you do, you're stuck changing into the human you are.

If your *Espionage* is low, you're only going to take its appearance; but the more *Espionage* you have, the more of an animal's special qualities you can mimic. *Espionage* also limits how much you can change your mass. The chart below offers some guidelines but is hardly comprehensive.



## Animal Abilities

*Espionage* 1: If it's human-sized, you look like it; but you have no other special capabilities.

*Espionage* 2: You can shrink to the size of a very large bird (vulture, condor) and fly like one.

*Espionage* 2: You can grow to the size of a horse and gain +1d Advantage to all **Open** rolls while changed.

*Espionage* 2: You can take the form of an aquatic animal like a shark or porpoise and gain its ability to breathe water or hold your breath, but you can't swim any faster than you run and your basic attacks are unchanged.

*Espionage* 3: You can shrink as small as a rattlesnake or cobra. If you hit anyone with a bite, your poison offers a +2 weapon Advantage.

*Espionage* 3: You can shrink as small as a pigeon or sparrow and fly like one. Tracking you by ordinary means is effectively impossible.

*Espionage* 4: You can grow to the size of a rhino or elephant and, while transformed, gain +2 Advantage to all **Open** rolls.

*Espionage* 4: You can shrink as small as a mouse, thereby gaining a Master Die in situations where you're trying to hide by being mouse-sized.

*Espionage* 5: You can shrink to the size of a bee or mosquito, flying like one and gaining that hiding task Master Die.

*Espionage* 5: You can grow as large as a whale and hold your breath appropriately. (Or, if you prefer, breathe water as a giant squid). You get +3 Advantage to all **Open** rolls in this shape.

**To change, you always have to roll a set using Cunning Espionage. The change lasts until you quit it, or until the end of the scene.**

## ARMOR (COWARDICE)

Demonic armor is not pretty. At least, not the kind PCs get. It tends towards knobby plates of discolored chitin that would make a deformed lobster start cracking wise, or glowing eldritch runes that moan and spark with baleful luster, or matted stinking clots of hair and filth.

**To activate Armor, roll Open Cowardice.** If you get a set, your armor appears and remains visible for the rest of the scene. Any physical damage has its Width reduced by one point. Moreover, weapons can no longer give Width bonuses when used to injure you. Weapon bonuses to non-physical attacks, still factor in, be they from powers like Terror or from someone using a knife to threaten your mom.

Unfairly (as is so often the way when dealing with things infernal), deluded 'heroes' as described on page 125 usually wind up with either glitter-sparkly energy fields or simple toughness that can't be perceived at all, until you hit them with a truck or something. It helps maintain the illusion that they're something other than hell's pawns, while PCs get no such comfort.

## ARROGANCE (COWARDICE)

Most demons have a certain degree of smug superiority. There's a minority of cringing sniveler scuttling around and mumbling "gollum," but most stand tall, dress gaudy, and speak of themselves in the third person. It's more fun even though, just like your grade-school teachers uselessly told you, bullies are only lashing out to cover up their insecurity.

But not all demons can make arrogance into a form of supernatural defense. You, however, can do just that. Your self-regard covers a fundamental unwillingness to examine your own motivations. Like an impenetrable shield, that stubbornness protects you from doubt, persuasion, and plain-spoken good advice.

**Whenever anyone attempts to persuade you using Nurture, Honesty, Deceit or**

**Corruption**, the Height of their set is reduced by your *Cowardice* rating. If this reduces their set's Height to zero, it's ruined.

As soon as a relevant persuasion attempt is made, it's up to the mortal to decide, during the declare phase, whether he's using Arrogance to defend. If he does, his demon goes active. Note that there's no roll required for Arrogance, so he can switch it on and still take other actions.

## BANISH (COWARDICE)

Teleporting a chunk of organ from the middle of a struggling target is trickier than you might think (so don't get distracted), but the look of surprise someone gets when their gall bladder suddenly appears in front of their face really is priceless. Other than the unpleasantness of the non-physical teleport attack (and, of course, it's just as easy to drop someone from a high place if that seems more fitting), Banish is terribly handy for getting out of handcuffs, dropping rocks on people's heads, or getting undressed in a hurry.

That said, this form of teleportation has some quirky limits. First off, you have to start out touching the object or person you want to send. (To call things to you, you need Summon.) You can only teleport the object (or fraction thereof) to somewhere within thirty feet, and you must see the destination with your naked eye. It has to have enough open space to accommodate the incoming object. But teleporting only part of something is perfectly kosher, and quite dramatic when the cops find half their paddy wagon door stuck in a treetop. You can teleport up to a hundred pounds for every point of *Cowardice*.

To attack with Banish, roll a set with *Sly Cowardice*. The first time it's used to attack someone in a scene, it gives +3 surprise Advantage; after that, it's good for +1 surprise Advantage. It does normal damage to *Courage*, like most physical attacks.

For each point of *Cowardice* you have, you can 'dedicate' one item that belongs to you and which you've handled a lot. (For our purposes, a set of clothing counts as an "item" as do all the keys on your ring, or the sniper

rifle and its case and bullets, or whatever.) When sending a dedicated item to any location you're intimately familiar with (somewhere you currently live or work, say), the range is increased to thirty miles and you no longer have to see the destination. The destination still has to have enough open area to contain the item.

## BODY CONTROL (DECEIT)

With this power, people do as they are told. It doesn't change people's emotions or opinions or decisions, but it does very effectively hijack control of their bodies. You can force them into any perverse or dangerous actions that you desire. The power doesn't make people forget or misperceive or misremember things, though. It's only for concrete movements.

To use Body Control, you need to make eye contact and issue a command. (It's especially fun if you preface this, or follow it with either "My will is stronger than yours! You must obey!" or just "Sleeeep!") The target doesn't have to understand the order, but he does have to hear it, so you can use any language you want. You can only target one person at a time.

Roll *Devious Deceit*. Your Height determines how many words long your command can be. The GM should interpret it in the most straightforward and obvious way. Characters can choose to defy a command, doing nothing instead. Doing so costs a point of *Nurture*. The *Nurture* point vanishes, it does not slide. The point comes from *Insightful* if *Nurture* is at zero. Characters who have run out of both *Nurture* and *Insightful* can still disobey, but doing so leaves them unable to act for the remainder of the scene. Commands that would take more than one scene to complete are begun but are abandoned when the scene ends.

A variation on this is **animal control**, which works on any animal but not on people and involves more dramatic gestures. (You still have to issue verbal commands. You needn't preface them with "Children of the night, attend!" but I personally feel you should.) To have power over both people and animals, buy the power twice.

## CLAIRVOYANCE (ESPIONAGE)

Clairvoyance or “remote viewing” or “scrying” is the psychic answer to pointing a telescope at your neighbor who never draws the curtains. When you clairvoy (is that a verb?) it’s like you’re right there. You hear nothing, but you can see anything that’s lit up and not blocked by walls, clothes, lampshades or the like. Since you can move your point of view with but a thought, even those walls and lampshades are unlikely to deter you for long. You need to be fairly relaxed and have your eyes closed to use Clairvoyance.

**Activating clairvoyance requires a Patient Espionage roll. You can scan one mile outwards for every point of Espionage you have. It does not search out persons, but if you know a location you can send your vision straight there, provided it's within range.**

## DEAD RINGER (DECEIT)

When the Prince of Lies equips his underlings to sow dissent and mistrust among mortals, he doesn’t do a half-assed job. When a demon uses Dead Ringer to impersonate someone, it’s not just the look. It’s the facial expressions and postures and nervous gestures. It’s the voice tone and timbre, and enough speech habits and superficial memories to carry off the charade to perfection. You must, however, have spent at least a few minutes in the presence of the person you’re going to copy. You don’t have to talk to him or touch him or anything; peeing in the next stall is close enough. This power duplicates garments, documents or badges. It also equips you to remember things like security passwords as long as the target had them down cold. If he’d have to think hard to dredge up the launch codes, you’re out of luck.

**To activate Dead Ringer, roll Insightful Deceit. With a set, you change to look like the targeted person for the remainder of the scene, or until you halt the effect, or until you use Dead Ringer to change into someone else. While you’re changed, it’s a Difficulty 5 Cunning Espionage roll for anyone else to spot the charade simply**

from casually suspicious intuition. If you speak with someone who knows the victim well, he gets an **Insightful Honesty** roll to see through the disguise if he has any reason to be alert. The Difficulty of the **Honesty** roll is equal to your **Deceit** score.

## DOMINATOR STRIKE (CRUELTY)

This is your personalized weapon of choice. Bolts of hellfire? The icy touch of the grave? Your face bursts open and your skull flies out to bite people? They all work the same way. Dominator Strike has about the range of a typical firearm and gives a +1 Weapon bonus.

When you pick the power, give it one extra off the list below.

**Persistent:** After the first impact, it continues to slide away a point of **Courage** every round until the victim takes a moment to stop the effect. (If it’s hellfire, she stops, drops and rolls. If it’s acidic slime, he pulls off his shirt and wipes himself clean. If it’s a swarm of satanic bees, she shoos them away with her cape.)

**Fearsome:** The first time you use it in a scene, everyone who isn’t demon-infused slides a point of **Courage** over to **Cruelty**.

**Enervating:** The first time you use this on a person in a scene, instead of doing normal damage it slides a point of **Open** over to **Sly**.

**Hot:** It sets things on fire. This works like the ‘Persistent’ perk on living people, but just burns and burns for curtains, carpet, piles of dry leaves and other flammable inanimates.

**Stunning:** The first time you use this on someone in a scene, instead of normal damage it removes a point of **Knowledge**.

**Nasty:** Instead of a +1 Weapon bonus, it has a +2 Weapon bonus.

**Use Sly Cruelty to make a Dominator Strike attack, as if it was any other**



BARKLEY

weapon. Moreover, you can always use *Cruelty* to attack with Dominator Strike, even if for some reason you'd normally have to use *Courage* instead.

## IMPOSSIBLE BEAUTY (CORRUPTION)

Most typically, this means you are impossibly beautiful, like a late 1990s Taye Diggs made entirely of late 1980s Winona Ryders. But it works just as well for entrancing music or awe-striking sculptures or brain-stunning fashion design.

To activate Impossible Beauty, roll *Devious Corruption*. For the remainder of the scene, you get Advantage to *Corruption* or *Deceit* rolls made to influence people, but not to activate demonic powers. The Advantage is equal to the Width of your Impossible Beauty roll.

Note that because Impossible Beauty gives you Advantage, it doesn't matter how many people you enthrall. There's no multiple action penalty for using it. Also, it's a 'generic Advantage' like aiming: The stuff that counteracts surprise and secrecy doesn't do any good against loveliness.

## INEFFABLE DEFENSE (ESPIONAGE)

This power's description is deliberately vague: The demon has an unwholesome ability to stall, impede and avoid the actions of others. This could be described as warning precognition, nasty telepathic insight, simply being smarter and 'knowing they were going to do that' or some kind of instant hypnosis that makes people unable to complete their actions. But while the rationale for the effect is vague so that you can tailor it to your preferences, the effect of Ineffable Defense is always the same.

Any rolls that use surprise or secrets for bonuses against you have their bonus reduced by an amount equal to your *Espionage*. If you have *Espionage* 3, no one can get the drop on you.

This isn't always on, but when something happens that might surprise or startle the character, the mortal player decides whether to invoke Ineffable Defense during the declare phase of the conflict. Once declared, it goes into effect with no roll and lasts the rest of the scene, complete with demonic commentary. If he opts to leave it off, he can still turn it on later.

## PSYCHIC OBJECTS (GREED)



You can produce objects from nowhere and, when you no longer need them, banish them back to nowhere. This could simply be a case of legerdemain ("...of course I have my passport right here!") or you can present it as a full-on Green Lantern power ring.

The greedier you are, the larger and more complicated the object you can create from nothing. The object has to appear in contact with your body. If it's too heavy for you to hold up, it has to appear resting on the ground. (This just means you can't drop a two-ton weight on somebody by conjuring it from nowhere.)

### Psychic Object Limits

*Greed* 1: A commonplace object you could effortlessly hold in one hand (without any kind of augmented strength). No electronics. A gun works normally, but if you make something that looks like an iPhone or a universal remote, it's just a prop. Credit cards have no functioning magnetic strip.

**Greed** 2-3: Any object you could, conceivably, lift to waist height with unaugmented strength. You can now create any electronic object you understand.

**Greed** 4-5: Anything that you could buy made by humans, up to the size and weight of a Bugatti Veyron. (That's a sports car.)

To create a psychic object, roll **Cunning Greed**. Any set is sufficient to create the object. Psychic objects last until the end of the scene. You can produce a number of objects equal to your **Greed** rating in any single scene.

## SUMMON (GREED)

Summon is the polar opposite of Banish, in terms of limited teleportation. You see an object in the distance, gesture dramatically and—bamf!—it appears in your hand. Obviously this doesn't have the same broad-scale possibilities for mayhem (unless you're standing at the edge of a building or something), but man is it sweet for shoplifting. Or disarming your enemies.

You can only teleport the object (or fraction thereof) from somewhere within thirty feet, and you must see the target with your naked eye. (Sorry, you can't just teleport someone's heart into your hand—unless it was already visible, in which case, what's the point?) You can teleport up to a hundred pounds for every point of **Greed**. As with Banish, you can rip stuff apart with Summoning, though it's less precise because you don't start out at point blank range to your target.

To attack with Summon, roll a set with **Cunning Greed**. The first time it's used to attack someone in a scene, it gets a +1 surprise bonus and a +1 weapon bonus. After that, it's just the +1 weapon bonus. If you're not attacking, any set is sufficient to bring over any suitable object.

As with Banish, you can dedicate an item for each point of **Greed**. To qualify for dedication, it has to belong to you without contest and be within your

lift limit. As long as that object is somewhere you know intimately (like a current workplace or home, or lair), you can bring it to you from a range of thirty miles, and you don't have to be looking at it. For our purposes, a supervillain costume counts as an "item," but not the stuff on the utility belt (a separate item) or a weapon (another item). But you can teleport the clothes onto you for a sweet quick-change.

## TELEKINESIS (DECEIT)

Some demons prefer to use it subtly, to slam doors, rattle windows, steal quietly and kidney-punch people with invisible, long-distance fists. But others are perfectly fine with stopping bullets in midair and hanging people upside down to emphasize a point.

You can lift a hundred pounds for every point of **Deceit** you have. You have to be able to see your target, and it has to be within ten feet for every point of **Deceit**. You can move it at about the pace of a brisk walk. Fine control is problematical. If you're at the full extent of your weight, your margin of accuracy is going to be within 18 inches, give or take. If you're moving something the size of a pencil, you can scrawl with it but not write gracefully. Tapping keyboards works fine though, if a bit slowly.

Human bodies are considered one "thing" and, being pretty large, it's hard to just poke an eye or close off a carotid artery. However, if you're in a situation where you could simply smother someone with a pillow, you can also use TK to dispose of him dramatically. You can use it for a *coup de grace*, but not as an instant, sure-fire kill.

Any time you use TK as an attack on someone, roll **Insightful Deceit**. The first time you use it against someone who hasn't seen or heard about the power, it has +2 surprise Advantage and +1 weapon Advantage. Every time after that, the inherent surprise bonus drops to +1. If you're not attacking, any roll is sufficient to lift an object that's in range and light enough.

## TELEPORT SELF (CORRUPTION)

To vanish in a puff of smoke or a concealing shadow, or to step through a mirror and taunt your enemy as you fade—it's a classic villain move. It's also useful for setting up nasty sneak attacks, or getting away from dangerous areas, or getting into areas that are meant to be secure. But you can only move yourself, your clothes and your personal effects, and you can only move everything all at once, accompanying yourself. (Teleporting out of handcuffs or other constraint is a Difficulty 3 trick, as is vanishing and leaving your clothes behind.)

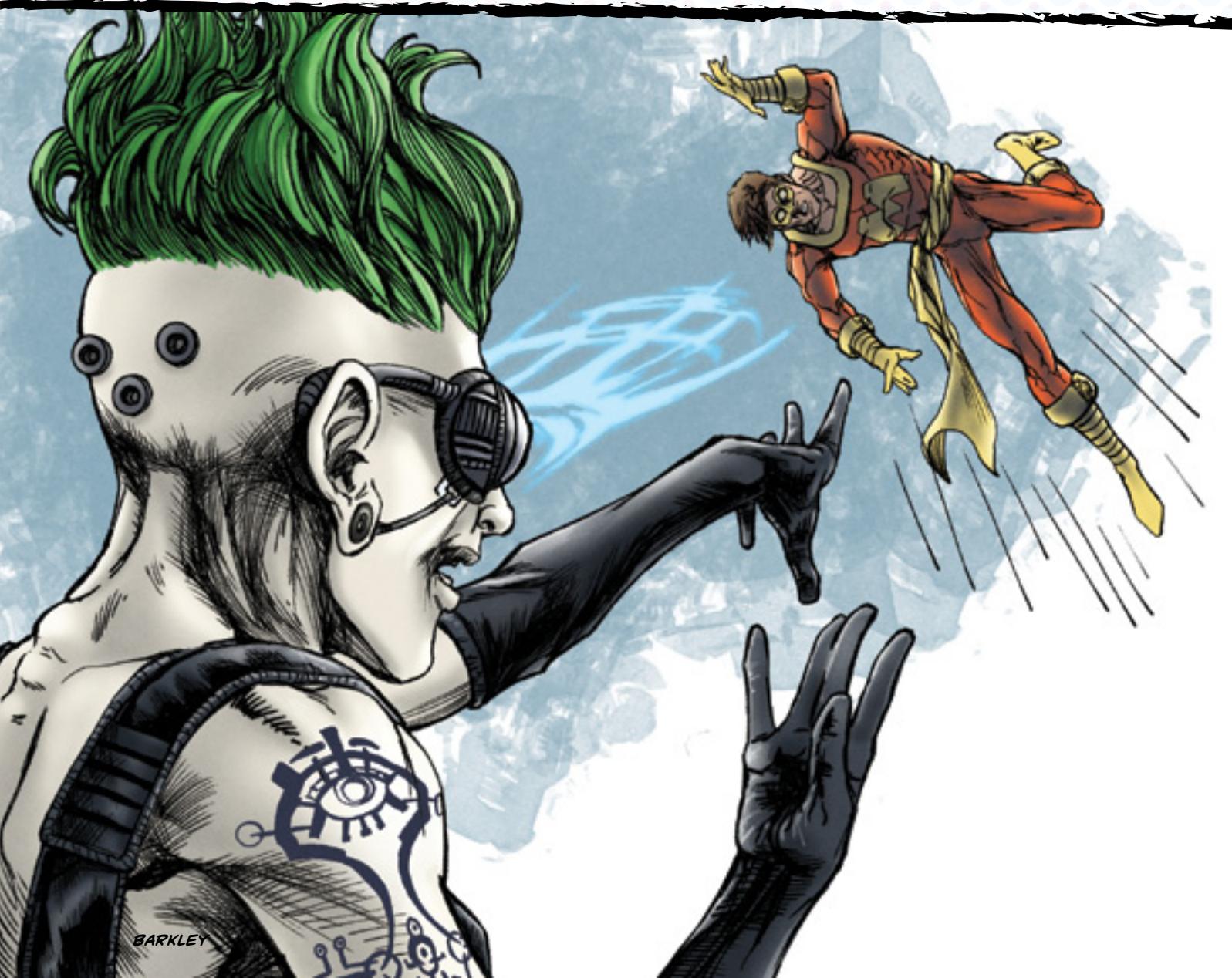
Your power has the range of one mile for every point of *Corruption* you have, but you can only teleport into certain places. The destination

has to have enough open space to contain your body. (Don't worry, you won't leave pieces behind or wind up stuck halfway through a wall.) It also has to be somewhere you're seeing, or someplace you've physically seen recently, or a place you know intimately.

**To teleport, roll a set with *Insightful Corruption*. When your action goes off, you vanish. If you use this to get an advantage over someone in combat, it gives you +1 Advantage from surprise.**

## TERROR (CRUELTY)

You say 'boo' and, instead of saying 'eek,' people scream, claw their own faces bloody, and develop post-traumatic stress disorders. This is not invoked through their physical senses (or, at least, it doesn't have to be—turning into a flame-



cloaked giant certainly might increase the effect with a weapon bonus). Even if you look like a mild-mannered bookworm, you can strike people with mortal terror. There's no need to gesture or say anything or even look (though, let's be frank, uncorking lines like "Tremble before me, puny mortals!" is pretty typical). You just pick someone nearby and decide you want him freaking out.

To invoke Terror, roll **Devious Cruelty**. It has the range of a handgun. If your set pierces their defenses (and the only thing normal people can use to defend is **Insightful Nurture**), it strips away one point of **Courage**. (It's not slid into **Cruelty**, it just goes away.) However, once **Courage** hits zero, Terror has no further effect. Additional hits do not affect **Open**.

## THAT HIDEOUS STRENGTH (CRUELTY)

Super-strength is simple to understand. You can lift, crush and uproot this, that and the other thing. But in an RPG, it can be hard to implement, especially if you want to be accurate about your physics. Can someone pick up a semi-trailer by the back axle without it snapping in half? If someone holds a main battle tank over his head, shouldn't his feet get poked into the ground like fence posts?

*Better Angels* is not focused on Newtonian physics. Rules are provided for bludgeoning people with your bone-breaking thews. Any other feat of strength—pulling up trees, flipping over cars, throwing garbage dumpsters through cathedrals, punching out skyscrapers—is pitched to the GM's judgment, within some simple guidelines.



### *Cruelty* 1:

**Combat Rules:** +1 weapon bonus

**Without a Roll, You Can:** break handcuffs, tear phone books, bend steel bars.

**With a Rolled Set, You Can:** lift a car over your head, kick through a steel door.

### *Cruelty* 2-3:

**Combat Rules:** +2 weapon bonus

**Without a Roll, You Can:** tear a half-inch steel plate, uproot a parking meter.

**With a Rolled Set, You Can:** jump through a brick wall, break a foot-thick living tree in half.

## CUSTOM POWERS

The little stories throughout this book contain supervillains who are using all kinds of crazy powers that aren't on this list. You can too. If you're one of those who wants a demon whose power is *Raise An Army From The Very Stones* or *Alluring Succubus Disguise That Only Affects Men*, or something a little more standard like *Telepathy*, here's how it works.

Go to "Devilish Creativity" on page 63. Build something that costs three points. That's your power. If it costs four points, take one flaw. If it costs six points, take three flaws. Your GM picks a Strategy/Tactic pair for its pool and, if necessary, what gets rolled to gobble it up. There it is. So... Telepathy? Does something science can't quite manage; major environmental change; three points. If I were your GM, I'd make it either **Cunning Espionage** or **Insightful Corruption**, and if the latter you'd only be able to detect the yucky stuff. (If the former, only very practical things, not secret hopes or hidden emotions.) People can roll **Insightful Nurture** to resist the **Corruption** version, or **Cunning Knowledge** to misdirect the **Cunning Espionage** version.

Want to call up a batch of demonic minions? That's going to cost you. First, it's a major environment change, bringing a load of entities into existence where there were previously none. So that's a +3 effect. That may be okay if you don't want them to be able to attack, but if they can't attack they aren't very good minions, are they? Tack on the ability to automatically attack for +1 and give it a point of Advantage to keep them from being total suck. Now you have to buy this off with two flaws. How about... blatant and palpably evil? Hell, if you're calling up minor imps to wreak mayhem, those barely sound like drawbacks. Once per round you can barf out a servitor. Let's base this on **Cunning Generosity** (because you're gaining an object or advantage, but not in any kind of decent or virtuous way). Roll a set, generate a minion. You can have a total number of minions equal to your **Cunning** pool. They either attack with 4d and get Width+1, or they attack with 5d.

## WITHER (CORRUPTION)

**Cruelty** 4-5:

**Combat Rules:** +3 weapon bonus

**Without a Roll, You Can:** tip a locomotive engine onto its side, throw a car engine a city block.

**With a Rolled Set, You Can:** collapse one corner of a skyscraper with your bare hands.

Those weapon bonuses come into play whenever you punch someone or throw something at him. If you're hitting someone with an object that would normally give a +1 weapon bonus or more, your weapon bonus rises by a single point until it maxes out at +3. Note that it doesn't matter whether you're throwing a full beer keg at someone or a single peach pit. We just assume the beer keg is slower and easier to dodge, while that peach pit can do some hellish damage at high speed.

You grab someone (or something), shout "Feel your flesh writhe in the grip of malice!" and your victim's arm or leg or face turns leprosy and dry and shrivelly. Or grab a car and make it rust out, turn a thriving tree to a blasted deadfall, or corrode a painting into a cracked, faded mess. Wither is pretty good against inanimate objects and better at injuring humans. But since it leaves **Courage** alone, it's less effective against supernatural enemies.

Make a **Devious Corruption** roll. This is a physical attack that only works on grappled victims. It cannot be improved with secret or weapon Advantages, though surprise works normally. When it hits, it moves a point of the victim's **Open** into **Sly**, no matter the Width of the roll. Against an inanimate object, Wither does about as much damage as having a drunk driver smash an SUV into it at 35 mph. It can be dodged and blocked normally.

A detailed illustration of a woman with long dark hair, wearing a white sailor-style top with a red collar and a red necktie, and a dark blue pleated skirt. She is standing in a dramatic pose, pointing her right index finger upwards. Behind her is a massive, fallen statue of a figure with multiple heads and arms, appearing to be made of stone or metal. The scene is set outdoors with a cloudy sky.

# NEW POWERS

## BABEL BABBLE (CORRUPTION)

When the Lord did reach down and confuse the speech of man, the demons of the universe all exchanged high-fives (and high-claws, high-psuedopods, etc.). It's like the big guy was doing their job for them; fractured cultures, petty misunderstandings, confusion. It was great!

Humans have only improved since then, especially since industrialization. Fueled by ego, classism, and a number of other vices, mortals have found ways to confuse their speech even amongst those that share the same language. Heart attacks become "myocardial infarctions." Ethnic cleansing turns into "opposition force pacification." Mass layoffs get dismissed as "synergistic organizational restructuring." The best part of this is that every human knows when this bullshit is being used on them — but out of fears of seeming unreasonable, uneducated, or unfair — they shut up and pretend not to smell the lie. This disconnect between what they know and what they do detaches and depresses the average mortal, and in the hands of a demon, it can absolutely crush someone without them even realizing it.

To use Babel Babble, the supervillain launches into spiel of jargon. It doesn't matter from what occupation or sub-sub-sub-specialization the language comes from so long as the speech is peppered with buzzwords and totally meaningless. Fueled by demonic despair, the hellbinder rolls **Cunning Corruption**. Any sets can be used to attack **Knowledge** (the nonsensical crap bores the victim into a stupor before enraging them) or **Nurture** (the words are so banal and meaningless that they make existence itself seem the same way). Regular humans can be attacked as a group with Babel Babble, but the power has to be concentrated to have an effect on anyone with a demon or angel. Needless to say, if the villain can't talk or the victim can't hear, Babel Babble doesn't work.

Babel Babble Example for "Education-ese:" Reverse character education requires project-based inquiry

methodologies facilitated by highly-qualified pedagogues in learning environments that support 21st century skills whilst mastering federal CCSS, state GLE's/CLE's, and district CSIP goals as outlined by the PDC's assigned book study for PLCs: Digital Natives and Differentiated Instruction: Best Practices for Vertically-Aligned Curriculum Guidelines.

## CRIME-TIME (GREED)

*Written by Greg Stolze, © 2013.* This isn't quite super-speed and it's not quite time-control. It's more of a pause that refreshes. Essentially, when you activate Crime-Time, everything stops for about sixty seconds. Everything, that is, except you.

If it were more comprehensive, this power could be used for every kind of evil, from sneaking lewd glances at people who wouldn't give you the time of day to dabbing sarin paste up the noses of passersby. The good news for humanity is that Hellbinders with this power cannot affect frozen matter. Anything that's touching them and becomes "unstuck in time" with them remains touching them and stays unstuck. Flaming objects instantly go out. Those sarin dabs remain stuck on one's finger. Punching someone who's frozen is like punching a brick wall.

With all these limits and restrictions in place, Crime-Time might seem less useful, but consider the advantages of compressing sixty of your seconds into an eyeblink for everyone else. Any physical attack that's timed later than you in a fight misses you, because you can simply get out of the way. You can (apparently) vanish from plain sight. You can hide behind the door while they search the basement and then, just as they're about to look where you are, you can freeze time, hide in the basement and continue to spy on them. You can't slit an unsuspecting time-frozen cop's throat, but you can run around behind him, point your gun and wait out the freeze. Or you can just climb on top of him and, when time comes back on, have him collapse under the sudden, unbalancing weight.

Being a product of demonic magic instead of stodgy ol' science, there's no air displacement shredding the scenery and

seeing light seems to work normally without any blue- or redshift.

Make a *Cunning Greed* roll. When it goes off (assuming you're in a time-sensitive situation), you can describe about sixty seconds' worth of action that you can take without moving anything (not even opening doors!) or leaving anything behind. When the time ends, you get +1 to +3 Advantage from surprise, depending on what (exactly) you set up. You cannot activate Crime-Time again the same round its effect occurs. (That is, your GM can stop you if you're trying to just roll one pause into another without letting anyone else ever act.)

## DARK RITUAL (KNOWLEDGE)

Most demons have been around for a looonnngg time. And like most elderly people, they tend to get stuck in their ways, especially when those ways have been ongoing for millennia. Ever wonder why supervillains are so keen to stick to their gimmicks? Why a master of crime would refuse to speak through anything but a ventriloquist dummy? Or flip a special coin when bullets are flying around? Believe it or not, the signature insanity of many supervillains is a tactical decision, or at the very least a way to get great-grandpa hellspawn to shut up and get to work.

A Dark Ritual is designed in two parts. The screwtape decides what the demon is so obsessed with that its presence is necessary for peak evil performance. It could be nearly anything: alliteration, rhyme, breakdancing, a certain color. For example, let's say that Ryaclimest the Singed really likes carrion-eating birds and requires their presence to feel comfortable in his host. The human now has to design the second part of the ritual, which must be some sort of action that would take at least one round of combat to perform. It could be delivering a speech, brandishing an object, doing a dance — anything so long as the Screwtape's obsession is fulfilled.

To return to the previous example, Ryaclimest's human becomes the Caped Corvid in order to please his demonic partner, but it takes more

than costuming to please the ancient corruption. The Corvid's player decides that in order to gain the true extent of his demon's ability, he has to make some sort of audacious bird-based pun to please the beast. Just screaming "Vulture!" isn't enough. The Corvid can only activate the Dark Ritual ability once he proudly shouts something like "Prepare to eat crow!" or "Quoth the Raven...suck it!"

It takes narration fitting with the theme on the part of the player and a successful *Devious Knowledge* roll to activate the Dark Ritual ability, but once it goes off it stays on for the rest of the scene. Since the demon feels so comfortable and at home now, it starts providing +1 advantage to all rolls for the remainder of the scene.

What keeps this power from making a hellbinder instantly dominant is the limitations. Dark Rituals cannot stack and the power can't be taken more than once; +1 advantage is the maximum. Dark Ritual also can't be taken if the player is using the "big demon" rule for extra powers or aspects. The ritual is so ingrained in the demon's black heart that it takes up half of its available powers, but the +1 can be applied towards the roll of the second power. Lastly, the ritual takes a whole round to carry out, and the human cannot split actions at that time (the demon demands his host's full attention on whatever bit of nonsense it came to fixate on over the centuries). That means that characters that want the bonus need to spend a whole round of combat doing the flamenco dance of the damned or whatever bullshit the demon deems necessary...even if a car has just been hurled at them and dodging might be a better idea. Characters that take damage while performing their Dark Ritual don't get the bonus until they can appease their demonic passenger without interruption by petty distractions like massive bodily trauma.

## THE EVIL EYE (CRUELTY)

By Greg Stolze, © 2013. Sometimes, you just want to put a hex on somebody, preferably from a distance and undetectably. That's a job for the Evil Eye. It has roughly the range of a pistol and when you glare at your foe and mutter something glottal under your breath... nothing happens.

That's the beauty of the Evil Eye. Nothing happens.

If that beauty is a little subtle for your tastes, consider that the Evil Eye hangs around. Your accursed victim tries to charm the pants off the UPS guy and nothing happens. She bucks for that promotion at work and nothing happens. She tries to get a search warrant for your lair, to no avail, and then she tries to shoot you and just misses.

The Evil Eye is not infallible, it can't stop everyone from doing everything, but it can slow down just about anybody. Here's how it works.

Make your *Cunning Cruelty* roll and, if you get a set, the target labors under the shackles of misfortune. Specifically, he takes a -1d penalty on every dice pool and, worse, if he has access to a Master Die somehow, that's the die that gets removed.

The curse lasts for a number of scenes equal the Width+Height of your roll. You can curse someone more than once, but it doesn't deepen the penalty, it just resets the duration. If you rolled really well with the first curse (say, Width 2 and Height 10 for 12 scenes of impediment), a second curse might actually shorten the duration (if it was Width 2 and Height 3, say).

GMs, be sure to have lots of pesky unrolled hassles fall upon the cursed also. Stuff like bank errors, car trouble, an embarrassing case of ringworm... GMCs who get the curse should suffer these quotidian dismay as well as more serious setbacks for which you didn't necessarily roll. Anything you can do to make sure the villainous PC knows the curse seems to be working is good too.

# FALSE MEMORIES (DECEIT)

By Greg Stolze, © 2013. The ability to falsify recollection is scary on a level different from building-blasting ice-rays or hemorrhage-causing eye-beams. We rely on our memories to be solid and trustworthy because if they aren't (and, as an aside, science assures us that they are in fact incredibly plastic), we have no basis for deciding anything. Our ideas of judgment are irreparably compromised. Even knowing that our memories have been damaged or tampered with, we have to treat them as if they can be trusted because the alternative is a morass of indecision and paranoia. With this power, you can consign people who irritate you to the depths of that morass.

To work it, you touch someone and think about the lie you want them to believe. Roll **Patient Deceit**. If it succeeds with sufficient Width and Height, your lie is true to the victim without even being told.

Width determines how firm the charade is, while Height determines how long it lasts.

False memories don't provide real skills, though with a 5+ result the GM may shift a Tactic one point left or right to represent motivation. For instance, that guy who truly believes he's a 9th Dan could shift a point from *Cruelty* to *Courage* from pure misplaced confidence.

Memories implanted need to be something that can be written out in fifty words or less, but people tend to imagine reasonable details for them. That's not even part of the power: Confabulation is a function of normal cognition. I've read that in like, three different books.

HEIGHT	DURATION
1-2	1 day
3-4	1 week
5-6	1 month
7-9	1 year
10	Permanent

WIDTH	STRENGTH OF THE MEMORY
2	<i>Memory is vague and foggy, on the level of "Yeah, I think I've met this guy," "Oh yeah, I saw some kind of altercation at some bar last week," or "I took some karate classes, um... sometime..."</i>
3-4	<i>Memory is sturdy and has some emotional content, unless actual events and recollections contradict it. "I remember you! Jedda Jankes from that crazy summer working at the Pizza Shack!" "I was coming out of the Pink Pinto Wednesday night and I saw some guy in a red and blue superhero getup pounding the crap out of this fat guy in a green shirt. It was heinous, man!" "Oh yeah, I got my brown belt ages and ages ago, but I'm totally out of training..."</i>
5+	<i>Memory is vivid, detailed, and is given assumed to be factual unless and until it is contradicted by overwhelming evidence or a powerful series of other memories. "What do you mean 'who's this'? It's my wife, Jedda! The love of my life!" "Clear as day your honor. It was Captain Daylight... er, the defendant... and he kept kicking and kicking Mr. Jericho there even though he was begging him to stop!" "You messed with the wrong guy, punk. KI-YAAH!"</i>

# HANGING CURSE (CORRUPTION)

By Greg Stolze, © 2013. While the curse of being hung by the neck until dead would be useful for agents of demonic malice, that's not exactly versatile. No, the 'hanging curse' takes its name from the way it hangs, like the legendary Sword of Damocles, until one day it drops.

It works like this: The demonic supervillain gestures dramatically and declares, "My ire shall fall upon thee should you ever talk to Janice again!" or some other similar trigger condition. "... should you ever raise violent hand against me" is a pragmatic alternative, while "...the next time thou hast the temerity to micturate standing up" is a dramatic combo of cruelty and weird specificity. The trigger action can vary widely.

The effect of the curse varies, but as long as you rolled a **Patient Corruption** set while placing it, it goes into effect the instant the target performs the forbidden action. Specifically, the curse immediately removes one point from a designated Virtuous Strategy. The point does not slide; it's just gone. It comes back only in the usual difficult ways you gain points in a Virtuous Strategy.

You can curse someone as many times as you want, but the most recent success is the only one that's supernaturally enforced. (You may not want to let people know that—if you fool them, they might avoid five or six behaviors, not just the last one forbidden. On the other hand, if they notice that one curse didn't take effect, they may assume all of them are bluff. Take your chances. If they do know the curse works, it's really fun to call out two or three fakes with each real one.)

The overarching effect of the Hanging Curse is to give your enemies an unpalatable choice. They can avoid the action you forbade (thereby letting you control them) or they can suck it up and take the hit on **Patient**, **Open** or **Insightful**. Once the curse discharges, it's done until another is placed.

While the Hanging Curse is powerful, it does have limits. First off, it only works if the victim can hear and comprehend the forbiddance.

(If she doesn't know what to avoid, she doesn't squirm, and what's the fun for your demon in that?) Secondly, it's one to a customer. You can actually remove someone's Hanging Curse by replacing it with something like "Yeah yeah, feel my wrath if you ever, um, jump to the sun." The quality of the roll doesn't matter, remember—just how recent it is.

As for the form the curse takes, that's up to you. If you target Patience, he could become subtly scatterbrained or plagued by terrifying hallucinatory clowns. A decrease in **Insightful** could inflict Tourette's-like impulsive cursing, or it could just be a shady cast to his features that make every statement and question seem vaguely sleazy. **Open** could be anything from weeping sores to sourceless lethargy.

## ORACLE (KNOWLEDGE)

You need an idea, but you're stumped. The topsy-turvy world of professional supervillainy has left you befuddled and at a loss. Or maybe you're really worried about that free boat you've supposedly won in the police raffle that you didn't enter. You're pretty sure that the letter telling you to pick up your prize at the police station is a trap, but...hey, free boat. You've got to know more.

Luckily, Hell specializes in intelligence gathering and strategic foresight. Demons have an endless horde of analysts and tacticians at their disposal. The only problem is that these fiends are in charge of managing schemes against the entire human race and — since this is Hell, after all — operate according to a Byzantine bureaucracy. Their predictions of the future are always correct, but they sometimes get thought-mailed to the wrong party.

To use the Oracle power, ask the GM one question about what's going to happen or what the best move for your character would be in a certain situation. Then roll **Devious Knowledge**. On a success, the GM just tells you. On a failure, they still relay the information, but in this instance they whisper it to your screwtape. The fiendish advice is now one more bargaining chip for your demon.

To prevent the Oracle power from breaking the game, the GM reserves the right to make predictions sufficiently vague, cryptic, and/or rhymed to keep the prophecy from ruining the plot.

## REGENERATION (COWARDICE)

*Written by Greg Stolze, © 2013.* The power of healing really, really quickly is coveted by anyone who's ever had to deal with the persistent itch and horrible aroma of a broken leg in a cast. It's also, naturally, a powerful temptation for a cowardly demon to offer a timid mortal.

In many games, Regeneration is easy to implement because characters have Hit Points, but *Better Angels* has a different focus. It tracks how able you are to fight back (or do other actions) and doesn't explicitly address how bloodily you're injured. The rules don't say when you've got a broken arm or are bleeding out — exactly what "I lost 2 points of Open" means is up to you and the GM — so Regeneration can't say when your arm is fixed or when you're back to normal.

At the same time, *Endurance* and *Cruelty* and similar physical traits are so much more than just how battered you are at a particular moment. If, in the course of a fight, someone held you down and slowly sliced your eyeball until the fluid inside had completely drained, that would be a significant reduction in *Courage* (and probably *Open*). Having your eye grow back ten minutes later is a powerful consolation (as long as she doesn't immediately cut it out again) — but does it fully restore your will to fight, or is an entirely natural reluctance likely to remain?

These are issues of characterization, so Regeneration deals with them by re-balancing *Courage* and *Cruelty*, or *Endurance* and *Cowardice*, over the course of scenes to reflect attitude changes going along with physical healing. This power maintains a gross balance between *Open* and *Sly*. It works quite simply.

Put a line between the dots on the *Open-Sly* continuum so that you know what your levels are at the start of a scene (or a game session). If they

shift around during the scene, don't erase the lines. Once per scene, you can make an *Open Cowardice* roll to restore your lost or shifted dots to *Open* and *Sly*. Any success is sufficient to restore the previous levels. (Though it's possible that you may wish to remain at your altered levels, if you've shifted and not lost stuff. If you decide to stay shifted, you can change the lines at the end of the scene and Regenerate to them in future scenes.) If the scene ends without you succeeding at the roll, you can automatically reset the traits before your next scene begins

Note that you can only Regenerate in scenes where you lost or shifted those traits due to injury. If you find something else that burns your *Open* or *Sly*, you can't Regenerate it away. This is trebly true for anything that gives you a benefit for sacrificing one of those traits: You can't sacrifice, Regenerate, sacrifice and Regenerate ad infinitum. Use scratch paper to keep track of losses that can be restored with Regeneration.

## RETROCOGNITION (ESPIONAGE)

*By Greg Stolze, © 2013.* You know the scenes in all those serial killer books, shows and movies where the brilliant detective recreates the crime scene just by looking at it and being spooky? The mystic answer to this is retrocognition, which does for "times gone by" what clairvoyance does for "places far away." You can apply it to an object, a location or even a person and get visions of their history.

These 'visions' aren't like actual psychedelic out-of-body experiences. They're more like memories of things you never saw. So if I use Retrocognition to look at 8:30 to 12:45 the previous night in room 221 of the Bide-A-Wee Motel, I don't have to sit through the whole thing like it's the movie Gettysburg. I know what happened as if I'd been there paying attention the whole time, but accessing the information doesn't take a ton of time.

You absorb one hour of experience for every point of Height in your *Patient Espionage* roll.

What you get to see depends on how far back you can look, and that, in turn, depends your *Espionage* rating.

- » *Espionage* 1: 24 hours
- » *Espionage* 2: 1 month
- » *Espionage* 3: 1 year
- » *Espionage* 4: 10 years
- » *Espionage* 5: 100 years

Once you're navigating through multiple years, there are a couple ways to do it. The simplest is to say, "show me what happened here on May 6, 1983, at 10:45 P.M." That sort of specificity doesn't require any particular success on your roll. Any pair or better calls it up.

The trickier bit is to hold a hatchet and tell your power "show me what happened when this got covered with blood and hair." To see with that degree of precision, not knowing exactly when it happened, requires a success of Width 3 or greater.

## **SOULLESS MATERIALISM (GENEROSITY)**

Humans like things. Their history is basically one long story of screwing each other over for stuff. The fact that so few of them can tell the difference between what they need and what they want is the most exploitable bit of code in the entire mortal operating system. Some demons get so good at using inanimate objects to tempt their humans towards damnation that the talent manifests itself in the physical world.

A villain with Soulless Materialism rolls *Cunning Generosity* to turn inanimate objects into servants. This is different from psychic objects be-

cause the mob of animate objects is intelligent and can act without direct supervision. The things are able to move on their own and follow simple directions from their unholy master. Want to re-enact a much darker version of fantasia? Animate some mops and order them to attack your enemies. Want to confuse the pursuing superheroes after a bank heist? Animate the moneybags and have them slither away in different directions. The servitor objects are treated like a mob that rolls with a +1 advantage (they don't feel pain and are often made of sharp materials).

There are limitations. A successful roll can only create a mob of objects equal to the hellbinder's *Cunning* score, and only one type of object can be animated at a time. For instance, if someone wanted to turn a group of classroom desks into galloping murder furniture, they could add to the mob in their next turn by rolling *Cunning Generosity* again, but they couldn't animate a stack of flying copy paper as well. Only one type of mob at a time. The maximum for any mob is 10d; past that it gets too hard to keep track of all the different blasphemies against physics. Furthermore, attacks against the supervillain move or erase dots on the character's sheet and knock dice off the mob as the person's focus wanes. Attacking the animated things knocks off dice like any other mob.

The weirdest limitation to Soulless Materialism is that a certain type of object can be animated only once. If you choked out a bunch of cops with their own gun belts in the last session, it won't work ever again. The gun belts of the world have had enough of false demonic promises and have gone back to their blissful existence as non-sentient dead cow skin. You could, however, turn the badges into a swarm of metal shurikens, or order their bullets to squirm out of the firing chamber.