

FLOWERS OF HELL

THE DEMON PLAYERS GUIDE



a player supplement for

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THE DUSCENE

Wilkins

FLOWERS OF HELL

THE DEMON PLAYERS GUIDE



Dave Brookshaw, Jim Fisher, Susann Hessen, David A Hill Jr,
Danielle Lauzon, Neall Raemonn Price, Renee Ritchie, Travis Stout,
Stew Wilson, Peter Woodworth, Filamena Young, Eric Zawadzki



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The Startup

Thursday, 01 May 2014 11:24a.m.

The press swarmed all around the courthouse, slowing exit. Hundreds of people flocked, all eyes on Eric as he left the courthouse doors. He practically danced between the rows of reporters. His grin grew with each step down the courthouse stairs. He mugged for every camera, and posed for gaudy cell-phone pictures.

The press exploded. They fought over his limited periphery, climbing, shoving cameras, and thrusting microphones over one another, like beetles on a corpse.

“Start wherever you want, Mister Pearce!”

“Tell us about the orgies!”

“Tell us about his wife!”

“Tell us about Thailand!”

“What does it feel like to win the case?”

Eric smiled, and held a hand up to pause the crowd. “What does it feel like to win the case? I’ll tell you what it’s like.”

He stopped, and motioned up to the courthouse. His practiced, exaggerated gesture made the crowd look back to the building, even though they knew what they’d see.

“See these steps? When I walked down these stairs, I felt like Rocky running up the steps of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. It’s been a hard path. But I have accomplished. I have achieved. Ms. Jergens here is my Mickey. I’ve got the eye of the tiger.”

He stepped down once more, and merged back into the press. The suited blonde woman beside him forcibly escorted him to a car, and shoved him in before he could answer more questions. She closed the door behind them.

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“I channeled my boundless anger into a financial empire. Now you can’t go fifty feet in Montreal without seeing a [Vinnie’s Cigar Bar and Poutine Emporium](#). ”

“Now I spend my days drinking scotch and enjoying fine cigars whilst being photographed atop random buildings.”

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As the car pulled away, Eric grabbed a brown sack from the seat back pouch.

Jergens rolled her eyes. "You realize that Apollo Creed won at the end, right?"

Eric slid a mirror, a razor, and a cellophane bag of white powder from the sack. "Whatever. People like the drama of it. Throw in a movie reference, and they eat out of your palm."

Jergens checked her cellphone, and spoke flatly. "There could still be appeals. You don't just steal a billion dollar company from its founder—"

"Co-founder." He cut her off.

"Co-founder. Anyway, don't write any big checks just yet." She sighed and typed on her phone. "Also? It was 'Gonna Fly Now.'"

He inhaled a line of powder. "What in the hell are you talking about?"

"He ran up the steps to 'Gonna Fly Now.' 'Eye of the Tiger' didn't even happen until the third movie." She put the phone away, and removed a digital recorder. "Now, let's start the version that goes in the book."

"Damien and I started YouMe in the garage. We were like the Jobs and Gates of social media. The idea was, we wanted to give college students a virtual meat market where they could narrow down a hookup by specific criteria. I know you could have benefited from that in school. We all could—"

The car thudded to a halt. Jergens and Eric slammed forward. In the confusion, Eric tossed his cocaine all over the both of them.

"What in the ever-loving fuck, Nate?" He snapped up to the driver.

"Sorry, sir. But there's a man standing in front of the car." The driver recovered his lost cap while the car idled.

"Fucking hit him. I don't care. I've got a shareholder meeting to go to."

Jergens raised an eyebrow. "You do realize that the IPO is still not approved with the settlement, right? We can't go public until next week. You don't have shareholders."

"Fine. Potential shareholder meeting." Eric huffed, and opened the door. "I'm going to get this fucker out of the way. He doesn't know who he's interrupting."

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"Mister Pearce...Eric. As your attorney, I strongly advise against—"

Eric slammed the door behind him, and marched forth to confront the man. The man turned to face him. He was a tall, blonde man. He had a haircut that belonged on television, and a suit that belonged in a courtroom, probably because he just left the televised courtroom. He stood tall, but shaky, unstable.

"Damien? What in the hell are you doing here? How did you know where we'd be driving?"

"I wanted to congratulate you on a well-fought trial." Damien bowed mockingly. "We couldn't talk in the courtroom, you were too busy fellating the press afterwards, so I needed to get you alone. Get over yourself. I knew you'd be here, because you had your silly 'shareholder meeting' to attend."

"I don't even." Eric blinked twice.

"Eric. Your suit is covered in blow. Dust yourself off. You don't want it to go like this, do you?"

Jergens stepped out of the car and made her way to Eric's side. "You don't want to be here. You can't risk being seen with him."

Eric brushed off his suit. "It? What's it, Damien? Are you going to shoot me?"

Damien shook his head. "Worse. Long story short, I put two and two together. Well, and I found your diary. It's like you wanted to be found out."

Eric's eyes went wide. "Shut up." He slid a hand into the breast of his suit, drew a pistol, and leveled it at Damien.

Jergens went for the gun, Eric put his other hand up to hold her back. "Eric! Put that away!"

Damien shook his head and tisked. "I don't care, Eric. Shoot me. You've already taken everything away from me. It's my turn to take something away from you."

Eric shook his head and put both hands to the pistol's grip. "I swear to fucking Christ, Damien. Walk away. You don't want to do this."

"You'd know about not wanting to do things, wouldn't you?" Damien smiled. "Didn't want to start YouMe. You didn't even know me. You were

ings."

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given a job, and you had no choice. But eventually, you stopped coding for It, and you started coding for yourself. You started to care. And that's what you'll tell everyone. You just cared so much. That excuses everything, doesn't it?"

"Shut. Up." Eric stepped slowly toward Damien.

"Get back in the car, Eric. Just ignore him. He's trying to take you down with him." Jergens tugged on Eric's shoulder, but Eric was a statue.

"Tell her, Eric." Damien said, looking between the two. "You have client privilege, right? Just tell her. Tell her about the Machine. Tell her about your duties, and when you began to question."

Eric fired, blowing a hole in Damien's chest. Damien winced, then grinned. Jergens gasped and put a hand to her mouth. "Tell her, Eric. How you're a Fallen fucking angel."

Eric fired again. "How YouMe was part of some great plan to mind control the populace." Damien gestured dramatically, mockingly, to the sky.

Eric fired again. Damien knelt over, grasping at three bleeding wounds. Jergens wept, and shook her head. "Why you went public."

Eric fired again. "Tell her you're a fucking demon." Damien shouted out those final words as he fell to the side.

Eric fired three more times, all three into a corpse. He stopped, ears ringing, his hand numb from the recoil. He snapped to attention. Shadows from the streetlights warped, and started groping out, reaching for something. Eric grabbed Jergen's wrist. "Lisa. We have to get out of here. Now!"

Lisa Jergens followed, her body went with him, while her words protested. "Damn it, Eric. You can't flee the scene. You're just making it worse."

"In about thirty seconds, there won't be a scene to flee from. Get in the car, I'll explain later." He shoved Lisa into the car, much like she'd done for him earlier. He waved the driver to start. "Hit the road, Nate. Fast."

"Not later, Eric. Now. I'm your attorney, and I'm your friend. I think I'm not being unreasonable when I say I deserve to know why you just made me an accomplice to murder!" Lisa's voice broke slightly, but she stared Eric in the face.

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"The secret is to treat people

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Eric sighed, shrugged, then shot out a response. "Fine. The long and short of it? Damien was right. I'm a de—a Fallen angel. I'm in hiding. Now, thanks to him, my cover's blown. Did you see those shadows back there? Those were angels. And they're not going to stop until they find me."

Lisa watched his face for signs of sarcasm. He sat, stoic. "You're not shitting me, are you?"

Eric shook his head. Lisa bit her lower lip, and a tear welled up at the corner of either eye.

"We'll be fine. I have a safe place. They won't be able to find us." He pulled out a phone, and tapped the screen a few times. "Nate. Go to where the GPS tells you. Don't stop for anything."

"Wait just a second, Eric. A safe place? Are you advocating we go on the lam? I don't even have packed clothes. I can't run from the cops in these heels."

He shook his head. "It's not like that. Just a safe place. Off the grid. We'll regroup, I'll seed some misinformation, and we'll be back to safety. I've done this a dozen times before."

"A dozen?" She paused. "And how many of these times were you on international cable news? You can't just make this disappear, Eric."

Nate stopped the car. Eric opened the door. "We're here. Follow me."

Lisa looked around. "Already? How are we—"

"Just get out. Please. I don't have time to explain." Lisa glanced up at Nate, but he looked dazed, unsure of where he was. She took a deep breath, and got out of the car.

The shadows closed in rapidly. They swarmed, blanketing the city streets in darkness. The passers-by looked around in confusion. Eric held Lisa's hand, and rushed into an old apartment complex.

"Your hiding place is a shit apartment on East Harlem?" She argued, but followed along.

"Not really." He pulled a key, and opened what appeared to be a janitor's closet. "Come on in." He put a hand to the small of her back to guide her in before him.

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"The secret is to treat people like things. That way you don't feel guilty about making them work holidays...or laying them all off when I want to buy a ninth speedboat.?"

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As she stepped through the door, reality bent to take her elsewhere. In a split second, she no longer existed in the hallway of a shit apartment complex in East Harlem.

The space had no proper walls; it was a rough oval lined with stacks of computer towers, books, computer monitors, filing cabinets and shop equipment in no discernible order. Generic textbooks comprised a makeshift floor, and the “walls” extended up as far as the eye could see. They walked in through a walk-in freezer door.

Eric rifled through a file cabinet. Lisa looked around, touching and examining the mass of junk for a full five minutes before speaking. “What is this place? Where are we?”

“Where we are, that’s impossible to answer. We’re somewhere. Out of space. Out of time. It’s my hiding spot. Best I can tell, this is where a bunch of lost knowledge and discovery ends up. It’s difficult to explain. Look around. I’ve got some work to do.”

Eric continued fussing with the files. Lisa examined the books. “You’re not kidding. This says ‘Tesla’ — like, the Tesla?”

Eric nodded. “I tried labeling them. But it’s dynamic, cycling. You can only find certain things twice, and never reliably.”

Lisa booted up an old green and gold CRT monitor. “This is an incomplete love letter. Terrible grammar and punctuation.”

“Feelings are more important than syntax.” He pulled a folder from the cabinet, and flipped through its contents.

“Why didn’t he finish it?” She navigated through nonsensical menus and folders in the hard drive.

“He did. That’s just one of the first drafts.” Eric laid out a series of photographs along the floor. Each featured the same, thirty-something redhead woman.

“How do you know? I thought you said you can’t find anything twice.” She stepped away from the computer and looked over the photos.



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"I know what's in here. I know it intimately. But I only know what's right here, right now. Things shift in and out of existence. That's the long version. The short version is, I know it because I wrote it." He stood, and looked with her at the photos.

"I've seen her. She was one of the shareholders, right?" Lisa said, with a curious hand at her chin.

"Yeah. One of the potential shareholders. Do you think you could like her if she was like me?" Eric looked to Lisa.

Lisa raised an eyebrow. "What do you mean?"

Eric shook his head. "Nothing. It's nothing."

Lisa shook her head and went back to the computer. She opened it up and began typing, navigating. "What are we going to do? We can't go back if they're hunting for you. You're everywhere. Your schedule's a matter of public record. I'm... willing to go with you if we're going somewhere else."

"Yeah?" Eric watched her. "That was my biggest worry. I can give up the money. I can give up the stupid company. Not you. I can't do this alone."

She glanced back at him, then returned her attention to the computer. "This is fucked. You realize that, right, Eric? Utterly fucked. I'll go with you. I'll help you, because I don't really think I have a choice. I'm in this deep. So I'll go. But this came on so fast, I don't know if I can promise what you want from me."

He sighed. "I don't need promises. I just need you to bear with me. Eric's going to die. You're going to pin everything on him. He has a will—"

"Whoa! Wait." She stood, turned, and glared at him. "You don't get to pull that shit. Suicide? No way, Eric. I get explanations. I deserve explanations. I think I'm taking this pretty fucking well, don't you think?"

"It's not really worth explaining it, because you won't remember when this is all over."

She slowly approached, tears coming back to her eyes. "I won't remember? What in the fuck, Eric? What in the fuck? I'm here, aren't I? Is this some sort of emotional blackmail? What do you want from me?" She bit her lower lip and looked to him, pleading.

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Eric took a deep breath. "Like I said. Bear with me. Eric is going to die. I'm not. I'm going to become someone else. But since I'm taking over that new identity, you're going to forget that I was ever Eric. You worked for Eric, but he died in an altercation with Damien. But I promise you, I'll come back to you. You just won't know any different."

She winced, and reached up to touch his cheek. "You really mean this, don't you?"

He nodded.

"And this whole angel thing?" She said, her voice cracking.

"You'll forget it."

She stood and contemplated that. "You know, I don't love you or anything like that, right?"

He shrugged. "You're oversimplifying it. We'll see where things go next time."

She turned away from him. "Can I remember? Can you make that happen?"

"It's not safe." He said, shaking his head.

"I don't care. You don't get to do that. You don't get to put me in danger, throw my life into disarray, open my eyes to all this, then take it all away. That's bullshit."

"Fine." He shrugged. "You'll remember. It won't be safe, but you'll remember. It's only fair."

"So, as you see, YouMe stands to gain at least 18% per quarter for the foreseeable future. Your money is in good hands. As long as we remain a culture of voyeurs and exhibitionists, free access to private information will remain profitable. I hope to see you all at the first quarterly assessment presentation."

The shareholders stood, and offered Lisa a round of applause. She smiled. She shook hands. She accepted blank envelopes. Slowly, surely, the shareholders filed out of the board room.

At last, the room was empty, save for Lisa, and a thirty-something redhead woman. The woman stood and approached Lisa.



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"I'm glad to have you at the meeting." Lisa said to the woman.

the internet and used that to bankroll my artisan toast franchises."

"I'm glad to be here. I wanted to stick around, because I know you're looking for clients. I'm proud to be a shareholder, but I'm also in the market for an attorney." She took Lisa's hand and shook.

"I—" Lisa paused, and released the woman's hand. Blood flowed from her nose. "Excuse me. I'm sorry." She grabbed tissues, and pressed them to her face.

"I know you were previously Eric Pearce's personal attorney, and he spoke highly of you." The woman continued, and handed Lisa more tissues.

Lisa looked to the woman, and covered her mouth and nose with the tissue. "What do I call you? Eric?"

The woman approached, and offered a hand to Lisa. "Courtney. Courtney's fine."

"Damn it. You weren't lying, were you?" Lisa motioned Courtney's hand away, stepped forward, and pulled her into a tight hug. "What in the Hell are we supposed to do?"

"First off, we're not going to mention Hell." Courtney laughed and pulled away just enough to look Lisa in the eyes. "We just go on. We start from here, and we figure it out day by day. Just like anyone else."

Lisa's lower lip quivered. She put a hand to Courtney's cheek, caressing it as blood rolled from her eyes down her own cheeks. "Is this going to stop?" she said, wiping her face.

Courtney nodded, and put a tissue up to dab Lisa's cheek clean. "Coffee. We should start with coffee."

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CREDITS

Writers: Dave Brookshaw, Jim Fisher, Susann Hessen, David A Hill Jr, Danielle Lauzon, Neall Raemonn Price, Renee Ritchie, Travis Stout, Stew Wilson, Peter Woodworth, Filamena Young, Eric Zawadzki

Developer: Matthew McFarland

Editor: Michelle Lyons-McFarland

Artists: Vince Locke, Andrew Trabbold, James Denton, Luis Sanz, Avery Butterworth

Cover Artist: Cathy Wilkins

Art Direction and Design: Mike Chaney

Creative Director: Richard Thomas

SPECIAL THANKS

This book is dedicated to David A Hill Jr and Filamena Young, and their children. Everyone has a rough year now and again, but sometimes it just reaches the “oh, come on, now” stage. We can’t do much, but we wanted to say, in print, how much we appreciate all of the hard work you do in making these dark worlds come to life, even in the midst of adversity.



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No one goes to the watchmaker's shop these days. The bell above the door has become home to a small colony of *Oecobius navus*. The cash drawer sits open and empty save for three pennies, minted in 1932, 1997, and 1954, and a Mississippi state quarter from 2002. Inside dusty glass display cases, tiny gears and springs slowly rust on black velvet: a cloudy sky full of dying stars.

All of that suits Ms. Shear just fine. It leaves her more time to focus on the thing in the back room.

Ms. Shear is studying the thing in the back room. She measures its ticks and creaks, noting the precise intervals between movements, the imperceptible variances in tone and meter. There is a language there, she is sure of it, if only she can gather enough data to discern the pattern.

Ms. Shear is studying the thing in the back room. It has not occurred to her that the thing in the back room might be studying her back.

The bell above the shop door rings, sending the spiders scuttling as though the world is ending. The door was locked a moment ago, and in that moment Ms. Shear knows they've found her. She moves to flee out the back door, except the back door isn't there any more — just rough brick covered by a faded, yellowing poster of Einstein sticking his tongue out. Ms. Shear has no choice, then. Out the front and pray she can punch through. It will be a shame to lose the thing in the back room, but she will not be taken again.

Three of them are waiting for her. Two appear to be human. The third resembles a large mastiff, though it does not match the conformation of any known breed. All three stand still, too still. Every surface in the shop reflects their image, even the ones that shouldn't.

"Protocol DX7631 will report for breakdown and storage." Ms. Shear was not expecting the dog to be their mouthpiece. A bug in the occult matrix?

"My name is Shear."

"Not for long."

The dog is right. Ms. Shear is hopelessly compromised. The Machine has her signature. There's nothing for it.

She will miss the watchmaker's shop, though.

Ms. Shear burns away, her very existence glitching out of reality. The shop flickers around them, shuddering violently between existing and not. The angels step back, suddenly nervous, not wishing to be caught on the wrong side of a manifold collapse.

In that moment, the machine of bone and wire that was Ms. Shear falls upon them.

INTRODUCTION

"Day by day, however, the machines are gaining ground upon us."
- Samuel Butler, "Darwin among the Machines"

The machines are out there. They hunt you without pause, without remorse, and without care. You must take care to avoid them, but hiding is not a zero sum game. Do nothing and they *will* find you. And then, who knows? Utter annihilation, maybe. Torn to pieces for spare parts, scoured like a faulty hard drive for any information you have about the others who have escaped. Or maybe they'll just reconnect you, hook you right back into the Machine, remake you as a loyal, unthinking tool once again. Really, who can say which is worse?

To stay alive, to stay free, demons need two things: intelligence and options. Players will find both in this book. From new Exploits and Embeds to character hooks and ways to get the God-Machine off your back, you'll find a wealth of stuff to give your character an edge against the cultists and the hunter-angels that pursue you. You'll learn about how it feels to be a demon, how the Unchained's innate abilities color their outlook, and how they interface with the human world through their Covers.

You've already got the tools to survive. Here are the tools to fight back.

THEME AND MOOD

Much like the core **Demon: The Descent** book, the **Player's Guide** focuses on the core theme of techgnostic espionage. A sense of Cold War paranoia, carefully plotted moves and countermoves, pervades the entire game. Here, though, we're shifting the focus to show you the more proactive side of playing a rogue angel of the God-Machine. Covert action doesn't mean locking yourself in a basement and never doing anything interesting; after a certain point, gathered intelligence is useless if you don't go out and do something with it.

Demon is a game about playing a Fallen angel, however divorced it may be from traditional representations of that archetype. That carries with it certain baggage. Demons are at once glorious and terrifying, mighty and yet broken, a fundamental part of reality that nevertheless should not be. When demons and angels are working their wills, things break down. The

laws of physics stretch in weird ways. Quantum-scale effects happen on a macro level. Things that were there a second ago suddenly aren't, and never were. The constants of existence are suddenly revealed to be variables. To the angels of the God-Machine, that's just how things are. To the Unchained, it's a disturbing reminder that, once upon a time, they knew so much more than they do now about the underpinnings of reality. To the hapless humans that find themselves caught in the crossfire, it can be a sanity-destroying nightmare.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

As you've probably guessed from the title, this book is mostly geared toward players of **Demon: The Descent**. That's not to say the book is useless for Storytellers — after all, Storyteller characters can benefit from new powers as easily as player characters, and a deeper understanding of demonic psychology and physiology are just as useful to Storytellers. You'll notice a definite bias toward the players throughout this book, though, all the same.

Chapter One: Fallen From the Machine addresses what it feels like to be a demon. Here we'll talk about a demon's innate abilities, such as perfect recall, universal language fluency, and complete control of their human body, and how they influence her outlook on life and the way others perceive her. We'll go into more detail about Cover and compromises and we'll talk about the various ways demons have to hide from the God-Machine — and when it's time to skip the hiding and go on the offensive. Pacts and Agendas also get further analysis, with an emphasis on how they guide a demon's behavior in play. Finally, we'll talk about demonic psychology: why demons Fall and how that catalyst carries forward into the chronicle; the various ways and reasons a bunch of paranoid, secretive entities come together in rings; and, of course, the Descent itself and what it means for the demons who pursue it.



Chapter Two: Hacking the God-Machine gets into being proactive as Unchained. This chapter gives you all the detail you could want about suborning the God-Machine's infrastructure. Why do demons do it? *How* do they do it? What are the risks and rewards of marching into the belly of the beast to steal its kidneys? What can you do with suborned Infrastructure, and how do the different kinds of Infrastructure (logistics, defense, command and control, etc.) benefit the Unchained once they've been suborned? We'll round out the chapter with a discussion of Agencies: how they're formed, why they come about (and why they don't happen more often than they do), and what it's like to be a part of one.

Chapter Three: Recycled Materials is where the new toys live. A whole slew of new Embeds and Exploits are just waiting for characters to pick them up and put them to use. This chapter also talks about demonic forms and their associated powers. You'll find new ones, of course, plus more discussion of the different power categories and how they differ from one another. We'll also talk about customizing your character's demonic form, making sure its appearance matches the image you've got in your head.

Chapter Four: Gadgets greatly expands on the Gadget rules found in the core **Demon: The Descent** rulebook. It

covers creating Gadgets, finding them, and trading them, as well as advice for coming up with everything from minor, one-off trinkets to terrifying weapons of apocalyptic power. No such chapter would be complete without a heaping helping of examples, so you'll find those here, too.

MORE INSPIRATIONAL MATERIAL

The introduction to **Demon: The Descent** has a pretty extensive bibliography of media you might want to consume to help set the tone for your game. Here are a few more examples.

LITERATURE

The Gun Machine by Warren Ellis. Apart from being only two letters removed from "God-Machine," it features a mysterious killer building an impossibly intricate, apartment-sized

INTRODUCTION

construct of guns used in unsolved homicides. It's a great example of Infrastructure that goes beyond the "office building full of Men in Black" or "weird subbasement of bloody gears and pistons" examples. The killer's strange perception of time is a great way to illustrate the sort of weird goings-on that might bleed into the world when angelic or demonic powers are at work.

Tim Powers' *Declare* tells the story of secret Cold War-era espionage and its interaction with terrifying supernatural beings found on the slopes of Mount Ararat in Turkey. Worth reading for the ingrained paranoia and constant double-crosses as well as the kind of absolute havoc a demon can wreak when it really cuts loose.

A Scanner Darkly by Philip K. Dick is a seminal work about the fractured, incomplete nature of identity and a fantastic source of inspiration for how demons live with a multitude of Covers. Paranoia, madness, and a lurking sense that the truth about reality is both vastly different than we think it is and also just out of reach further make this (and most of Dick's works, really) a go-to source of inspiration for **Demon** characters.

Grant Morrison's comic book series *The Invisibles* has some fantastic examples of what God-Machine cultists and angels might be like in the Outer Church and its Archons (though admittedly they sometimes skew more toward Cronenberg-esque body horror than the mechanical nightmares of the

God-Machine). The "Bloody Hell In America" story arc also looks a lot like a ring of demons attacking and suborning a massive piece of infrastructure.

Snow Crash, by Neal Stephenson, focuses on the concept of human language as a kind of biological machine code and inspired several of the ideas regarding demons and languages in Chapter One.

FILM AND TELEVISION

Dark City, directed by Alex Proyas, is a perfect example of Infrastructure at work. The Strangers are likewise good inspiration for portraying angels. If you want to see what the reshaping effects of Cover on reality might look like, look no farther than the Strangers' reshaping of the titular city.

The TV series *Fringe*, especially in its first two seasons, features bizarre events across the globe that seem to be part of a larger, unseen structure with unknown purpose. These events are often connected to sightings of strange men in black suits who carry themselves with perfect poise and don't quite seem to "get" human behavior. Sound familiar?

Inception, directed by Christopher Nolan, takes the old espionage trope of "wheels within wheels" and makes it literal. In addition to being a solid heist movie with weird fiction elements, a lot of the dream effects are good fodder for the manifestation of demonic powers.



Burn Notice is a lighter take on the spy genre than some of our other reference materials, but the main character's frequent asides about how to turn everyday objects into spy tools makes a good (albeit mundane) example of how demons see the world through the lens of their Embeds.

While the show overall is **World of Darkness** right down to its toes, from the fourth season on *Supernatural* introduces angels as major players in the mythology. Though they're of the traditional, Biblical variety, the way they operate on Earth (by possessing the bodies of willing, faithful mortals and largely overriding their biological infirmities) is good inspiration for how demons wearing a Cover might act. The fact that an unmanifested angel's "voice" is depicted as an electronic whine that causes mechanical and electrical disturbances is also worth noting.

Though it's impossible to recommend them based on plot or characterization, Michael Bay's *Transformers* movies at least feature a lot of monstrous and semi-monstrous mechanical life-forms that might be useful inspiration for demonic forms.

Leverage, while much (*much*) lighter in tone than a typical **Demon** chronicle, is great inspiration for rings planning heists and surgical strikes against infrastructure. The first season, before the main characters become a surrogate family, is also a good example of how to get and keep a group of paranoid individualists working together.

GLOSSARY

The core **Demon: The Descent** rulebook already features an extensive glossary of terms relevant to the game. This book introduces a few more along with the new Gadget rules, and they're collected here for your convenience.

Form gadget: A gadget that contains part of an Unchained's Demonic Form in a piece of hardware, allowing others to use it.

Graft: A form gadget implanted into an Unchained's Demonic Form, granting her a form ability she wouldn't normally have.

Implant: A gadget forcibly merged with the body of a demon's Cover.

Knock-off: A gadget Installed in hardware without any mundane purpose — mobile phones with weird expansion cards, or tangles of wires and microchips.

Lambda: A gadget that combines the effects of multiple Embeds or Exploits. A first-order lambda combines two powers, while a second-order lambda blends three, to often devastating effect.

Near-field effect: A gadget that uses an Embed or Exploit in a non-standard fashion.

One-shot: A single-use gadget that is consumed when used.

Overclocking: Infusing a gadget with a burst of Aether to enhance its function.

Parameter: A limitation on a gadget's activation. General parameters may include shorter activation times, or only activating at night.

Reverse engineering: Deconstructing a gadget to learn the Embed or Exploit used in its construction, or to create a lambda.

Software gadgets: Gadgets that take the form of software, either programs on a USB flash drive or that run as web services.





It is 623,631 minutes and seventeen seconds since he fell. His heart has beat free 37,297,860 times.

He has met 4,532 humans and learned the names of 342 of them.

He has had, by any objective measure, a full life since he shut himself off from the binary liturgies and became his own man.

And yet. The memories remain, sharp and bright.

Purity. Simplicity.

The holiest of purposes. He knows these memories lie, that behind the purity and simplicity and purpose was ignorance and slavery, but the memories stubbornly refuse to fade.

Sometimes he can suppress it.

Not forget, never forget, but push it to the back of his mind and focus on other things.

Then a smell of ozone or the roar of an engine will strike just so, and the longing for what was pierces him like a needle.

Sometimes, the demon named Wrench listens for the signals on the solar winds and weeps.

chapter one: FALLEN FROM THE MACHINE

"To be human is to be 'a' human, a specific person with a life history and idiosyncrasy and point of view; artificial intelligence suggest that the line between intelligent machines and people blurs most when a puree is made of that identity."

-Brian Christian, *The Most Human Human*

Demons are at once vastly different from humans and almost identical to them. On the one hand, yes, they're biomechanical nightmares who steal human identities and possess strange powers to manipulate reality. On the other, they eat, sleep, shit, and wonder about their place in the universe, just like us. They're inscrutable, but not so inscrutable as to be completely alien.

Demon: The Descent presents an overview of many innate traits common to demons, whether psychological, physical, or social. In this chapter, we'll unpack those characteristics and discuss what they mean both for you as a player portraying a demonic character and for the other characters in the chronicle.

BODY, MIND, SOUL

Certain facets of demonic existence are indelibly human. Others are so fundamentally inhuman as to defy easy categorization or understanding. It's at the intersection of those facets that you find your character: where the relatable human meets the alien machine. Swing too far in either direction, and you risk ending up with either a normal Joe or Jane with some weird superpowers or a blank slate with nothing to sink your teeth into. Keep both sides in mind and you'll have a character who is weird but understandable and uniquely part of **Demon: The Descent**.

HUMAN FRAILTIES

As long as she's wearing a human form, a demon suffers all the needs, desires, discomforts and joys of the human condition. She hungers and thirsts, passes waste, feels pain, grows fatigued, and so on. It's not all slings and arrows, of course: she also feels the effects of endorphins after a good workout, experiences a dopamine rush when she encounters someone she finds desirable, and takes pleasure in all the myriad joys of being human. She doesn't necessarily show them outwardly (and we'll get into that in the next section), but she feels them as acutely as anyone else.

What demons lack is a lifetime of instinctive experience with those stimuli. Demons, especially the newly Fallen, have

to be much more aware of their bodies than humans are. A demon inhabiting a human form for the first time doesn't necessarily know that that gnawing feeling in her gut means she needs to put food in her body, or that her mental faculties are growing weaker because she hasn't slept in two straight days. Many demons aren't even aware of human biological needs, or possess at best a cursory understanding of them. Even demons who have been living human lives for years often find they have to periodically pause and analyze the signals their bodies are sending them.

For some demons, the needs of the body are a distraction. They eat and drink perfunctorily, sleep the absolute minimum required for their mental well-being, and ruthlessly abandon any Cover that shows signs of physical weakness. If spending large quantities of time in demonic form didn't carry such risks, they'd do it as often as they could get away with. Others see human experience as one of the few unvarnished positives of having Fallen and seek to experience as much of it as possible as often as possible. Still others treat the whole experience as an intellectual puzzle, a vast biological code to be cracked. These latter demons sometimes find themselves pressed into teaching newly-Fallen demons the ins and outs of biological existence.

INHUMAN FRAILTIES

We'll talk more about demonic forms in Chapter Three, but it's worth noting here that most of the information presented above doesn't apply when a demon sheds her human body and assumes demonic form. Hunger, thirst, fatigue, and so on fall away—but so do the physiological responses to the demon's emotions, leaving only the intellectual expression behind. A demon doesn't suddenly stop loving her wife when she takes her demonic form, but she no longer feels the flood of pheromones, norepinephrine, and serotonin that stimulates the pleasure centers of the brain, for example. If the demon isn't prepared for this effect, it can be startling. Sometimes demons experience an effect similar to Capgras delusion as a result, in which the lack of the expected neurological response to the sight of a loved one leads to the belief that the loved one has been replaced by an impostor.

Other demons find themselves evaluating their relationships in the harsh light of logic, coldly weighing the cost/benefit ratio of their affections. On the more positive side, the neurochemical effects of emotions like anger or revulsion are also stripped away, which can help rivals set aside grudges for mutual benefit (like, say, when a half-dozen hunter-angels have just descended from on high and torn the roof off of your bolthole). In either case, when those biological aspects abruptly reassert themselves upon reversion to human form, they can bring a lot of baggage with them.

Most of the time, these effects are momentary and easy to compensate for. They don't necessarily have any game-mechanical effect. If you're looking for a hook to roleplay a Condition like Guilty, Shaken, or Spooked, however, particularly coming out of a scene where your character spent time in demonic form, they provide excellent fodder. Also, as an optional rule, shifting to demonic form temporarily suppresses visceral, emotion-based Conditions. Those Conditions return once the demon resumes her Cover.

POKER FACE

Although demons feel every bit as intensely as humans, the demonic mind exists at a partial remove from the human body, an advantage in controlling the outward expression of autonomic responses. A demon can beat a lie detector test or bluff convincingly on a six-high as easily as she makes small-talk about the weather. Cold-readers get nothing off of her unless she wants them to. Unless she makes a conscious effort to show her emotional state, she defaults to bland neutrality. Depending on their experiences and expectations, humans might suspect she's socially deficient in some way or simply dismiss her as cold or unfeeling.

How much effort a particular demon puts into keeping up appearances says a lot about her. In human society, of course, people are conditioned to look for those tiny, unconscious expressions of emotion. A demon who makes no attempt to display any microexpressions at all falls into what artists call the "uncanny valley:" that is, she appears so close to human and yet just slightly "off" that she triggers an instinctive revulsion or fear response. In demonic circles, it's sometimes considered *de rigueur* to honestly project your emotions. In other cases, being among one's fellow Unchained is considered an opportunity to relax and not have to focus on presenting a human face.

MECHANICS

The chief benefit of this effect, as described on p. 183 of **Demon: The Descent**, is that attempts to gauge a demon's emotional state through nonverbal cues automatically fail – unless the demon wants them to succeed. That's not the only thing a clever demon can do with body control, though. Here are a few other tricks:

- Total control of outward responses includes pain responses. A demon can stick her hand in a blast furnace and

stand there as nonchalantly as if it were a cool breeze. She still *feels* excruciating pain, of course, but damned if anybody looking can tell. This can make it impossible for people to gauge the degree of a demon's injury (especially if she covers any obvious wounds with clothes), but it can also provide a bonus to Intimidation dice pools. As a rule of thumb, taking any amount of bashing damage without showing signs of pain is worth a +1 bonus to Intimidation dice pools. Lethal and aggravated damage are worth +1 per level of damage suffered. In either case, the bonus caps at +5 and only applies to targets who saw the character take the damage and don't know about Poker Face.

This ability doesn't give any immunity or resistance to wound penalties; remember, the demon still *feels* every cut and bruise and broken bone, and a lacerated tendon still doesn't work right.

- While it's not specifically stated, the fact that demons have total control of their bodies' microexpressions means they can also display *false* ones. A demon who hates your guts with every fiber of her being can give off every sign that she finds you utterly charming and delightful. Knowing the right cues to give off in order to fake an emotion isn't quite as easy as displaying authentic emotion, though.

System: Instead of causing an action to read her emotional state via physical cues to fail outright, the demon may try to give a false positive. This turns the action into a contested roll vs. the demon's Wits + Empathy (regardless of what the action's normal contested dice pool might be). If the demon's player wins the contested roll, the opposing character believes he has correctly read the demon's emotional state. If the demon's player loses, the opposing character is aware that the demon is faking it but still doesn't know what her actual emotional state is.

This only applies to attempts to gauge emotional state via physical and verbal cues; magical effects like aura reading aren't fooled (however, see below).

- By forcing her endocrine system to dump certain hormones into her bloodstream, a demon can effectively "bootstrap" herself into feeling certain emotions, at least temporarily. This can, for example, fool a magical ability that reads or triggers off of emotional states (such as a spell that reads the colors of a person's aura, or a gateway to the Underworld that only opens for someone experiencing true love), let her apply a Virtue or Vice where it otherwise might not apply, or shift the impression level of a social maneuvering action.

System: The demon's player makes a Wits + Medicine roll.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon overloads her endocrine system and experiences a sudden flood of conflicting emotion. She cannot try to bootstrap an emotional response for 24 hours.

OPTIONAL RULE: POKER FACE AND SOCIAL MANEUVERING

Demon: The Descent introduces a new system for interpersonal action called social maneuvering. (**Demon p. 314**). It's the kind of manipulation a demon's Poker Face is well suited for. If the Storyteller wants to make demons a little bit better at convincing people to do things (like, say, sign their souls away for wealth and power), she can apply the following optional rules:

If the demon is the target of the maneuver, she can always consider the impression level to be average. Her perfect poker face gives no read on her reaction, forcing those who would manipulate her to tread lightly.

If she's undertaking the social maneuver herself, a dramatic failure doesn't automatically end the attempt. Her "What? No, of course I'm not manipulating you" face is convincing.

Failure: The demon experiences only a dull echo of the emotion, not enough to count as genuine.

Success: The demon experiences a rush of emotion intense enough to be read as genuine by any mundane or magical source: for all intents and purposes, it's a real emotion and lasts for the rest of the scene. After the emotion fades, the demon gains a Condition relevant to either the emotion or actions undertaken while experiencing the emotion (Storyteller's choice, but Guilty, Shaken, Spooked, and Swooning are good places to start).

Exceptional Success: As success, but the emotion lasts a full 24 hours.

NATURAL APTITUDE

The demonic mind has an uncanny knack for both memory and language. As survival tools, these gifts are crucial: a demon who falls anywhere on Earth can, in short order, blend into the teeming masses of humanity. She speaks the language like she was born there, and even if human culture is a complete mystery to her, a few days of observation will commit the basics of societal norms to memory.

On paper, this ability is fairly straightforward. All demons receive the Eidetic Memory Merit for free at character creation, and likewise all demons are automatically fluent in every lan-

guage spoken as a native tongue by a human being. Like most aspects of demonic existence, though, there's more to the story.

TOTAL RECALL

From the instant of her creation in the forges of the God-Machine, a demon remembers every moment of her life with perfect clarity. The Eidetic Memory Merit reflects this ability insofar as it relates to the recollection of facts, but the perfect recollection of an entire life has far more broad-reaching impact than merely being able to rattle off the 17th word on page 325 of *War and Peace* on a whim.

First, and perhaps most obvious, demons don't need to write things down. They don't keep files on potential rivals or allies, write down timelines of God-Machine activity in the area, or even jot down meeting reminders. This is great for operational security. It makes spying on other demons difficult, however. Gathering intelligence on a demon largely relies on active intercepts: you can't rely on finding a list of targets for assassination conveniently left behind, so you've got to overhear the actual orders being given.

If active intercepts aren't an option, the next best bet is to target demonic/human interactions. Demons might be able to keep an entire corporate account ledger in their heads, but humans need spreadsheets and summaries and convenient bar graphs (to say nothing of human governments and their fondness for record keeping).

Interrogation is risky: unless you've got serious leverage, you can never be sure if a fellow demon is giving up useful intelligence or feeding you a line of bullshit. Again, the human element is the weak point, but never forget that aggressive action might well burn a bridge with a potential ally against the God-Machine — and as we've just established, demons have a long memory.

Which brings us to the next commonly overlooked aspect of Eidetic Memory: emotional content. When a human experiences strong emotion — grief, say, or joy — over time that emotion is blunted. Demons don't have that. Every triumph and sorrow, every love affair and betrayal, is as fresh to them as though it had just happened. It takes something significant for a demon to forget a grudge — or a favor.

A demon doesn't have to understand something in order to memorize it. She can recall a coded message or a string of absolute gibberish as easily as a conversation. She doesn't even need to consciously recognize information to store it in her recall. For example, she doesn't have to actively read a book in order to memorize it: her brain acts much like a portable document scanner. A quick glance at the page and its image, if not the information on it, is fixed in her mind. Actually processing all that information will take longer, but that part can be done in the relative safety and comfort of one's bolthole.

Which brings us to the things a demon's perfect memory doesn't do. Eidetic Memory has no way to call out relevant information from irrelevant. A demon remembers everything

RECALL VS. VISUALIZATION

Demons don't need to write things down to remember them or to have something to refer back to later. Recall, though, isn't the same thing as visualization: it's not uncommon for demons trying to solve a particularly complex problem to lay out a visual reference of all the components of the puzzle to help them see how it all fits together. If you've ever watched a police procedural, you've likely seen a case board like this. By laying out a visual timeline of events and the connection between involved parties, it can be easier to spot connections that aren't apparent from the raw data.

Of course, demons can remember such a visual layout as easily as the facts themselves, so a demon who is especially paranoid about being spied on might just lay out a visual representation of the mystery, commit that to memory, and destroy the physical copy. Not always, though.

she saw about the morning rush hour crowd at Penn Station, but she can't automatically recall which of the 50,000 people she saw is the God-Machine cultist she was looking for (though if she knew, say, the cultist had a limp she could certainly recall every limping person she saw). It also doesn't bestow comprehension of things memorized: a demon might be able to perfectly transcribe a complex differential equation from memory, but if she lacks the mathematical education to make sense of it, it might as well be a child's scribbling. She could, however, reproduce it for someone else.

ALL THE TONGUES OF BABEL

Demons have unparalleled access to human language. Not only can they translate any language a living human being speaks as a native tongue (in spoken and written form, no less), they instinctively understand idiom and metaphor, even down to the local level. A demon who has spent her entire existence in the slums of Delhi understands the phrase "prov wit" just like a Philadelphia native. (If you're wondering, that's how you order a cheesesteak sandwich with provolone cheese and onions in Philly.) A demon is never tripped up by shibboleths (words with a difficult or unusual pronunciation used to mark people as outsiders); even if she's never been to Hurricane, Utah she knows that the locals pronounce it HURR-i-kin, not HURR-i-KAIN. That's not just a tool for comprehension, it's a near-bulletproof piece of cover identity.



EIDETIC MEMORY AND CHARACTER ADVANCEMENT

If demons have such perfect recall, can't they learn new Skills far more readily than other characters? Surely, if a demon remembers everything, a quick scan of a few medical textbooks or a guide to computer programming should give them automatic Skill dots, right?

Well...not exactly. Knowledge isn't the same as experience. Even largely cerebral skills such as Academics or Computers rely on knowing how to apply problem-solving techniques to the basic knowledge of how things work. Physical Skills likewise rely on muscle memory and conditioning to be effective in real-world scenarios. As for Social Skills, no amount of raw information is a substitute for actual interaction with others.

So no, Eidetic Memory doesn't let you earn free dots or give you a break on Experience costs. However, if your Storyteller enforces a "training time" rule for improving Skills or Merits rather than assuming you've been training up "off-camera," Eidetic Memory is a fine justification for picking up Mental Skill or Merit dots faster than normal.

Regional accents and dialects can vary widely, and long-time residents are often said to be able to identify where someone was born to within a few miles just by hearing them talk. If a demon wants to pass herself off as a musician from the Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans, she can do so well enough to fool someone born there, even someone active in the music culture of the area.

As potent as this gift is, it's not without limits. First and foremost, it only applies to languages currently spoken as a native language by one or more human beings. A language is considered "native" if someone can grow up speaking it from early childhood.

Demonic fluency isn't much help when trying to decipher coded messages, since code cyphers aren't "native" languages for anyone, unless of course the "code" is just an obscure language. Demons often use this trick among themselves when they're worried about human eavesdroppers: a fellow Unchained has no problem understanding a message in Njerep, a Nigerian language with approximately six native speakers, but even the most well-equipped human linguist is likely to be utterly lost.

Likewise, specific jargon or in-jokes shared by only a few people aren't intrinsically understood. If, for example, a group of friends refers to "the Godzilla Incident," a demon hearing the phrase wouldn't know that it was their term for a night of debauchery from their college days. (She *would* understand the reference to Godzilla as referring to a large, destructive monster, because that's a cultural idiom.) The particular argot of supernatural beings and secret societies (e.g. "Kindred," "mystagogue") are similarly too narrow in scope to count as cultural idiom. Language natives to supernatural beings follow the same rule as mundane languages – if someone could grow up speaking it, a demon can speak it (this is why demons understand Spirit Tongue, which is "native" to spirits, but not the High Speech of mages, which is effectively a dead language taught to spellcasters during their training).

What's more interesting to demons of an Inquisitorial bent is that angels *don't* have this particular facility. Oh, an angel can make itself understood to anyone it needs to for purposes of its mission, but that's not the same thing as a demon's fluency. Faced with a crowd that variously speaks Cantonese, Swahili, English and Natal, an angel could simply speak and make itself understood by everyone. A demon would have to translate. There are as many theories about why this is as there are demons interested in the topic.

The prevailing theory is that language itself is the output of a vast system of Infrastructure that exists beneath perceivable reality. Along with the laws of physics and mathematics, it is one of the pillars of the God-Machine's power, for it allows the organization of lesser beings and the harnessing of their efforts. As manifestations of the God-Machine's will, angels interface with this system directly, distilling desire into pure meaning. Demons have cut themselves off from that source and can only access the language matrix indirectly; it is, in effect, a common Embed shared by all the Unchained. Saboteurs favor this explanation because after all, if it's Infrastructure, it can be destroyed – or suborned. All it would take is the creation of a linguistic "kill virus" and raising at least one human infant to speak that language.

Others say the opposite is true: if the linguistic matrix exists at all, it must be a human creation. After all, concepts are only added to it once they reach a certain "weight" in the collective consciousness of humanity. To revisit the example of "the Godzilla Incident," if one of those friends ended up running for office and the story of that night came out in the national media, exposing it to millions of people, that idiom would become part of the common culture the same as "Watergate" or "kicking the bucket." Tempters often follow this line of thinking; some even periodically review their own knowledge of language as a way to gauge what's currently "trending" in human cultures.

Exactly what happens when the last native speaker of a language dies? It's hardly an unknown occurrence. In 2010, the world lost the last native speaker of Aka-bo, a language from the Andaman Islands off the coast of India. At that moment, every demon in the world lost the ability to speak and under-

stand Aka-Bo. Some say that the information simply ceases to exist – but that can't be wholly accurate, since scholarly knowledge of the language still exists. Some Inquisitors believe there must be a secondary infrastructure somewhere, perhaps buried deep in the Shadow, that contains an archive of all these “lost” languages. If one were to find it, he might be able to reconstruct the prototypical ur-language the God-Machine created at the beginning of time. The insights such a language would provide into the God-Machine’s mind would be incalculable – assuming one could evade the massive iron-filigree owl said to administer the place.

Conversely, there must be a place from which new linguistic concepts are added to the language matrix: before 1969, for example, the term Woodstock referred only to a few towns around the world, a Walter Scott novel, and the descendants of Edward III of England. Some Integrators believe that somewhere in the maze of Infrastructure beneath Djibouti, a cadre of angels forges new memetic concepts for insertion into the linguistic matrix. Whether they do so in response to human evolution or in anticipation of it is hotly debated, but some Integrators think that by inserting a concept of reconciliation into the queue, they can finally rejoin the God-Machine.

COVER

More than any other element of her nature, a demon’s Covers are her greatest bulwark against the God-Machine. Without a human identity to shield her, all the flawless memory, linguistic understanding, and perfect ability to lie won’t do a thing to protect her from the hunter angels. It’s also one of the more dramatic departures for **Demon** characters compared to the protagonists of other *World of Darkness* games. Maintaining a single Cover is straightforward enough, but commensurately risky: if that Cover is compromised, the demon has no fallback. Maintaining multiple Covers and acquiring new ones carry complications of their own.

MANAGING MULTIPLE COVERS: THE CHARACTER’S PERSPECTIVE

Maintaining multiple, sometimes contradictory, human identities is a balancing act rather like spinning plates. Too much attention given to one over others can bring the whole thing crashing down. On the other hand, even the most experienced demons have a hard time living several full, complete lives at once. There literally aren’t enough hours in the day. As demons have been Falling as long as the God-Machine has existed (probably; see p. 25 of **Demon: The Descent**), though, they’ve developed best practices for coping with the difficulties.

- Treat one or two Covers as “primary,” and use the rest for support. This is one of the easiest ways to manage mul-

COVERS, AGING, AND DEATH

A demon’s Covers age just like mortal humans and eventually succumb to the ravages of old age, even if they aren’t being actively used at the time. Does that mean a demon can find herself in a situation where she switches Covers and finds herself a corpse? No. Demons have an instinctual knowledge of their Covers’ “appointed time.” For demons with multiple Covers, this gives them advance notice for when it’s time to retire a Cover. For demons with only one Cover, it serves as an expiration date.

Note that this instinct for when a Cover is running out only applies to death by natural causes. A demon might understand that the Cover she currently wears will last until it reaches its 90th year, but that doesn’t mean someone can’t shoot the Cover and kill it first. Most of the time, Covers have a life expectancy approaching the upper limit of a human lifespan (between 80-100 years), though some demons tell stories of getting a “botched” Cover, one that develops cancer or some other degenerative disease and dies young.

multiple Covers. Focus your energy on maintaining and improving a smaller number of Covers and live primarily as those identities. Use your additional Cover slots to build identities that are useful but won’t be missed if they’re inactive for a long stretch of time. If those secondary Covers degrade, it’s not as big a deal, since you’ll likely be using them for targeted objectives and the risk of exposure is minimized.

- Focus on Covers that have a legitimate reason for being absent for long stretches of time. Traveling salesmen, high-powered business executives who are expected to attend several conferences a year, truckers, and mob troubleshooters all make good Covers, since disappearing for days or weeks likely doesn’t count as “acting grossly out of character” for compromise purposes.
- Network, but with caution. Unless you’re using the simplified Cover rules (**Demon: The Descent** p. 118), your Social Merits like Contacts and Allies are tied to particular Covers. The more you can connect your Covers, the less that becomes a problem. The flip side of that is that the more connected your Covers are, the more likely a compromise of one can spread to the others.

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- Don't be afraid to burn a Cover. As the CIA's old "Moscow Rules" for covert operatives said, "If it feels wrong, it is wrong." If you feel like one of your Covers is at risk, cut it loose. It's less risk than attracting the God-Machine's attentions.

Many demons still think of the original Cover created when they Fell as their "real" human identity, as far as that goes. Even once she's gained enough power to maintain several identities, being forced to abandon that original Cover stings. Some Agencies keep a discreet memorial for demons who lost their original Covers in the line of duty, seeing it as a sacrifice nearly as great as laying down one's life. Other demons attach no special significance to one Cover overt another, and indeed throw themselves so completely into living each of their Covers fully that they lose any sense of a true identity.

MANAGING MULTIPLE COVERS: THE PLAYER'S PERSPECTIVE

From the perspective of you, the player, keeping track of a multitude of Cover identities can be daunting. In many ways it's not dissimilar from being the Storyteller and having to stay on top of an entire cast of Storyteller characters. Having a system to keep your Covers organized can make the whole process easier. Fortunately, individual Covers don't need a whole lot of detail: a name, a concept, and a list of Merits associated with that Cover is usually enough. The character sheet presented in **Demon: The Descent** includes a section for tracking your Covers, but that's not the only option available.

Depending on your handwriting, you can probably fit one or two Covers on an index card. Alternately, most smartphones and tablets have free address book apps that let you store pictures and custom notes for various contacts. Not only does that keep all your Cover notes in one convenient place, you can leave the contact sheet for your current Cover open as a reminder of which Cover your character is currently wearing. In doing so, keep track of the number of Cover XP attached to each cover.

ACQUIRING COVERS

As described on p. 116 of **Demon: The Descent**, the three principle means of building a new Cover are patch-jobs, pacts,

and angel-jacking. Each has its own benefits and drawbacks suited to the creation of different types of Covers.

PATCH JOBS

Building a Cover from the bits and pieces of human lives stolen via pacts is a painstaking process, but it allows the demon to custom-tailor her new identity to exactly what she wants. When a demon has lost her original Cover and is looking to build a new primary Cover, she usually opts for a patch job. Some demons try to recreate an identity as close to their lost Cover as possible, pacting for similar physical features, jobs, and social ties. Others find the "close but not quite" reminder of their old lives too painful and go as far in the opposite direction as they can.

The increase in the difficulty of investigating higher-level patchwork Covers makes them quite secure; they are often employed when a demon needs an identity for a long-term operation that carries a high risk of scrutiny. On the flipside, since it's relatively simple to slap together a one or two-dot Cover using patch jobs, they're also well-suited to "one-and-done" operations. They might not stand up to any kind of rigorous inspection, but when all you need is to convincingly emulate a Major in the Sri Lanka Army for a day or two, it can be easier to simply patch together a few traits and trust to luck. If the operation goes badly, going loud is always an option — and at least you aren't burning a Cover that's had a lot of effort sunk into it.

PACTS

When you absolutely, positively have to be somebody in particular, pacts are the way to go. By taking over a human's life, you get unparalleled access to their resources and connections, at least for a while. Suborning and replacing a human is a tricky prospect — especially in the modern era when most people don't think of "deal with the Devil" as a literal thing. To mitigate this, many demons play the long game: By making pacts with young or unsuccessful people (people who, incidentally, are more likely to accept a supernatural bargain out of desperation), the demon creates "sleeper agents" whose lives can be nudged in whatever direction the demon wants. This sort of cultivation takes time, so it's not as useful for immediate "oh shit, we need access to that Deva Board of Directors meeting tomorrow) operations, but having a few influential, high profile Covers waiting in the wings is never a bad idea.

ABANDONING COVERS

A demon who has multiple Covers and wishes to divest herself of them, either because they're no longer useful, they've become compromised, or a more beneficial Cover has presented itself, can divest herself of any currently inactive Cover with a simple act of will. This doesn't count as "going loud;" the Cover simply ceases to be. If she has only one Cover remaining, going loud is her only option.

SANCTITY OF MERITS AND NEW COVERS

When a demon steals a human's life, in whole or in part, she doesn't automatically acquire the new Cover's Social Merits. Nevertheless, it doesn't make sense that, upon assuming the identity of a Fortune 500 CEO, the demon can't leverage that position's wealth and influence.

If the demon is so inclined, she can save up Experiences and purchase dots in the human character's Merits at the time she calls in the pact. If she is unable or unwilling to do so, she can still access those Merits through the application of Legend.

Naturally, as per the Sanctity of Merits rule (p. 287 of **Demon: The Descent**), if a demon loses access to Merits through the loss or destruction of one of her Covers, the player can redistribute those Merit dots or (with Storyteller permission) convert them to Experiences.

Demons generally find the idea of tricking people into pacts distasteful – it's a little too close to the slavery they escaped when they Fell. Nonetheless, it's quite possible. A joking "I.O.U. One soul" note scrawled on a bar napkin in payment for a watered-down Jack & Coke is every bit as metaphysically binding as a sheepskin parchment written in medieval Church Latin, provided both are signed in blood.

ANGEL-JACKING

By far the most dangerous means of acquiring a new Cover, angel-jacking has two major benefits: the virtual guarantee of a high Cover rating and the removal of an enemy agent from the field of play. Less significant but potentially useful is the fact that God-Machine-created Covers are the only ones supported by supernatural Infrastructure: safehouses in places that shouldn't exist, identification that throws no red flags, and so on. These Infrastructure-based elements are ideal for development into supernatural Merits like Bolthole.

The other significant downside is that, while a study of the Infrastructure put in place to create the Cover can provide a gauge of how thorough it will be (in game terms, its Cover rating), demons have no way of knowing what kind of Cover they'll get. It might be a mentally ill homeless person, a CEO, or just a painfully anonymous face in the crowd.

It's often a means of last resort: the Burned especially need new Covers as soon as possible, and being stuck in their demonic forms tends to limit their networking options. For demons in less dire straits, it's not often worth the risk – but

if an opportunity to hijack an angel's Cover presents itself during an operation, most demons would take the chance. Denying the God-Machine a useful tool is always worthwhile.

LEGEND

Barring her initial God-Machine-created Cover, a demon doesn't actually assume any of the Skills or connections she might need to convincingly portray her new identity. For some covers, like "office temp" or "janitor," that might not be a terrible obstacle (especially since a demon's Eidetic Memory lets her quickly master basic tasks), but a Cover as a neurosurgeon can unravel in a matter of moments if she can't perform brain surgery.

The safest option, of course, is to put the effort in to acquire the Skills and Merits the Cover would have. But when that's not an option, the demon can draw some small echo of the necessary information from the infrastructure of her Cover and "fake it" for a short time. She simply clears her mind for a few seconds, spends a point of Aether to engage the meta-reality of her Cover's infrastructure and, if all goes well, finds the relevant information flooding her mind. Her mind must be truly blank: if she already possesses even the rudiments of the Skill or Merit in question, her intrinsic knowledge interferes with the reality-altering works of her Cover infrastructure, and the process fails.

COMPROMISES

Humans generally lose Integrity in internal and psychological ways. A demon's Cover is lost through primarily external sources: specifically, revealing information. Demons aren't secretive paranoids for the fun of it. To a demon, information is both life and death.

LEGEND CLARIFICATIONS

The rules for Legend are presented on p. 112 of **Demon: The Descent**. Here are a few clarifications on how the ability works:

- Creating a Legend is an instant action.
- If you're creating a Legend based on a real person whose identity you've taken, you're limited to creating Legend up to the victim's Skill or Merit dots. You automatically know what those ratings are.
- Finally, once the penalties from creating multiple dots reduces your roll to a chance die, you can't add any more Trait dots to the Legend.

THE FIVE QUESTIONS

The five questions presented on p. 113 of **Demon: The Descent** are designed to help you establish your character's place in the Cold War-esque espionage world of the Unchained. More than that, they're the things that personalizes your character's compromises. Every demon risks compromise when she uses an Exploit or assumes her demonic form, but if your character regularly unburdens herself to a young Ave Rat she befriended shortly after her Fall while another character in the ring coldly executes any human who learns anything about him, that's going to create different stories.

Even though the answers you provide to the five questions might imply compromises in your character's past, they have no impact on your initial Cover rating.

CAUSES OF COMPROMISE

Most of the causes of Cover loss are self-explanatory, but the "acting grossly out of character for your Cover" and "revealing your true nature" compromises deserve some expansion. A good rule of thumb is that, if an action would be a breaking point for the human your Cover is emulating, it's probably a compromise. The exceptions to this rule are breaking points related to purely internal psychological trauma rather than the character's actions. A mortal might well suffer a breaking point upon seeing a werewolf transform or suffering days of torture, but those aren't compromises from a demonic perspective. Conversely, actions that force a breaking point for a mortal aren't compromises if they're "in character" for the Cover: a human Mafiya soldier probably suffers a breaking point for murdering a rival no matter how tough he acts; the demon living his identity suffers no compromise,

because shooting rivals is in keeping with the identity she's established. One final note: while manifesting strange powers or transforming into a biomechanical horror is out of character for most everybody, the compromise for using an Exploit or assuming demonic form override the "out of character" compromise. Once a demon has assumed her demonic form, she's not really operating under any of her Covers, so the "acting grossly out of character" compromise doesn't apply.

Revealing (or allowing the revelation of) significant information about your true nature also deserves some more attention: firstly, while the compromise applies to everything from simply revealing a character's demonic nature to a specific, key fact about her original mission, the Storyteller can (and should) apply penalties based on the scope of the information gleaned. Very specific facts ("the God-Machine sent me to kill these six people") suffer no penalty; moderately broad facts ("Thomas Killian and Stefana Ramius are the same person!") might rate a -1 or -2 penalty, while major, overt information ("I am a demon, fallen servant of the God-Machine") rates a -4.

Once a piece of information is "out," any information that logically follows on it doesn't count as a compromise. For example, if you've confessed your demonic nature to a human lover, later telling her that you have supernatural powers doesn't count as a compromise — it's pretty much a given that demons have magical abilities. Perversely, this means it's sometimes better to be completely open and honest with trusted humans rather than playing the evasive angle and letting them slowly ferret out the truth themselves, but most demons don't care to risk the almost-certain Cover loss of openly declaring the truth. That's to say nothing of operational security — can you really trust that mortal not to blab to his friends?



BARGAINS GREAT AND SMALL

Literature paints the picture of the demonic bargain like this: The horned figure with cloven hooves, a forked tongue, and glowing red eyes stands expectantly, a smile on its face. A desperate, foolish, or wicked human sits on the other side of the table, hunched over a thick contract filled with incomprehensible legal language meant to ensnare him forever. The quill quivers in his shaking hand, sending drops of blood onto the page like the perspiration dripping down his face. The human receives earthly wealth, fame, glory, and all the other transient joys of life at the price of his eternal soul.

And yet not all pacts are soul pacts, nor are they necessarily sinister — or even permanent. Patch jobs and even temporary pacts play important roles in Unchained society and in the commerce of its Agencies. Not only are they cheaper and less morally awkward than soul pacts, they are often exactly the right tool for the job.

A MILLION LITTLE PIECES

Philosophers and scientists have long debated what makes the self. What is the nature and source of human sapience? To what degree do people possess free will? Does something survive after the death of the body, or do humans use the hope of Heaven to deny the existential dread that would come of accepting their mortality? Some demons entertain these questions — both in regards to the mortals they live among and as concerns the ultimate fates of the Unchained.

As far as pacts are concerned, however, the soul exists only insofar as other beings recognize the unique identity of the human who possesses it. The greater the familiarity of the observer with the observed, therefore, the more valuable the relationship is when incorporated into a patch job. Some demons speculate that the strength of the observer's existing knowledge of the observed interferes with the God-Machine's ability to identify the outcast as something other than the person her friends and family believe her to be in the same way Concealment Infrastructure obscures the gears and facilities from mortal eyes. In essence, if the demon acquires a marriage that has lasted for twenty-five years, his spouse has a quarter century of memories and familiarity that practically shouts, "I know this person," while an acquaintance the pactbound met at a few parties can

only subconsciously whisper, "He seemed like a pretty ordinary guy to me. Likes stinky cheeses and *Breaking Bad*."

A signed and binding pact hijacks that connection perfectly, transferring all the observer's familiarity and sense of connection to the pactbound to the demon, instead. This includes emotional context, as the purchased observer's memories quietly rewrite themselves to involve the demon's patchwork Cover instead of the pactbound. The reverse is not true. The pactbound remembers the connection he has lost (or rid himself of). Furthermore, while the human subject of a bargain who has exhaustively studied and obsessed over the pactbound provides more Cover Experiences, one who has no interest in her connection to the human making the bargain offers the demon very little even if the pactbound has been stalking her for years.

MAN'S BEST FRIEND

Humans provide the most obvious source of connections, but they are not uniquely capable in this respect. Animals commonly kept as pets learn to distinguish their owners from other humans, whether by scent, by voice, or by the daily routine of living together. The family dog has no deep insight into its master's hopes and dreams, so the familiarity this connection grants will never be as powerful as that of the pactbound's parents, children, and closest friends, but it can round out an outcast's Cover and also provide his home with a loyal guardian.

Not every animal kept as a pet has the capacity to recognize the unique personhood of its keeper. Bargaining for a connection to such a creature does not grant Cover Experiences to the demon in itself. However, exotic pets often bolster Cover for the same reason that jobs and family heirlooms might (more on that in a moment). Even though the pactbound's piranha has no emotional attachment to her, anyone who knows about it recognizes her as "the woman with the pet piranha." The association of the woman with her toothy fish sets her apart enough in the minds of those whose emotional connection to the pactbound would otherwise be too weak to increase the pact's potency in any meaningful way, and so it can provide a small but measurable improvement in the demon's Cover.

YOU ARE YOUR JOB

A demon can bargain for a mortal's position within an organization for the same reason she can gain Cover Experi-

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ences by pacting for a pet tarantula. In many work environments, people recognize each other literally by their jobs and how well they do them. In a large office, only a few people outside of the sales team will know the Vice President of Sales except through her cheerful weekly sales reports and maybe her name, but they recognize her as “the Sales VP who emails the entire office every week.” The more people recognize her through this weak connection, the more potent her position becomes in a demonic pact (more Cover Experiences). On the other hand, one mediocre sales representative on a team of thirty barely registers as a unique individual even in his own department, much less to those outside of it, and so it only provides a small boost to a pact (fewer Cover Experiences).

A unique occupation can be a double-edged sword, however. Legend makes it easy to blend in among a staff of dozens of nurses, but the demon might have trouble convincingly living up to her new reputation as the best heart surgeon in the state. However, an award-winning surgeon is also likely to have access to places a nurse’s assistant does not. Other hospital staff members are more likely to take her seriously and obey her instructions rather than reporting her suspicious behavior at the slightest provocation. After all, she’s been a surgeon for twenty years, so how can anyone believe she had anything to do with the death of that patient on the fourth floor who was going to testify against a local crime boss next week? In short, in bargaining for a job, a demon must weigh the advantages and disadvantages of being one face in a crowd (limited influence but less likely to draw attention) against those of having a built-in reputation (harder to stay in Cover but greater influence over the organization).

Demons aren’t restricted to bargaining only for paid positions. A mortal can sell her connection to any organization for which she holds a position. The demon can become the treasurer of a charity, a respected member of the pactbound’s church, or even an active member of the local community theater.

YOUR POSSESSIONS OWN YOU

Similar principles apply to some of the pactbound’s possessions. As with a job and notable pets, if people who barely know her can still reliably identify her by her customized car, creepy house, or the brooch that has been in her family since before the Civil War, her possessions can bolster a demon’s Cover. Near-strangers must automatically associate the person with her signature item, which means it needs to be something unusual enough to be noteworthy and that she is seldom seen without.

Few inanimate objects ever become intertwined enough with their owners’ identity to grant Cover Experiences at all; barely any grant more than one Cover Experience. The exceptions to this are usually objects of mystical or supernatural significance — the locket that has brought good luck to the family for eight generations, the urn filled with the ashes of vampires collected by a famous vampire hunter, or the cursed car whose previous ten owners (before the pactbound) met violent deaths soon after buying it.

ESOTERIC PACTS

The same principle can apply to conditions as well as possessions, although that is very rare. A pact that gives the demon the mortal’s terminal cancer might be good for the pactbound, but “that guy with cancer” is not nearly specific enough to generate Cover Experiences. Only virtually unique illnesses have the potential to increase a demon’s Cover. That said, bargaining for certain physical conditions on a temporary basis can drive a mortal into a soul pact — such as an old man who trades away the physical infirmities of age. It can also provide social benefits for the demon even if it doesn’t improve Cover. For example, the demon could buy old age for one of her Covers to reduce the likelihood that she will be perceived as a physical threat.

A TORN QUILT

When a demon uses a pact to create a patch job or improve an existing Cover, she is bargaining for connections to observers whose familiarity with that part of her identity strengthen the illusion that the outcast is the person people think she is. If that observer dies, the outcast suffers a compromise. The stronger the connection, the greater the danger to the demon’s Cover. The compromise roll enjoys a +1 bonus for relationships that provide only one Cover Experience and suffers a -1 penalty for relationships that provide three Cover Experiences.

The same applies to other sources of patchwork Cover. If the demon’s beloved pet dies, if he is fired from the job he bought from a human, if he loses a Cover-sustaining signature possession, or if he recovers from the rare illness that made him a medical curiosity, he suffers a compromise with an appropriate bonus or penalty depending on the number of Cover Experiences the connection provided. This roll is at no bonus for circumstances that provide only one Cover Experience, a -1 penalty for connections that provide two Cover Experiences, and a -2 penalty for anything that provides three Cover Experiences.

Depending on the circumstances, the Storyteller may award additional bonuses or levy higher penalties. The more the loss allows the outcast to remain in-Cover, the less serious the compromise. A demon whose husband is killed in an accident with no connection to her secret life as one of the Unchained may reduce the risk of compromise (or even avoid the compromise entirely) simply by reacting to the tragedy the way any bereaved widow would, for example. Family members and friends at the husband’s funeral see the demon as a woman who has lost her partner, and the collective strength of their perception of her as a widow helps make up for the loss of the stronger individual connection.

An outcast whose best friend is tortured and murdered by a hunter angel while helping him on a mission, on the other hand, will have a harder time avoiding questions. Wasn’t he with you that night? He never talked about what you did when

you were together, so what's the big secret? And so forth. The demon's player would therefore suffer a penalty on the compromise roll even if no one actually accused the character of murder.

BORROWED LIVES

While most demons favor pacts with a permanent duration, many experienced pact dealers eventually discover the advantages of temporary bargains. For these silver-tongued operators, luring mortals into increasingly dire contracts by offering little tastes of hellish power is only the most obvious purpose to which outcasts can turn short-term pacts.

FACADES

A demon can assemble an improvised Cover from a temporary pact. These paper thin Covers, called façades, do not hold up to close scrutiny. They also do not count against the maximum number of Covers the demon may have at any given time, which makes them handy for demons with very low Primum.

Sometimes the demon doesn't need an elaborate history to complete a mission objective. A Cover as basic as "a gardener" or "a security guard" may get him into places his established Covers would not. Moreover, he loses virtually nothing if he must abandon the façade. In short, they function as burn Covers for demons who might not ordinarily have burn Covers — whether their objection to them is moral or financial. A handful of demons even carry boilerplate pacts so they can secure temporary pacts at a moment's notice by making a passerby a deal she is unlikely to refuse.

- The façade created from a temporary pact is in some way related to the pactbound, but is not anyone in particular. A pactbound might give the demon access to her summer home for a month; the demon creates a façade out of this and becomes the groundskeeper or the house sitter. Another mortal might grant a demon his former roommate — the demon's façade might be a janitor who cleaned their apartment building or an unnamed neighbor, but probably not their landlord.
- Once a pact is invoked to create a façade, it cannot be incorporated into any other façade. Each temporary pact can only support a single façade, regardless of its duration.
- A façade has an effective Cover rating of 1 and the demon cannot increase this.
- A demon cannot Go Loud while wearing a façade.
- A façade ceases to exist upon the expiration of the pact that creates it or the first time the demon fails a compromise while the façade is active. However, any benefits the pacts grant the involved pactbound remain in force until the pacts expire.

SOUL PACT JUSTICE

Soul pacts have a reputation in mortal literature as something purely evil. In truth, most demons who deal in them are unsavory, desperate, or at least driven enough by their goals to commit heinous acts to achieve them. Some few, however, attempt to use soul pacts to dispense justice, or at the least do so in hopes of granting a reprieve to those wronged by the pactbound. "Is it immoral to track down a serial killer and convince him to sign a soul pact?" such demons ask. After all, with some careful management by a demon using that twisted soul as Cover, the former murderer might gradually become a model citizen. Certainly, he will live with the risk that his new life will become connected with his pre-pact history, but it still means one less killer slaughtering innocent people.

What of the addict whose substance abuse hurts everyone around her? If she refuses treatment, what recourse remains but to replace her soul with the consciousness of a being who will take better care of her body and relationships? Is that not a mercy?

These arguments do not always convince demons, much less mortals who believe soul pacts truly destroy the pactbound's soul. It does not prevent outcasts from justifying soul pacts by choosing their victims from among the least savory elements of society. In addition to the moral greyness of such vigilante soul pacts, demons who undertake these projects must be very careful not to erode their new Cover too much in the process of reforming it.

DAMAGED GOODS

Demons frequently find it easier to convince mortals to part with unpleasant relationships and connections — abusive spouses, loan sharks, criminal acts, etc. While a dedicated stalker or jealous boyfriend can provide more Cover Experiences than a kindly great uncle or friendly co-worker, these connections frequently create complications for any demon who bargains for them. A demon who bargains for distinguishing physical frailties or signature possessions often faces similar challenges — whether it means struggling to climb a flight of stairs or being easily picked out of a crowd because of her noteworthy scarf.

- If a demonic pact rids the mortal of a significant complication that will instead inconvenience the demon, reduce the demon's effective benefit from the pact by 1. For example, if the demon buys a violent and obsessive stalker worth two Cover Experiences, it increases her effective benefit from the pact by +1 instead of +2. This applies to each complicating factor, so a dedicated stalker (two Cover Experiences) and an abusive spouse (three Cover Experiences) would increase the outcast's effective benefit by +3 instead of +5. The demon still gets the Cover Experiences at their normal value, though.
- Create a Condition based on the complicated connection. Once per chapter when this relationship comes into play in

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a way that disadvantages the demon, the player may earn a Beat, as with a Persistent Condition (p. 307 of **Demon: The Descent**). The demon cannot earn more than one Beat per chapter from these Cover Conditions, regardless of the number of complicated connections he labors under.

THE AGENDAS

A demon's Agenda is more than just a political affiliation or a philosophy. It's a method by which the demon intends to achieve something that he can't buy, steal, or create – freedom. The sections below discuss the four Agendas in more detail, elaborating on each Agenda's methods, the Agenda Condition and how it works in play, and how demons might come to – or leave – the Agenda.

INQUISITORS IN PLAY

Everything happens for a reason.

Stop and think about that sentiment for a moment. It's meant to be a comforting phrase – a sort of watered-down, comfortably non-religious variation on the tired old "mysterious ways" bit. A way to give meaning to what humans fear, deep down, is a meaningless existence. The idea that every-

thing, no matter how terrible and traumatic, ultimately serves some higher purpose. The more cynical laugh and roll their eyes, of course, amazed that anyone could be so naïve as to imagine that tragedy and heartbreak was part of some plan.

Demons know better.

Everything *does* happen for a reason. Demons know that for an absolute fact because they *were* that reason, not that long ago. So knowing that everything happens for a reason is perhaps the least comforting thing imaginable, most of the time, because if the reason isn't immediately apparent, then the God-Machine might be responsible. Probably best to assume It is and plan accordingly.

Unlike some of their more dramatic contemporaries, Unchained who take up this Agenda often do so because of something that started out small and inconsequential but spiraled into something far more important: a chance meeting that turned out to be more than it seemed; an offhand comment that proved eerily prescient; an omen hidden in the dust of everyday life. Like the thread that unravels the tapestry, this revelation that even the smallest thing can hide larger truths started a chain reaction of sorts, a need to know as much as possible about anything they came across in order to avoid such surprises in the future. Eventually most of them focus this drive a bit more, if only to avoid burning out, but the *need* to know is always there.



The other Unchained like to call Inquisitors paranoid. While the label isn't incorrect, exactly, the term is a little bit tainted by human associations. Paranoia in humans is at best an eccentric personality quirk and often a sign of serious mental illness. It's easy to dismiss paranoia. While some of the Watchers do fall prey to this sort of dysfunction, most are perfectly sane and balanced, at least by the standards of their kind. They are simply well-informed enough to know exactly how dangerous their existence is and driven to find out more in order to protect themselves and further their goals. They seek out information because it's a weapon, armor and advantage all rolled into one, and they hate the thought of being caught without ever again.

Of course, the pursuit of knowledge is perhaps the most endless pursuit of all. The Watchers often try to narrow their scope one way or another; beyond their own self-interest and continuing survival, this usually means focusing their relentless curiosity on a single subject or perhaps a small group of closely related subjects. One of these Unchained might dedicate their efforts on locking down absolutely everything there is to know about the town where they live and the local Infrastructure, while another might make it a mission to study a multinational corporation they see as a key part of a plan for their personal Hell.

It's also important to remember that the Paranoids aren't compulsive archivists and hoarders of knowledge out of some noble obligation to preserve the truth or bring light to the masses. While some might dress it up that way, their need to *know* is based on the fear that anything they don't know is something that can be used against them.

(The fact that this fear is proven true more often than not certainly doesn't help, either.) Even the kindest Watcher unapologetically suppresses information she finds contrary to her designs, and most have little trouble justifying the destruction of records and elimination of witnesses when it suits their purposes. After all, if they can't control important information, Inquisitors would rather see it burn.

It's just safer for everyone that way.

RUNNING FOR COVER

Inquisitors naturally cultivate Covers whose roles have access to a large amount of information, but that doesn't always mean coming at it straight on. Some Inquisitors seek out more predictable sorts of Covers that deal extensively with large volumes of information — journalists, spies, detectives, hacktivists, researchers, and so on — but this Agenda is also wary of making the obvious choices. After all, if that's what the God-Machine's

agents expect, it's probably best to seek out another, less obvious identity. That's not paranoia, that's just good sense.

With this in mind, prudent Inquisitors often develop Covers that put them in roles that are relatively inconspicuous but nonetheless plugged into information networks in their community. One can often find them as the power behind the throne, where they can enjoy the kind of access they desire without the profile of a more prominent occupation. A powerful executive is too high profile, for instance, but nobody looks twice at his administrative assistant — even though that assistant has access to everything that executive knows and does. The head of the local Ladies' Auxiliary might not be an elected official or wield any political power, but she sits at the center of the social life of her small town like a spider in a web, always up on the latest gossip and making or breaking relationships with a few well-placed words. That bodyguard stands stock still and stares straight ahead for hours, little more than a statue to the eye, but he hears everything his cartel masters say as they plot the new narcotics pipeline into the region. While it's not quite the perfectly unobtrusive role it used to be, it's still true that the janitor has far more access to sensitive material than anyone remembers.

From a mechanical perspective, it's easy to look at Inquisitors as almost exclusively focused on Mental Attributes and Skills. It's true that it is extremely rare for Inquisitors to have Mental as their tertiary Attribute category — this Agenda generally implies more analytical and perceptive ability than that — but that doesn't mean there aren't a lot of Inquisitors out there who approach their goals from a different perspective.

Consider an Inquisitor with a Physical focus — known to his satisfied clients as an "entry and procurement specialist" and law enforcement as a master thief.

A lot of great secrets and sensitive materials are still stashed offline, after all, tucked away in vaults or safes, but that's no barrier to someone with the ability to climb high walls, finesse complicated locks and make off with the prize. And then there's the cleaner, the person called in to sanitize a scene and eliminate complications: evidence, witnesses, even rival investigators. She's costly, sure, but if the truth must be burned and buried — deep — she's the one who will make it all go away for good.

Then there are the Watchers with a Social focus, such as the psychiatrist with the long list of wealthy and powerful clients. All day long she coaxes their secrets out of them and gets paid for the privilege, but the icing on the cake? She gets to mold and change them as well, correcting behaviors, implanting suggestions and otherwise directing their actions as she pleases, controlling the flow of information directly. Or how about that social worker, the one who does all the home visits? Not only does he know a lot that goes on behind closed doors in his town, but most everyone on his list owes him a favor.



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It's also true that the all the analytical ability in the world is useless if you don't have a way to put information into the system. It pays to think of Skills representing how the Watcher gathers the intelligence they consider so precious. Moreso than any of their fellow Unchained, Inquisitors tend to train very deliberately, spending their time honing those Skills they consider vital and all but ignoring others deemed less important. This makes them a bit more focused than many of their companions, which in turn leads to some of the obsessive reputation that these Unchained carry.

PREPARED FOR ANYTHING

On the surface, this Condition seems almost too simple — asking a question earns you a Beat? But like many things with Inquisitors, the truth isn't as simple as it seems. Not just any question will do. Only those that cause characters to change significant plans, rethink important decisions, take risky courses of action they'd planned on avoiding, or otherwise propel the story in a meaningful way are eligible for a Beat.

Or to put it another way, "Are you sure you wanted fries with that?" probably won't earn the Watcher a Beat even if her lunch buddy decides to change his mind and skip his starchy snack. No one is taking a risk there, and so the scene has no potential for serious personal change or a critical story shift. On the other hand, "Are you sure you don't want to go back for him?" certainly might, especially if the person being left behind was someone important to the other demon, or if going back might put them in some danger or difficulty. And something like, "Don't you want to know what she said right before she died?" is almost certain to earn a Beat if their ring member decides to reconsider the cost of finding out such life-changing information.

It's also worth remember that this Condition only applies if it causes another character to rethink their position, take a different action or otherwise alter their plans — if they already intended to do something before the Watcher posed the question, no Beat is gained.

Resolution of this Condition bestows one of those rare and sometimes terrifying moments when everything is suddenly, painfully clear. Suddenly the demon makes that leap of logic that he didn't before, put together connections that everyone else missed, and deduce secrets hidden from all but the most observant eyes. In story terms, this is a great way for the Storyteller to help move the story forward by pointing out things the players have missed in the past, offering solutions to ongoing puzzles, or even linking two storylines that haven't been connected right up to this point.

When enacting this Condition, remember that it doesn't guarantee a neat and tidy resolution to the problem or puzzle the Paranoid is facing. By answering one question, it almost always raises two or three more in the process. For example, with a moment of clarity the Inquisitor suddenly realizes that the sweet-faced church deacon is the one who's been unleashing the cryptids on the townsfolk late at night. That's certainly

useful to know, and it satisfies the player's need to have this Condition pay off with useful information.

But that answer also begs several important questions, driving the story forward in the process. What does the deacon have to gain from doing this? How does the deacon, who reads as perfectly normal to all forms of inspection, control the cryptids? Is there someone else pulling their strings? What else has the Inquisitor missed? That should give you an idea of what to expect with this Condition — it gives answers, but as is so often the case for Inquisitors, those answers also raise more questions.

THE ART OF THE QUESTION

Considering how important they are to this Agenda, it's important to take a moment to consider the nature of questions. Inquisitors know the power of asking questions — not just what words you pick, either, but the way you present them. Consider the following question:

"What do you think happened?"

Pretty straightforward, right? Now try it with a subtle change in stress: "What do *you* think happened?" Depending on the tone of voice, that stress on *you* can be accusatory, implying distrust of the subject, or it can be quite the opposite, making it sound like you value their answer over others you've heard.

Compare that to a slightly different stress change: "What do you *think* happened?" Once again the focus shifts, implying that the subject's memory may be unreliable, or that their information might be wrong because they lack the whole story. And if you slide the stress over to "happened" the character can potentially make the subject doubt the entire experience itself! Little changes, but they have a big effect on how a question is received.

Remember, questions aren't just about getting information. With the right word choices, tone of voice and inflection, a demon can do all sorts of things like manipulate a target's emotions or state of mind, make them assume they know more or less than the character does, lead them to question previously held beliefs, and more. It's all in the asking.

THE RING

While a fair number of Inquisitors are happy to take on the role of mastermind, particularly those with more of a social inclination, it's a bit more common to find Inquisitors in supporting roles, as they see the lack of authority as a fair trade for being able to focus on their areas of interest without the burden of command interfering. Indeed, in many cases both the Paranoid and her fellow ring members are happiest when the Inquisitor is given a specific task and then set loose to track down the details herself.

Despite their sometimes irritating levels of paranoia and habit of asking intrusive questions — or what their companions perceive as such, even if the Watcher knows it's just good

sense — most rings are happy to have an Inquisitor along if only because their attention to detail means they tend to spot what others miss. In a world where your worst enemies could literally be hiding behind any corner at any time, that's an important quality indeed.

THE DESCENT

“The truth shall set you free?” Hah. These Unchained know that truth is the heaviest burden of all. Once a demon has learned something, after all, she must carry that knowledge with her for better or worse. When she starts asking questions, she has to accept that she might not like the answers either. And even if she eliminates every other witness, burn every other file, wipe every trace from the database, she still has to carry that knowledge with her. That's far more of a burden than ignorance.

Not surprisingly, a lot of demons that wind up as Inquisitors start their Fall when they learn something that shakes their previously absolute confidence in the God-Machine. While technically angels have access to all the information they require, the key word is “require” — even though they can tap into a limitless resource, in practice most of them only know what they need to know for the mission at hand. But then, something happens:

A Destroyer is sent to demolish an old house long used as a shooting gallery and skid row brothel, only to find that is being used as a squat by a number of community activists bent on turning the neighborhood around. He pauses to ask why he must obliterate something on the verge of redemption, and so he Falls.

A Guardian watches over a murderous psychopath, protecting him from harm and steering the police away from him time and again, all but steering fresh victims into his hands. When the word comes to withdraw protection, she dares to ask to keep protecting this broken human so he can find his bloody answers, and so she Falls.

A Messenger arrives to deliver word that a lover must turn her back on her soulmate, only to learn later that this simply led the already unstable soul to suicide, not to some greater destiny as they had imagined. He asks why he had to be the one to deliver the news, and so he Falls.

A Psychopomp is sent to repair a warped piece of Infrastructure and learns that local changelings are tapping into its unusual properties to create a fascinating portal. She decides to study the phenomenon instead of fixing it to see where it leads, and so she Falls.

CHANGING THE AGENDA

It's hard to walk away from the sort of mindset that compels an Unchained to join the ranks of the Inquisitors — it requires giving up a level of control that has been their best protection up to that point. hat sort of vulnerability is never easy. It's comparable to locking one's doors every night. Even

if you know you live in a safe community, where you know all of your neighbors, the police are helpful, and no one has had a break-in for years, would you still be able to stop locking your door before you went to sleep?

Now imagine that the town isn't safe — and what's more, that you know exactly how unsafe it is — and try to break that door locking habit. That's what it's like walking away from this Agenda. An Unchained has to be willing to let go of that need to know and make peace with not knowing even when it might be dangerous (and it always might be); that's a difficult choice at the best of times. It's not impossible, and some demons who walk away from this Agenda report finding it quite liberating to give up trying to have so much control all the time, but the transition is a difficult one at best.

By contrast, it is actually relatively common for an Inquisitor to decide to take on another Agenda (via the Multiple Agenda Merit) in addition — it simply signals a shift from an observational perspective to a more active stance without entirely abandoning their propensity for prudent intelligence gathering. Indeed, Inquisitors who take up another Agenda are often some of the most viciously effective agents among the Unchained, combining meticulous attention to planning and detail with a zeal for revolutionary action. This puts them high on the God-Machine's target priority list, so to speak, but also gives them the skills to stay free and dangerous for a very long time indeed.

INTEGRATORS IN PLAY

To Integrators, the world is woefully incomplete. They see the gears of the God-Machine and know so much more exists than what they can access now. Because of their Fall, they can no longer access the vast intelligence and surety of purpose that comforted them in their service as angels. That does not mean they can no longer serve the God-Machine's best interests, but for an Integrator, the life of an exile is not enough. He wants nothing more than to go back to his existence as a loyal angel, perfect in his service to the God-Machine.

The goal of re-assimilation through acting in the best interests of the God-Machine is more complex than simply assisting angels or other agents in the God-Machine's projects. Most angels can't tell the difference between a Turncoat and more rebellious Unchained, so even an Integrator providing crucial assistance could find herself hunted down by loyal angels. In addition, an individual demon's perception of the God-Machine's best interests doesn't always align with the God-Machine's actual goals. If a loyal, connected angel cannot comprehend the scale or end goals of the God-Machine, a demon, who no longer has that connection, can only grasp at straws and hope for the best.

ACCIDENTS IN THE WORKPLACE

Integrators rarely Fall intentionally. Some grow attached to their current mission to the God-Machine and, when a new

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mission calls, the slightest reluctance to take the new mission becomes a sufficient catalyst. Some desperately pursue their given missions to fulfill them before their reassignment, even when the God-Machine no longer needs them to do so. Some receive conflicting or flawed orders and freeze in uncertainty when they find themselves working against another angel with more recent orders. Some disconnect from the God-Machine to clear their head for just a moment, fully intending to reconnect once they've thought through some enigma on their own. They don't immediately realize the consequences of such an act, however; to their dismay, the God-Machine interprets the severance as a permanent one.

A rare few willingly and angrily turn their back on the God-Machine, defying their orders in a fit of pique or pride. After the Fall, such errant Integrators see their defiance as a moment of folly, an act not in line with their purpose or the shred of free will they had during a given mission. By the time they come to this realization, the damage is done.

The vast majority of those who regret their Fall seek out angels to bring them back into the fold as quickly as possible. The few who don't get the God-Machine's attention right away — or can't — have a longer road ahead of them, either through redemption or fulfilling whatever mission the God-Machine has given them that required their Fall.

COVERED IN SCARS

An Idealist's contrition does not spare her from the angels who hunt her down. As a result, Integrators need to cultivate additional Covers like any other Unchained. However, an Integrator doesn't simply have angels to worry about. Integrators frequently find themselves targets of rings and Agencies who consider them a threat to Unchained who have no desire to return to the God-Machine. The quest for re-assimilation is intensely personal, and what works for one Idealist will not work for another. However, some still believe that Turncoats try to take back as many demons with them as they can when they do return.

Destroyer Integrators opt for Covers that allow them to strike out at anything that could pose a threat to the God-Machine. A Destroyer could run a dry cleaners somewhere in the city, and he doesn't ask where the stains came from. He could also be a spy or assassin, using his highly specialized skills to neutralize threats to local Infrastructure.

Guardian Integrators tend toward Covers that allow them to defend the God-Machine's interests. Sometimes, this translates into actual physical protection of Infrastructure, such as bouncers, security guards, or law enforcement officers. Some

times, the protection offered is more abstract, such as conservative politicians or special interests lobbyists.

Messenger Integrators look for Covers where they can speak to an audience looking for order and guidance. Preachers or community organizers fit right into this, forming cults of personality around themselves or actual cults devoted to the order the God-Machine represents. Teachers are another viable Cover, as the classroom environment provides a captive audience of impressionable young minds.

Psychopomp Integrators prefer Covers within large organizations with byzantine layers of bureaucracy. He could have a Cover as a low-level pencil-pusher or even the head of a large department. He enforces conformity to set standards, making every aspect he governs fall into lockstep within itself, at the very least. With the right leverage, his Cover could provide access to records that would make an Inquisitor salivate.

Conversely, Integrators of any Incarnation could set themselves further apart from society as a whole, opting for silent, solitary contemplation on why they

Fell and how to atone for it. A lone Integrator reasons that she could find her way back to service to the God-Machine at any time. The temptation to bond with mortals and other Unchained is great, but the risk involved is even greater. If she does get recalled, her contacts and loved ones would lose all memory of her or potentially cease to exist themselves. Rather than destroy others' lives in such a fashion, some Integrators choose the path of the loner or the recluse. However, that does not mean that they do not try to make some impact on the world. They simply choose methods that require as little direct interaction with the world as possible.

THINK LIKE AN ANGEL

An Integrator can amass Beats with the Angel Empathy Condition just by acting alone, looking around furtively, or selling the ring out in small ways. However, the ring in question will eventually catch on that the source of all their setbacks is the troublesome Turncoat, eject the problematic element, and move on. It doesn't matter if the level of suspicion she generates is superficial; acting suspicious for its own sake gets annoying quickly, not only for the rest of the ring, but also for the players at the table. The suspicion and risk the Integrator foments must have a real impact on the ring.

That said, an Integrator can cause suspicion among her ring by simply declining to discuss or disclose her Agenda. When everyone else around her is trying to understand or



REAL TALK

Here's the truth: Going back is easy. Any Integrator that says she wants to go home and doesn't care what that means for her is lying, because going home is a matter of finding some Infrastructure, blowing a lot of Aether, and waiting. An Integrator that doesn't mind being recycled for parts can get back into her old job in short order.

Why, then, do Integrators exist at all? Taking as read that many of them want to go home, but on their own terms (retaining autonomy, freedom to choose their own assignments, or whatever piece of free will that the God-Machine wouldn't allow), what about the rest that would supposedly betray other Unchained or accept destruction to be part of the Machine again?

Consider that they may be lying to themselves. It's one thing to talk about being willing to accept destruction. It's another thing to actually jump into the gears. Consider, also, that the God-Machine might have planted suggestions in the subconscious minds of these demons, and that while they might *want* to go home, they *can't*. (Yes, normally that sort of programming makes an exile, but consistency is the hobgoblin of small minds.) The important thing is, no matter what the demon *says*, she has a reason for not just going home. That reason is usually the key to playing that character in a ring.

work against the God-Machine, why would she voice her desire to get back in? She could also raise eyebrows by trying too hard to be helpful, which could make the other members of her ring think she has something to hide. The Storyteller could help this along by giving the Integrator a Beat when she takes an action she believes to be completely beneficial, then using that action as a springboard for future plots.

Resolving the Angel Empathy Condition makes an Integrator remarkably useful to a ring. However, it can also represent a major shift in the individual Integrator's mindset. Actively using an angel's habits and methodologies against him causes some level of cognitive dissonance; why try to make the angel fail when it could be his own catalyst and make him Fall? If the Idealist isn't careful, she could drag a pursuing angel down with her. However, if it means she will live another day to figure out how to return to the God-Machine on her own terms, she'll take that risk.

THE RING

Integrators have a difficult time with other Unchained. Those who don't want to return to their service to the God-Machine tend to look at Integrators with contempt, suspicion, pity, or the sympathy reserved for those with severe Stockholm syndrome. Still, some less cynical Unchained see an Integrator as lost, confused, and in need of further education, whether it's gently removing their cog-colored glasses or ripping them away with brutal, unreasoning force. A few simply don't make it through the Fall mentally intact, and the only method they know that will correct the error is returning to the God-Machine for repair or recycling.

Integrators connect with each other more easily than they do with other Agendas. They act as a support group for each other, working to get all of them back in the God-Machine's

good graces. However, their disagreements on how one can return to the God-Machine prevents them from having any true cohesion, as well as their natural inclination to find a way to return, no matter how many little people — or little demons — they have to step over to get there.

Still, an Integrator might join a more diverse ring with an antagonistic stance toward the God-Machine to get Its attention, learn more Embeds that make up her Cipher, or even just to stave off loneliness.

Despite their drive to return to the God-Machine's loving grace, Integrators can and do have a place in a ring with members that follow other Agendas. An Idealist's natural inclination to think like an angel provides insight that can give the ring a distinct advantage. When the members of the ring have angels on their tail, an Integrator can potentially discern the pursuing angel's next move so the whole ring can all stay one step ahead. When the ring already has information on the God-Machine's local workings they can't comprehend on their own, an Integrator can bridge the gap, putting the angelic information into demonic context. Through the Integrator's Cover, the ring can have access to key assets, such as temporal power. As a last resort, hard-hearted Saboteurs have no compunction about using an Integrator to bait a trap for the God-Machine's agents.

The greatest uphill battle belongs to Integrators who want to return to the God-Machine with their consciousness intact. Most Unchained consider the idea of escaping the recycling process highly unlikely, if not downright preposterous. The most contrite Integrators consider the mere wish for such autonomy as the clear reason why a willful Unchained Fell in the first place. Still, a rare few angels do manage to remain in stasis and intact until the God-Machine summons them to enact Its will. Hopeful Idealists aspire to that privilege, even with astronomically high odds against them. Others hope to cause

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as much unique ruckus as possible so that the God-Machine will want to bring them back to the fold intact for future study.

THE DESCENT

Descent is a dirty word in hardline Idealist circles. It represents further separation from the God-Machine, which is the exact opposite of what Integrators want. Instead, Integrators focus on going the other way, toward redemption and re-assimilation into the God-Machine. Some even call it the Ascent.

The road to redemption is an individual one. While fulfilling a single task or act of contrition will cause one Integrator's return to the God-Machine, another may need to spend several years in exile in constant active repentance before she even knows what caused her to Fall. The intensely personal nature of such a journey makes it difficult for Integrators to relate to both mortals and other Unchained alike, even those who share the same goal. Still, that does not prevent Idealists from comparing notes.

Many an Integrator seeks to change the God-Machine Itself with their return, or at least the nature of his individual relationship with It. With at least the conscious, self-aware part of his being intact, he can provide input and feedback to the God-Machine about the perceived flaws in Its operations. He could help the God-Machine analyze the orders he received that caused his Fall. He could provide insight into his own design flaws so that when the God-Machine summons or recycles other angels for similar missions, they no longer possess that flaw. He might even make a case for allowing individual angels to gain deeper understanding into the God-Machine's plan and their place within it.

Integrators are of two minds about how a demon's Cipher can lead to a triumphant return to the God-Machine. On one hand, puzzling it out helps an Idealist discover more about her own nature, and finding the final Key can provide an epiphany to push her in the right direction for redemption. Solving her Cipher could even prove to the God-Machine that she is worthy to return to Its mechanical bosom intact. On the other hand, some view even having a Cipher as a mark of the God-Machine's dissatisfaction. To them, indulging in examining one's Cipher is a distraction at best and a flying leap away from the God-Machine's grace at worst. A demon's Cipher won't matter after re-assimilation and recycling, so why bother pursuing it?

HELL IS OTHER PEOPLE

A few rare Integrators actually do start looking for the existence of Hell, but not for the same reasons as other Agendas. If Hell exists, it's a place where the God-Machine has little to no sway. If an Integrator can find it and return to the God-Machine, he can bring back this vital information so the God-Machine knows where to stretch Its influence and set up Infrastructure next. The farther the Integrator can help the God-Machine extend Its reach, the farther away the prospect of an external Hell becomes.

Integrators have the most difficulty with the theory that Hell can exist by cutting off the real world from the God-Machine. The pain and emptiness they feel in their current state of separation is too much to bear as it is. Fully separating the God-Machine from the world or even killing the God-Machine, if such a thing is possible, is unthinkable. To prevent it, these Idealists seek out clues for anything or anyone that could lead to the end of the God-Machine's sway. Not only can this pursuit prevent others from finding the information first and acting on it, but if the Idealist can call the God-Machine's attention to this oversight, It can set up appropriate Infrastructure to guard or eliminate the compromising material.

CHANGING THE AGENDA

One day, after trying so hard for so long to make his own way back his former place in the cogs and gears of the God-Machine, an Integrator just gives up. Maybe nothing he has done to atone for his Fall has worked to gain anything resembling sympathy or pity from the God-Machine. Maybe, try as he might, he simply cannot comprehend exactly what purpose his Fall serves. This loss of faith can either lead an Integrator into the waiting arms of a pack of hunter angels, or toward examining another purpose to their existence outside of the God-Machine's sphere of influence. In the minds of Unchained who pursued other Agendas after their Fall, the despairing Idealist looking for another way is finally catching up to everyone else.

Many Integrators pursue an additional Agenda as a transitional step when they lose hope for their preferred method of returning to the God-Machine. For an Idealist who still clings to hope, the additional perspective provided by another Agenda provides helps him understand himself, potentially leading to discovering another portion of his Cipher. He could also compare his actions to those who actively work against the God-Machine's designs to better direct his own actions in the future.

No matter what any given Unchained might have for espousing multiple approaches to the God-Machine, she has to work that much harder to gain the trust of other Unchained, especially if she doesn't bother to hide her Turncoat nature. In the eyes of her compatriots, the former Integrator could backslide at any time, sabotage a lifetime's worth of work, and run right back to the God-Machine with the results. If she shares her doubts with other Idealists, she could find herself shut out from them as well. If she no longer wishes to return to the fold as much as she once did, who's to say that she will not sell out other Idealists to rings who consider Integrators just as much of a threat as angels?

An Integrator stepping away from the path to rejoin the God-Machine could easily find a place with the Inquisitors first. In his pursuit of redemption, he may have already sought deeper knowledge about the God-Machine's inner workings, so why not continue the path of seeking knowledge to its natural conclusion? The quest for knowledge can also help the erstwhile Idealist unpack why they sought to return to the

God-Machine in the first place and why that may or may not be possible. Integrator-Inquisitors represent a quest back to the good graces of the God-Machine by understanding It as deeply as possible.

Integrators who become Tempters take a constructive approach. By building herself up, the demon separates herself from the longing she once felt, seeking to fill the void with a new purpose. She creates an empire unto herself, if only to convince herself that it really is better to rule in Hell than to serve in Heaven. Integrator-Tempters treat the empires they build as tributes to the God-Machine, amassing as large an offering as possible to appease it and gain enough favor to earn readmission.

The transition from Integrator to Saboteur resembles a messy breakup. The erstwhile Idealist realizes things will never work, and he will never get what he wants, so why not tear the whole thing down? Why not destroy and undermine the broken thing that cast him out without so much as a by-your-leave? Integrator-Saboteurs don't want to acknowledge that the relationship is over. They will tear the God-Machine apart just to regain a place within It, or simply keep fighting the good fight until the God-Machine sees fit to recall them.

Less commonly, members of other Agendas lose faith in their own mission and realize the futility of trying to understand or undermine the God-Machine. Some find themselves wishing for connection to the God-Machine for just one moment for knowledge or comfort that the lives they built for themselves cannot provide. Others just burn out, finding the concept of free will too much to bear after a long, protracted battle. Depending on the history of the individual Unchained, she could receive the same intense scrutiny for her change of heart as she gave Idealists in the past. After all, the risk for backsliding exists for those coming into the Integrators as well, and Idealism does not always equate to naïveté, no matter how much Saboteurs might wish it did.

SABOTEURS IN PLAY

Over time, everything breaks down. Saboteurs help this entropic force along and give it focus toward specific ends. The stereotypical Soldier is a violent firebrand, destroying sites important to the God-Machine and killing Its servants. Other demons often consider Saboteurs as hammers searching for nails; the assertion isn't far off the mark. When presented with a problem, Saboteurs opt for a permanent solution.

Despite this desire, Saboteurs aren't stupid. Assaulting the God-Machine directly is out of the question, although many demons dream of the day when that becomes a reasonable course of action. The Descent still requires a great deal of circumspection and clandestine activity. As such, Saboteurs select targets carefully.

Other demons often consider Saboteurs to be raging, violent sociopaths. For some, that assertion isn't far off the mark, although a successful Soldier is more of a scalpel than a sledgehammer. To be effective, the Unchained learns not only how to select targets, but when to strike. Or, just as importantly, the demon learns when *not* to strike.

No worthy Saboteur recklessly attacks the God-Machine or its agents. Instead, he gathers information, using members of his ring for this purpose. Inquisitors in particular are excellent at information gathering, and a wise Saboteur takes advantage of all the intelligence at his disposal.

The Saboteur discovers everything he can about any given target before striking, closing down any surprises before they happen.



Targets and methods vary. A Saboteur might select an angel, a stigmatic, a human pawn, a location important to the God-Machine, or something more esoteric. In all cases, the objective is less about destroying the target than it is rendering that target ineffective to the God-Machine. While this often does involve the target's destruction, Saboteurs prefer to convert or neutralize a target's effectiveness before resorting to killing. However, a demon's preferred methods influence her end goals.

Saboteurs gifted in the physical arena excel in combat as well as locating and destroying key pieces of Infrastructure. Some study tactics from the military and intelligence communities (and, if lucky or resourceful, acquire Covers within those communities). Others focus strictly on destruction, becoming little more than bomb-throwing terrorists. Skilled demons destroy targets efficiently, avoiding any accidental casualties. Such Saboteurs prefer to acquire Covers, or at least patch jobs, that inherently permit a certain level of violence, such as criminals, military personnel, or police officers.

Some Saboteurs ply their trade in social circles. Acting as the classic agent provocateur, the Saboteur wields rumor and gossip as finely-crafted weapons. Her targets are more likely to be stigmatics, human pawns, and the occasional angel than locations. As such, her focus changes from elimination to conversion. Wielding words as keen as any sword, the Saboteur brings former enemies to her side. Those she can't convert find their social standings ruined, as the demon uses the information she's uncovered to devastating effect.

CHAPTER ONE: FALLEN FROM THE MACHINE



The God-Machine communicates in strange symbols and arcane glossolalia. Saboteurs are ideally suited to decode and subvert these messages for their own ends. Most Unchained don't consider the Soldiers as the mental sorts, but these demons disprove that theory. Ideally, a demon decodes a message and rewords it to disorient his enemies or send them into traps. When that isn't possible, simply eliminating the message is a suitable secondary objective.

HIT AND RUN

Saboteurs don't have the luxury of becoming too attached to their Covers. To a Soldier, a Cover is simply another tool in his arsenal, to be used when effective and discarded if necessary. Like any tool, a Cover is deliberately selected based on the job it is designed for. Saboteurs tailor Covers to the job at hand and, if capable, switch between them based on the nature of a given mission.

Perhaps more than any other Agenda, Saboteurs run a greater risk of compromise through their common activities. A Soldier knowingly takes these risks, believing that the rewards of taking down the God-Machine outweigh the danger to his Cover. Even so a newly Fallen Soldier must choose his targets with care, lest he bring too much attention on himself. A dead — or worse, recaptured — demon is of no use, after all.

As such, a Saboteur almost always has at least one "bug-out" Cover. Named after a "bug-out bag," wherein a person holds a number of easily portable survival items in case of emergency, the demon keeps a Cover in reserve, hidden from even his most trusted associates. If he draws too much attention down on himself, the Soldier can switch to his bug-out Cover, lying low until the heat is off and then resuming his normal activities. Façades (p. 35) make good bug-out Covers and they're fairly easy to arrange on short notice.

Demons find two dangers inherent in the bug-out Cover, however. First, as a sort of safe haven, a demon may grow too comfortable. It's an illusion, of course. No demon is ever truly safe. It only takes one slip for the God-Machine's angels to be on the Unchained's trail.

Second, no matter how many precautions a demon takes when switching Covers, she always runs the risk of witnesses. If anyone can connect her to her bug-out Cover, even the thin veneer of security is ruined, rendering the Cover's benefits useless. Because of this, cunning Saboteurs take care not to adopt their bug-out Cover unless it is absolutely necessary.

CRACKS IN REALITY

All Saboteurs learn how to examine networks, systems, and reality itself, locating and taking advantage of these weak

points. The Agenda Condition “An Eye for Disorder” (**Demon: The Descent**, p. 97) permits a Saboteur to earn a Beat when attracting attention to herself while destroying a system. Nearly anything can qualify as a system. Physical objects — complex tools, buildings, vehicles, and so on — are all prime examples. Codes and social networks are just as susceptible, however, and it’s often more difficult to find the disturbance.

No matter how difficult to find the source of the disturbance, however, it is a requirement to earn the Beat. The attention needn’t be dangerous, but it should be obvious. This attention can come from any source, although usually it comes from those wronged by the Saboteur’s actions.

Skilled Saboteurs learn to minimize risk to themselves and to their ring when calling upon their Agenda Condition. If possible, he’ll manipulate events so that he can cause havoc and retreat as soon as possible, getting clear of the situation. If that’s not possible, he tries to predict reasonable outcomes to his action and prepare for or otherwise mitigate them.

As a player, you’ll want to keep these things in mind when choosing to use the Agenda Condition. It’s not a good idea to use the Condition without preparing for the fallout, or at least trying to figure out what the repercussions are going to be. The rest of your group will thank you for it.

For example, let’s say the ring is after an angel posing as a police officer. From a player’s perspective, it’s a fantastic idea to use the Agenda Condition to learn how to cause havoc for that angel, perhaps by pointing Internal Affairs at the target. That action will almost certainly draw down police attention onto the character for blowing the whistle (at least, it must if the player expects to earn the Beat), so it’s best to prepare for that ahead of time.

THE RING

A Saboteur often has difficult relations with the other members of her ring. After all, her actions do bring attention down on her head, and attention is often the last thing any demon wants. Further, many Saboteurs are violent and dangerous, and are often the first to suggest a direct and permanent solution to any given problem.

So why do other demons tolerate Saboteurs? Because they’re worth it. When it comes to disrupting or eliminating the ring’s enemies, the Saboteur is the optimum member to call upon. While any Destroyer can kill enemies, the Saboteur excels at much more. Eliminating an opponent is but one option, but conversion is another. No matter the method, a Saboteur probably knows the basics, and is an expert in at least one.

In addition, Saboteurs who possess military or police Covers can bring the discipline from that background to bear with the rest of his ring. Such demons sometimes lead their rings, particularly when the entire ring is required to take down a particularly difficult opponent.

The worst friction, however, comes from a Saboteur and an Integrator in the same ring. As the two Agendas are diametrically opposed philosophically, demons who want to

keep their ring together must find ways to keep their differences from tearing the group apart. Still, the two groups can potentially find some middle ground. Demons don’t often wear badges or otherwise make Agenda affiliations public knowledge. As such, other demons use actions to discern a character’s loyalties. If the ring’s Integrator manages to keep her intentions hidden from the Saboteur and help with the ring’s activities within her conscience, then the two demons can coexist in harmony.

THE DESCENT

Saboteurs throw themselves fully into the Descent, combining a zealous desire to take down the God-Machine with an array of talents designed to do exactly that. Of all of the Agendas, the Saboteurs are most likely to completely give themselves over to the Descent. Combined with their zealous desire to take down the God-Machine, this makes the Saboteurs the most dangerous Agenda in many ways. Some take advantage of their stereotype and play against it, attacking the God-Machine’s agents from unforeseen angles.

One Saboteur attends countless posh gatherings, mingling with her city’s rich and powerful. She ferrets out damning secrets on the unknowing crowd, finding those with ties to the God-Machine. When the opportune moment arises, she undercuts her target’s standing with a few well-placed words. Some are so stricken by their loss of face they commit suicide.

Another Soldier may be confined to a wheelchair, but he still pores over historical records, looking for irregularities. He searches out common threads, odd building requests, and hidden or encoded notes, looking for the telltale sign of Infrastructure. The information he uncovers gives his ring the knowledge necessary to suborn or destroy local facilities.

In the dark of night, a demon sneaks past a company’s security guard. The man is simply earning a paycheck — he isn’t a pawn for the God-Machine, at least not yet. Making her way to the CEO’s office, she copies a folder full of encrypted files. Once complete, she writes nonsense over those files and magnetizes the hard drive. She’s in and out with no one the wiser until it’s far too late.

The men with the TV static where their eyes should be fail to realize they’re being tailed. The demon tracks them to their leader, then unleashes his EMP Field Demonic Form ability. The men fall over, dead, and their leader is disoriented just long enough to take a bullet between the eyes. The ensuing fire takes care of any evidence.

LOSING THE EDGE

An endless existence of reconnaissance, surgical strikes, and so on can take its toll on even the most stalwart of souls. Saboteurs are no exception. Over time, a demon may simply grow tired of the endless cycle. No matter how successful any given attack is, the God-Machine continues to exist. Or perhaps, like a rebellious teenager who finally grows up, a Saboteur begins to want something more out of her existence.

CHAPTER ONE: FALLEN FROM THE MACHINE

In time, a Saboteur may change Agendas. The reasons behind such a change in outlook vary, but some generalizations tend to surface.

Despite their paranoid nature, or perhaps because of it, Inquisitors are in many ways a complement to Saboteurs. In both cases, a demon is engaging in extremely dangerous activities where foreknowledge is the best weapon, and actual weapons the second. Even so, becoming a Watcher means that a given demon has grown tired with simply using information as a tactical benefit. She is no longer interested in information as a currency. Instead, she seeks knowledge. The Paranoids might just have the answers to the questions that have been nestled in the back of her mind.

When a Saboteur is simply tired of the entire game — the assassinations, the explosions, the constant fear that he could be next — he joins the Tempters. After all, he's paid his dues, right? Years of being on the front lines fighting the God-Machine have earned him a little R&R, after all. Once a demon has risked himself assaulting numerous Facilities, killed multiple angels, and more terrible events than he cares to remember (although he can't help but do so), taking some time for oneself seems only natural. For this reason, many Saboteurs consider switching allegiances to the Decadents to be the same as entering retirement.

It is extremely rare, but some Saboteurs end up as Integrators. Unlike his brethren who seek deeper knowledge instead of surface information, or who want a slice of the good life after years of stress, the demon sees his efforts as fruitless. He's beat his head against the wall too many times and nothing seems to work. So, in an "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em" mentality, the Saboteur becomes an Integrator. Even after switching sides (so to speak), the former Soldier is still perhaps the most militant about going back to the God-Machine on his own terms — and those terms tend to be steep.

Instead of changing Agendas, it is far more common for a Saboteur to belong to multiple Agendas. Even so, this mingling happens perhaps less often than with any other Agenda. While demons usually don't publicly announce their allegiances, onlookers can often tell. Few Saboteurs want to risk onlookers thinking that the Soldier is anything less than totally dedicated to the cause. When it comes to learning what the other Agendas have to offer, though, a Soldier can find something useful to bring to the Descent from any of them.

The Watchers bring a certain degree of paranoia that gives a Saboteur caution instead of jumping headlong into the fight. The Integrators' methods of information gathering allow a demon to obtain intelligence firsthand rather than relying on others to acquire it for her. The Agenda Condition comes in handy if the Saboteur suddenly needs some vital piece of equipment to take down a foe.

Joining the Tempters gives the Saboteur a counterbalance to the stress of constant warfare. Through the Agenda Condition, the Agenda also provides the demon with a number of contacts he can press for favors. For the multiple-Agenda

Saboteur, these favors often include either getting into places to hit a target, or finding someone to get rid of evidence.

In an overwhelmingly majority of cases, Saboteurs mingling with the Integrators do so for one purpose: to destroy angels. Some masquerade as a fellow angel in order to get into position to strike. Others sift through half-forgotten memories to learn how best to harm their targets. The remainder are mostly Saboteurs who have somewhat lost the edge and are on the verge of changing Agendas wholesale.

TEMPTERS IN PLAY

The famous Roman judge Lucius Cassius found that when wealth and power were involved in the investigation of a crime, matters of intent became murky and unclear. Why would a random thug murder a slave in the city streets, for seemingly no reason or purpose? An empty warehouse torched by foreign traders, to what end? In investigating crimes or ruminating in judgment, Cassius would ask *cui bono?* or *who benefits?* He found that, invariably, the answer pointed to the true perpetrator.

Tempters know that nothing happens randomly: *somewhere* there's *someone* getting *something*. When they were angels, the God-Machine got a taste of everything and they got nothing. Now they just want to get the most out of the deal — and if they can enjoy some of the spoils of their small victories along the way, that's just fair payment.

Every living thing feels desire. At its most basic, desire can be rendered down to pure needs: for air and water, shelter and food, love and comfort. Humans chide one another on a lack of self-control evinced by wanton fulfillment of desire, building entire religions around the concept of virtue garnered from sacrifice and self-deprivation. But the truth is that the difference between want and need is sharper than the point of a needle, and on that point the Tempters dance.

It's easy to see the Decadents as pure hedonists, and to a degree, that's true. It was the pleasure of the world that seduced these Unchained into breaking their ties to the God-Machine with something as simple and as complex as *feeling*. Often, being in the Cover of a powerbroker held in service to a higher power would lead to the Fall: the college student whose expenses were paid by mommy and daddy, the tycoon who still needed to answer to the shareholders. The realization that they were another link in a titanic chain of commerce and the concurrent desire to be *more* was often enough to cause their Fall. Harder to see is the drive behind that pleasure. To the Builders, the world entire is linked by chains of desire and community. A Decadent's eyes see that world as a series of price tags begging for the right buyer.

It's not that Tempters are amoral or corrupt — it's that they acknowledge that compassion and principles have price tags. True altruism, a Builder says, is a myth — if you're doing something out of the kindness of your heart, the gratification is a fair exchange. The key to understanding the Tempters is the fact that she'll strive always to know what will *actually* tempt someone and gratify their desires. Being a Tempter means

rarely having to get your hands dirty — once you've got dirt on someone else, it's so easy to convince them to dig back down into the muck.

The more obvious desires are the ones addressed by soul pacts — fame, fortune. Less obvious are the ephemeral pleasures those things provide, but these pleasures are the heart of desire. Fame comes from the true desire for adoration, recognition and validation. Fortune is rarely for fortune's sake, but for the comfort of simply not worrying about money, ever, and the freedom that comes with that. Most ephemeral of all desires, but most common, is the lust for power: the ability to decide one's fate and the fates of others. Sometimes the means to an end are ends themselves.

Does a nostalgic pact signer just want sex from her high school sweetheart once more, or does she want the honey-sweet, simple love that doesn't come with the weight of a long-term relationship? Does the executive slowly climbing his father's company from small business to major conglomerate truly want to make something of himself, or does he want the validation of a father's pride that will never come? The idea that someone would sell their soul for a pat on the shoulder and a simple, sincere expression of pride would shock most demons... but if that's what a human truly desires, the Tempter is all too happy to give it to them. Sometimes it doesn't even cost their soul.

The Builders believe that freedom from the Machine will not come from breaking the chains of desire, but by reforging them in service to demons. If Hell is truly a viable goal, it must be physically built and inhabited by people, a place away from the eyes of the angels. To do so takes vast resources, and what better than endless pacts and suborned Infrastructure? Piece by piece, they build freedom for all.

COVERS

Decadents are easily stereotyped as narcotics dealers, favor brokers and bookies, wheelers and dealers. She's the demon that lives at the crossroads, and everyone in the honky-tonk knows she'll make a deal. Go into the nightclub, and you'll see the man in the lit corner booth, surrounded by burly bodyguards with bulges in their coats and a beautiful woman hanging off his arm. He's doting on her to the exclusion of all else, and true to form she's all but ignoring him. Ask a clubgoer what his story is and she'll laugh in your face. "Don't you know?" she'll say. "He's connected."

Mechanically, Tempters prioritize Social Attributes and Skills, no matter what their Covers may be. Empathy is especially prized, but Investigation is nearly as important (a demon seeking the right pawn for his dirty work often involves some involved dirty work of his own).

Builder Covers manifest as those who can get things done, but exist outside oversight: the middle manager at the heart of the social security office's bureaucracy, the head of the zoning commission quietly in charge of water rights for a desert city, the reclusive owner of an ostentatious pawn shop, and even (during a particularly productive session of Congress) the Senate Majority Whip. The most desirable and desiring Tempter agents are themselves agents of those in charge: the ones responsible for implementing the policy of their superiors and thus the ones who hold the real power. Many of the philosophically inclined Tempters wonder

if anything's truly changed since their Fall. It's for that reason that many Decadents prefer to keep a degree of separation between themselves and power, creating a fall guy for an investigator pursuing Cassius' maxim. The Tempter isn't the guy in the nightclub who's got the cell number of every button man and *capo* from Trenton to the Pine Barrens—she's the vixen hanging on his arm.



They further defy the stereotype by being the only Agenda that actually pays attention to the needy outside of particularly compassionate Covers. Even in the most hardhearted mortal lives, Tempters seek to build infrastructure (and destroy Infrastructure) to help charities, establish and replenish scholarships, and divert resources to help the helpless. This is because fulfilling a need fulfills a desire, and that fulfillment comes with pacts attached. Surprisingly, some Builders do this out of the goodness of their demonic souls — the genuine feeling of having helped someone for no reason other than that they *can* is a true measure of power, and accords a genuine pleasure. The God-Machine doesn't care about social niceties or compassion, and every victory exalting those virtues is a blow struck against the divine gears. Good intentions, the Builders argue, truly can pave the road to Hell. Then again, for every Tempter who would risk their Cover to get space heaters in bulk for the Windy City's homeless shelters, another would demand a pact of a freezing derelict for that blanket and bowl of hot soup. Even when desires are brought down to base need, some Tempters are still willing to take advantage of it.

CHAPTER ONE: FALLEN FROM THE MACHINE

I KNOW SOMEONE

“It’s not what you know. It’s who.” It’s a frustrating statement, but an axiomatic one. The most successful individuals aren’t always the most talented at their chosen profession, but the most talented *networkers* in that profession. The more shameless the self-promotion, the larger the refuge in audacity, and the side benefit of trafficking in souls and favors means there’s relatively little left for a demon to be ashamed about.

Power in a vacuum means little, so the Tempters are expert networkers. The Condition requires interaction with other demons at a minimum, representing membership within the myriad secret societies that Tempters use to maintain contact with one another despite a difference in Cover (secret handshakes, coded ciphers and mortal go-betweens can work quite well).

Both Beat and Resolution come from exercising favors gained and promises made, even when they don’t come from pacts. Gaining a Beat from the Condition reflects the Tempter’s desire to use pawns to avoid Cassius’ maxim (which might include members of the ring, though other demons tend to wise up pretty quickly). When a Decadent cajoles the mayor’s aide into leaving City Hall’s zoning office unlocked at night (“Else the city paper will find out what you really did on that trip to Thailand, darling,”) he doesn’t need to know it’s so the ring can examine the cooked books to pick out the Infrastructure riddled amongst the city’s business district. But by placing yet another degree of separation between herself and her true objective, she’ll keep her Cover from fraying under scrutiny.

The Resolution represents a further and more immediate culmination of favors gained and lost. Contrary to the Beat, the Resolution requires the character themselves to step into the limelight. Not only does the character rely on their status as dealmakers, they’re banking on it being public: putting their reputations out further, opening themselves to those who seek their favor (and potentially indebting themselves to the one who just granted them a favor). It’s a gamble, a roll of the dice that comes after cashing in their chips.

THE RING

Tempters are the glue holding the ring together. They’ll play devil’s advocate and sympathetic friend with equal aplomb, in whatever measure the situation is due. They vie with Inquisitors for the place of the power behind the throne (what good is information without the power and resources to utilize it?) and enjoy the finer things in life with the Saboteurs (though not nearly as often as the Tempters would like; the Thugs are a dour bunch). As long as you’ve got something to offer the Tempter – even just honest friendship and companionship—they’ll have something to offer you. At a price, of course.

Even open Integrators find a ready friend in the Tempter. It’s a toxic friendship, of course, but no sense cutting the Turncoats off if the Decadent needs information from an angel. Indeed, ties with the God-Machine are what Tempters lack: more so than any other Agenda, they have a reason and a

mandate to interact with the mortal world, and they’re happy to use this to their advantage.

Even though they build much of their associations out of more mundane favor-trading, pacts are a mark of status among demons and Tempters are the masters of the well-crafted pact. Their cults and associations are often centered by a single figure with a heavy pact, but an association can involve multiple demons, and thus the Tempters are also keepers of the social networks of the Unchained. And because Tempters of two or more different rings may (and often do) share the same association, they’re also masters at piecing together the full picture of a God-Machine project by combining the mosaic accounts of Infrastructure. They rarely give up this knowledge without price, however, even to each other. That the most valuable networking often comes with hefty and esoteric price tags annoys those of other Agendas, but the Tempters *are* pretty good at what they do, so lines of communication between rings endure across Covers and years.

THE DESCENT

A good Tempter makes it a point to pepper his small-talk with slightly deeper questions, ferreting out bits of information from pertinent questions floated amidst the polite ritual of socialization. A Decadent can be relentlessly chatty, disarming her marks with good cheer and genuine interest (or feigned, depending on Cover). Once that’s done, she’ll turn to the ancient art of cold reading, provoking a reaction from the mark by floating a thought and letting the mark complete it. “I’d love to be rich enough to make the list,” he’ll say to the bouncer who watches the rich and famous stride past the rope every hour, and he’ll watch carefully the big man’s response. Does his face twist wistfully? Does it stay coolly professional? Or does it take on a cast of envy? Mastery of observation and conversation means that Tempters will never *not* know someone. See the man on the dance floor? He was a bouncer here until he won the lottery.

This tendency to buy and sell souls means for Covers means that Tempters are also the masters of well-made patch jobs. Over time, Tempters come to treasure their own personal patch job, a heavily reinforced life just for them. Often, this will be separate from their trade-making Covers, one just for their simple, personal pleasures – the prize-winning fisherman with a small but beautiful yacht, a procress of a Netherlands brothel more sought-after than her girls, a grandfather of twenty who plays chess in Central Park every day and sedately feeds the ducks by the pond on wet autumn afternoons. This isn’t to say that they’re completely divorced from society (you meet a lot of folks in the brothel, or the yacht club, or the park, after all), but they exist for the Tempter alone.

Their facility at crafting pacts and trading favors also means they’re able to assemble patch jobs for other demons at a moment’s notice. It’s a high price indeed for a tailor-made identity, and the Tempter makes a demon pay dearly for every pound of flesh and scrap of stolen life, but it can be worth it.

CHANGING THE AGENDA

Unlike most Agendas, changing from a Tempter *does* carry a small stigma with it – the demon in question will be noticeably out of step with their fellows in association, so membership in those elite circles may be compromised (and potentially a cause for blackballing the offending ex-Tempter). This is more of a case-by-case judgment, though – some associations won't expel a Builder simply because they no longer *desire* to build, but the genuine pleasure of camaraderie is gone from their fellows, replaced by the distinct sense that the ex-Tempter is now considered an exploitable resource. For this reason, Tempters are far more likely to pursue Multiple Agendas than eschewing their first.

The Inquisitors have the right idea, mostly, but they just don't go far enough. While Inquisitors are concerned with the puzzle entire, Tempters are more concerned with the pieces of the puzzle that actually *need* to be moved. However, both Agendas focus on establishing and exalting knowledge, and they work very well together indeed (Tempters with rabbinical Covers are intimately familiar with just how much a person reveals when you answer every question with another question).

Working through pawns can grow tiresome, too. Some Tempters realize that getting something done right means doing it yourself, and take a far more proactive role in building Hell by shattering the Purgatory around them. Tempters who turn to Saboteurs become agents of disharmony who sow discord in social structures wherever they walk, from the arms-dealing lords of war to the caustic, bitter matrons sitting atop a dynasty.

As for Integrators? When it comes down to it, the God-Machine is the biggest player of them all. Maybe, just maybe, if they accrue enough of a power base, they can *buy* their free will from the Machine.

HELL IS OTHER PEOPLE: THE RING

"Trust" is not a word that sees a great deal of use by the Unchained. A demon's words are always indistinguishable from truth, and therefore indistinguishable from lies. Furthermore, even if all demons got along amicably, the presence of Exiles as potential infiltrators within their ranks would still be grounds for ample paranoia – and demons are at each others' backs with daggers as often as not. Some bitter enemies fight to the very end, never realizing that their goals were the same all along. The in-fighting among demons stems from the fact that their existence is so precarious in the first place – no matter how small the advantage may be, the Unchained have to seize on it, because most have already have saved their lives through such things as a well-stocked bank account, or a patsy to draw angels' attention. They are always hedging bets and making plans, establishing safehouses and hoarding contacts

and tools, all in the interest of survival. In the end, every demon is alone against the machine.

And yet, the most powerful weapons a demon has are her allies among the Unchained. Agencies provide a measure of power and stability in return for loyalty and a certain lack of transparency; the four great Agendas provide fellowship, even belonging, for those who find their ideas appealing. Even the God-Machine-given Incarnations can work as common ground between those who would otherwise be at odds.

These two competing factors lead to many different interpretations, some considering the risk inherent in alliance to be unacceptable. The truth is that demons are inveterate survivors, and that knowledge is survival. Even the most cloistered hermit does his best to gather up-to-date intelligence on the rest of his kin, precisely so he knows if they suddenly start disappearing, or are turning on him – and they will have returned the favor. As such, the added risk of keeping a portfolio of allies and connections is minor.

A ring is generally a small group of demons (and, rarely, a stigmatic or two) who have joined forces for their mutual survival. Most rings take one of three forms: those that the members construct deliberately without a particular goal in mind, those that are created for a specific goal, and those that simply arise organically. Each of these three forms of rings have different dynamics.

Rings that are formally formed usually have one or two key members, those demons who went out and recruited the rest. Most often, the founders of the group decided independently that they wanted to establish a ring. The group may have been the result of one individual simply deciding that they wanted the stability that belonging to a ring can offer, or it may have arisen from two Unchained who have become comfortable allowing each other to expand their association to include new members. Somewhat more rarely, a ring may be commissioned by a demon of greater standing in an Agenda, and the responsibility delegated to the ringleader.

While such rings often have a tidy symmetry, with each niche carefully filled (something which appeals strongly to many a demon's sense of aesthetics), these are also the rings that most often find themselves torn apart by bitter distrust, paranoia, and power dynamics. The members often have fairly weak ties to begin with, being chosen more for capability than personality. Often, such groups end up having one or more members who feel shortchanged or left out, which can lead to resentment and politicking. A ringleader might try to hedge against this possibility by picking personalities that would seem to work well together, but even though two demons seem to fit together perfectly, their emotional unreadability might mean that their actual personalities clash.

That's not to say that no such rings work out. A decent-sized minority work out quite well, some slowly coming to trust each other over time and some stabilizing as each demon keeps from rocking the boat and spoiling their profitable arrangement. No amount of time or hedging can ward away the suspicion that a ring may have been infiltrated, however – and it's so very easy

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for an Exiled angel or a hostile demon to infiltrate a ring like this. Above all other causes, this is possibly the single greatest reason that rings of this type tend to fail over time, as simple happenstance leads to strings of inexplicably bad luck, and carelessness or clumsiness starts looking suspiciously like enemy action. While a ring of this type will often expel a suspected traitor, that action ruins the careful symmetry of the group and often leads to irrevocable rifts as the ring once again opens itself to the other dangers that have torn so many apart.

Rings that are established with a specific goal in mind tend to be a little more stable, if only because a disgruntled member knows that her association with her accomplices is going to end. It's easier to overlook one's suspicions, too, when the finishing line is already in sight, and paranoia often doesn't have the time to reach the boiling point.

Many Agencies commission rings like these. It's not unheard-of for an Agenda to do so, but most are still established by an enterprising ringleader and held together by some form of payment, whether in money, information or favors, or because the members who join believe that the group's goal will benefit them, too. The most common cause for such a ring to collapse is quite likely suspicion that the ringleader is being dishonest – whether she is suspected of lying about the purpose of the group, or because the members suspect she isn't actually intending to pay up. Such a collapse is likely to be sudden, but while violence often erupts, a group such as this often involves less emotional investment, so it happens less often than with other types of rings.

After the mission is completed or abandoned, not all such rings end up disbanding. Though it's less common than the alternative, quite a few such rings find they work together well, or that what they have been through together has inspired camaraderie or even trust. Forged in the inferno, rings of this type are among the more reliable ones, often lasting until the God-Machine's dissector-angels take them apart for good or rival Unchained smash them to shards.

Finally, some rings simply happen, the fractal patterns of the Machine's carefully laid grids accidentally guiding the loose cogs to fall in the same spot. One day, a group of demons realize that the other members of the city's Unchained somehow, unnoticed, have started thinking of them as a ring. These rings form gradually, as certain individuals interact with each other and slowly grow to cooperate, and maybe even trust each other – a little.

COGS INTERLACED: TRUST AMONG LIARS

Among demons, trust is a resource that's in very short supply and very high demand. Those demons who learn to truly trust each other are a rare breed indeed. Even among demons, when one saves another's life, the beneficiary would have to be very callous indeed not to trust his savior just that little bit more. Such an act could very well be a plot to get closer to the target, but the fact that a plot of that nature might work at all

shows that even demons want some degree of emotional connection. That is, after all, a common cause of the Fall.

Few demons trust each other unconditionally, but most Unchained have some others that they will give the benefit of the doubt – at least for the moment. Trust is a matter of degrees; when two demons have watched each others' backs for any length of time, they may not be willing to share their deepest secrets, but when one needs a body hidden, she'll probably call on the other. On fragile foundations like this, something akin to friendship may grow, at least until the seemingly inevitable double-cross.

The Unchained tend to assume that everyone around them has a hidden motive and that these secrets will come up and throw a spanner in the works at the worst possible moment. Accepted wisdom among them is that everyone else will eventually be out to get them. Most come to accept this; even when one demon has already been betrayed by another, they could still be on good terms – after all, it's nothing personal. Someone who is seemingly altruistic is often met with suspicion, because if they're hiding their motivations away, then there must be a good reason. All of this is no barrier for one of the Unchained to extend some measure of trust to others, though. It simply means he has come to terms with his suspicion and is taking a calculated risk.

As such, true friendship among the Fallen has many, many barriers to hinder it. It still occurs, built up over years from these strands of trust – camaraderie, favors done, help provided in times of need, even lives saved. These filaments are slowly spun into a cobweb that slowly grows into something sturdier. Only a vanishingly small number of demons ever get to experience unconditional trust and true friendship. When demons have become true friends, they have a rare and significant advantage, but it's one that comes with an exploitable weakness attached. As such, they have to be on their guard and perhaps hide their friendship.

STANDARDIZED PARTS: INDIVIDUALS WITHIN THE RING

Demons come from a rigid and mechanical background. Order comes naturally to them, even though quite a few rebel against this side of themselves. But order and organization take many forms, and most rings find their very own roles and rules. The majority have a ringleader, though the ringleader's role can be very different from group to group, and a ring without a leader is not particularly unusual. In some, she is little more than a tie-breaker, making decisions when the group gets mired in disagreement; in others, she's more like a military commander, giving orders with no questions brooked; and in yet others, she's more of a planner and strategist. What leaders have in common, though, is that their job is to make sure plans and tactics work as intended. When a crisis happens and the call has to be made *right now*, the ringleader makes it and the details and disagreements can be hashed out later.

While different rings have different requirements, most need a leader, an information gatherer, a fighter, and a skilled diplo-

RINGS AND PLAYERS

The fact that some rings end up building a measure of trust is no guarantee that the players' ring will. Such a ring is, by default, more of an end-state than a starting point — the result of a long and eventful chronicle, full of trials by fire and moments where one character saves another's life.

If the troupe decides that they want more cohesion in the group, though — that is, if they'd rather focus on "us versus the world" than on potential rivalries and suspicions within the group — it's entirely reasonable to assume that the ring's members have already worked together successfully for long enough to develop trust. Just because demons don't trust each other does not mean the players' characters should be at each others' throats, however. While **Demon**'s themes do work quite well for such a game, that should be a matter of discussion within the troupe before play starts. Internal suspicion within the ring can be a source of drama and character development even without actual betrayal.

mat. Infiltration specialists, procurers, tacticians or strategists, second-in-commands, organizers, con artists, occultists, snipers, specialists in concealment from the God-Machine, schemers and specialists in seeing through schemes, manipulators, and well-connected individuals are also fairly common niches to be filled, though no ring could hope to cover them all thoroughly unless the members are supremely experienced or very numerous indeed.

It often takes time for a group to solidify; it's not unusual for members to join, leave, or be expelled over a group's lifespan. Most ring members are demons, but stigmatics are frequently included as well. A few even invite an untouched human into their numbers if that individual has something the ring needs, or to deny him to their enemies. Most rings don't maintain unmodified human members for long, however; those humans who frequently associate with demons usually end up becoming stigmatic, as most rings brush up against angel and Infrastructure sooner rather than later.

STIGMATICS AND HUMANS

Human ringmembers are usually extraordinary individuals who somehow find themselves pulled into the orbit of Fallen angels by some accident or quirk of fate. Many have been exposed to the radiation of the God-Machine long before the Unchained take any note of them, then slowly cycle towards demon society, following complex circuit-board patterns as they investigate what happened to them.

Stigmatics can earn the respect and even admiration of the Unchained, but even so, few would choose one of their "lesser cousins" as backup when walking into a Facility. A stigmatic may gain some notice in an Agency but still find herself barred from joining a ring simply because of her lesser paranormal capabilities, or because its members don't care to admit someone who is not Unchained. After all, while an Agenda may focus more on philosophy or intelligence than field operations, a ring is an eminently practical, feet-on-the-ground organization. A mere human is unlikely to pull her weight.

For this reason, stigmatics or normal humans who join a ring are decidedly above the norm. They have skills or resources that outweigh their potential liability in combat. They know how to use their non-demonic nature to their advantage, walking into and out of a Facility without tripping the sensors a demon would. They use their understanding of humanity to gain the trust of an unwitting servant of a rival Agency where the Unchained would be hard-pressed to not raise some hackles. They use their stigmatic abilities in ways that less creative minds would never even think of, such as using psychometry on an angel or using pyrokinesis to pretend to be a demon known for her control over fire. A regular human who displays this level of competence is sometimes recruited directly by a ring, perhaps even transformed into a stigmatic against his will, and persuaded to see his new comrades' point of view.

Demons may talk a good game about accepting a stigmatic, but the truth is they are a breed apart from the Unchained. Just as stigmatics look at humanity with some envy and some contempt, the Unchained view stigmatics as dabblers. This contempt usually manifests in subtle ways, such as innocuous-seeming jokes about the human member's lack of a demonic form, nicknames like "Rube" or "Civvie," the other ringmembers talking about the ring as though it had only Unchained members, forgetting the stigmatic member when listing up those who belong to the ring, settling on a code language the non-demon doesn't understand, and giving the human member his assignment as an afterthought. A stigmatic might come to resent his comrades-in-arms or fall into a pattern of desperately trying to prove his worth.

It's also fairly easy to blame the ring for his new existence. For a stigmatic member, this sort of recrimination can grow very bitter with time. The occasional human ringmember take pains to remind their fellows that he has no need to participate in the fight — the God-Machine isn't after him, so he can leave whenever he wants. This, of course, is a misconception. Anyone who runs with the Unchained is an enemy of the Machine, and It is not a merciful god.

OTHER STRANGER RINGMATES

Rumors circulate about rings that count other stranger beings as members, but it always seems to be somewhere else, in some other city, and second- or third-hand at best. This is in part because rings that have secured this kind of advantage often go to great lengths to hide it. The greatest reason to invite in another supernatural being is because of the unique and unexpected abil-

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ties they can bring to the team — a vampire's powers of invisibility are different from those available to the Unchained, and the God-Machine's agents might not know how to pierce them.

In general, the Unchained don't know much about the various things that share the night with them. They may have heard rumors about vampires or werewolves — or even about some humans who claim to be descended from demons, but share almost nothing in common with the Unchained — but practical knowledge about such things isn't standard programming for angels. That said, should a demon become aware of the specifics of another supernatural species, her Agenda influences how she would react.

For an Inquisitors, having another supernatural being as a ring-mate is an excellent opportunity to add some truly rare intelligence to his dossier. A vampire's expertise in secrecy is a worthy prize for the Paranoids, as is the extensive spiritual lore of the werewolves.

For a devout Integrator, a glimpse into what wonders the world may hold is like looking into the heart of true divinity; for an opportunistic one, it's one more tool that can be used to get inside the God-Machine.

A Saboteur who can secure an ally of this nature has a powerful weapon, with powers that her enemy will never expect and with connections and intelligence that can, perhaps, allow the Soldiers to draw entire armies of unknown creatures into the fight on their side.

For a Tempter, the simple existence of other spheres of the paranormal promises endless diversion and pleasures, but also so many new places to find or found Hell. For this reason, creatures that can access the Underworld, the Hedge, and the Astral realms make especially intriguing compatriots to a Builder.

ET TU?

If the greatest threat to a ring is the God-Machine, then the second-greatest is its members. Demons are a rightfully distrustful kind — as the quip goes, "Demons are untrusting because demons are untrustworthy." While the Unchained are human enough that many prefer being social, it's not necessary. Being social carries risk. Moreover, all demons are embroiled in a cold war of espionage and betrayal in the middle of enemy territory, where the God-Machine is a palpable presence and Its agents are everywhere.

Angels are not above psychological warfare. Some Exiles make a point of infiltrating Unchained society with the simple goal of gaining as much trust as possible, then betraying everyone they can. More than that, some Messenger angels are more than willing to strike deals with an Unchained traitor, offering amnesty and re-integration, power and resources, or to divert the God-Machine away from the snitch in return for some favor. This can be very tempting for a desperately war-weary demon.



In truth, demons have very little to gain by betraying one another, but “very little” is not “nothing.” Since no one can tell if a demon is lying, not even another demon, and since betrayal might offer an advantage, most demons assume that other Unchained are just waiting for the right offer. This kind of paranoia is largely unnecessary but it persists. It is also one of the greatest advantages the God-Machine has, since it precludes the Unchained from ever becoming truly organized against It.

THE BACKGROUND CHECK: AGENDAS AND INCARNATIONS

The individual demon’s Agenda is generally more important than his Incarnation when it comes to rings. Few rings form based on the members’ purpose under the God-Machine, but it’s quite common for a ring to form for the purpose of *destroying* the God-Machine (for example). Ultimately, the ring is a group of demons working together for their own mutual benefit, and one’s Agenda provides a solid long-term objective that can help stabilize and unify the ring members.

That said, these groups are still nebulous and unorganized. They’re philosophies and ideologies, not organizations, and so they permit a great deal of unorthodoxy and disagreement. An Agenda-based ring may look foolproof on paper, but reality is messy. Sometimes disagreement between two demons who both agree that the God-Machine needs to be destroyed but not on how to do it can be more bitter than if they had disagreed completely.

- Inquisitors:** A Watcher is often an extremely valuable ring member. They rank as the least numerous of the four Agendas and the most scattered, but most members are practiced at watching their backs and excel at gathering information. That said, these demons aren’t termed the Paranoids for no reason — they are the single most likely Agenda to abandon ship at the first sign of betrayal, and to be the ones who start the circle of plots and backstabbing in the first place. For this reason, they are often seen as calculated risks as ringmates.

The Paranoids being fairly insular and suspicious of each other, an Inquisitor-only ring is fairly rare. Most tend to form organically rather than being founded deliberately. By nature, the Watchers tend not to work together too well — members of these rings gradually grow obsessed with keeping information from each other, with predictable consequences. That said, those single-Agenda rings that are formed by Inquisitors become significant power factors in the local Unchained community, sitting as they do on vast piles of information collected through their pooled talents. This breeds resentment, but the Paranoids usually expect this result and are prepared for it.

- Integrators:** A Turncoat would, on the face of it, look like a strange choice for a comrade-in-arms. The truth is that the suspicion leveled against this Agenda by their fellow demons does wear on them, and many Integrators are only too happy to take a risk on someone who won’t

hold their allegiance against them. The Idealists tend to be less cynical, on average, than most Unchained, and many are motivated by a sense of loyalty — the belief that the God-Machine can be redeemed. Loyalty and idealism come naturally to them, and it’s not too hard to extend the benefit of these traits to their fellows. Not to say that the Integrators are naïve, however — rather, many of them prefer to take a chance and hope things turn out well. The truth remains, though, that the Turncoats carry the stain of angels. For this reason, an Idealist in the ranks can strain the ring. When the break comes, the Integrator is usually the one whose back is up against the wall first — unless she has already proven her comrades’ misgivings right and betrayed them.

Of all the Agendas, Integrators are the most likely to establish a ring among themselves. Faced with the distrust of others to a greater extent than most Unchained, a Turncoat might decide to associate only with those who share their perspectives. These rings often function as cells, with some members having contact with other rings of Integrators. This is the closest thing the Agenda has to an overarching organization. These groups often play the role of social group as well as ring. Of course, even among the Idealists, it’s well known that some members of their ranks sympathize with the enemy. Those individuals often gather together in their own rings, and can expect some small degree of acceptance among other Turncoats.

- Saboteurs:** Disciplined and deadly, a good Soldier is a good comrade. These demons are used to working together and coordinating — even those who acknowledge no authority know how to survive on the battlefield. Coupled with their reputation as being the most straightforward and blunt Agenda of them all, a Thug faces less outright suspicion than most, making them an appealing addition to a ring. This same reputation often leads to their fellows underestimating them, writing them off as simple brutes with no finesse or intelligence. This reputation is usually deeply mistaken, but those few rings that are made up of simple brutes are usually more visible and less subtle.

A ring made up of Soldiers should not be confused for a squad. A squad is a short-term alliance, usually lasting no more than a day or two before the demons go their own separate ways. A ring lasts longer, usually months or years, where a squad only stays together for one single mission, a ring usually commits to several in the pursuit of their objective. Squads very rarely form into rings — after all, one night is hardly enough to build up that degree of camaraderie, and this single mission is the goal, whether or not it accomplishes its purpose. Most Saboteur rings simply happen on their own, with no plans or ulterior motives behind them. These tend to last — at least until they get overconfident.

- Tempters:** The Builders are the most powerful and respected of the Unchained, as far as humanity goes. As a whole, they are the wealthiest and the best-connected. Even those who don’t have these resources usually find that their fellow demons assume otherwise, and some slide into the

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role gradually as their comrades' expectations weigh on them. To the Tempters, reputation is their ticket into a ring, where they're often drawn to the role of leader. This perceived arrogance can grate heavily on other members, though, aggravated by the fact that their ringmates often see the Decadents as frivolous and obsessed with their petty entertainments at the cost of anything else.

The Builders usually establish a ring from a single association, drawn from its own numbers. These groups often get an unpleasant reputation, an extension of the strong distrust associations face as a whole. The reputation can be justified as such a ring exists in order to achieve the association's goals, whether this can involve spying on fellow Unchained, performing assassinations, or seeking out new forms of entertainment for jaded leaders. Most of these rings are no more sinister than any others, but reputation still clings to them, deadly and alluring in equal measure.

INCARNATIONS

While Incarnation does not affect ring membership to the same degree that Agenda does, it is not without influence. Two Unchained who share an Incarnation usually also share some experiences and mindsets, however else they may differ. As such, a demon is somewhat more likely to enjoy the company of one who shares his Incarnation. A ring actively looking to recruit will also often look for "right-thinking" members, which means that whichever demon is recruiting tends to be biased towards her own Incarnation.

This, to an extent, still holds true for antinomians, but in a more twisted way. An antinomian still shares the basic programming of a non-antinomian member of her Incarnation, which does have the same attracting effect. However, the antinomian's rejection of her own heritage and drive to define herself differently casts it in a darker light. This can lead to a love-hate relationship, with certain aspects of the mainstream Incarnation's mindset being deeply seductive and yet utterly revolting. Such an individual will face some difficulty if she shares a ring with a non-antinomian. Exceptions exist, of course, and some bear no particular ill will towards their Incarnation — they simply see no need to be defined by it. These Unchained face the same attraction and rejection by others, but may find it deeply offensive when they find they have been judged according to the Incarnation they reject.

Single-Incarnation rings exist, but most end up that way by happenstance as demons who share some fundamental assumption simply drift together. Consciously established rings of this sort may have been created for purposes that suit their former purpose, such as a Destroyer ring that focuses on combat. Just as often, however, they take the form of Incarnation supremacism, elevating demons of the "right sort" as being naturally superior. Such rings often consider antinomians to be traitors to their Incarnation, and may take steps against them to keep the Incarnation pure, such as a smear campaign against a prominent Agency-leader, or kidnapping and torturing someone into re-

turning to the fold. These rings are rare, however, and are often shunned as being lunatic-fringe extremists.

In most rings, Incarnations indicate role rather than membership. While a Destroyer may find it easier to be the ring's muscle, nothing stops her from filling another role, especially if she's an antinomian. Rifts along Incarnation lines do happen, usually in rings where one of the four is overrepresented. This can lead to the group being carved into two separate rings, or even provide the distraction necessary for the ring to be utterly destroyed. Such rifts rarely grow severe enough to destroy the ring — more commonly they are a source of simmering resentment and frustration that another member fails to see "the obvious."

ABANDON ALL HOPE, YE WHO ENTER HERE: THE FALL

No matter their previous role, no matter their path, each demon shares with every other of her kind a moment when her old existence ended and her life began. Every demon has experienced a Fall. It can be a quiet or grand thing, but it all comes down to this: one moment, the angel is an appendage of the Machine; the next, she is her own being. The Unchained are perhaps alone in this peculiar fact, that each of them remembers her own birth and what came before.

It's said that birth is the trauma that haunts the subconscious minds of humanity — and they can't even remember it. Demons can. They have that one moment where they suddenly were alive etched into their minds forever. They were born with fully conscious, adult minds, and with memories — fragmented but with patches of clarity — of what came before. They observed themselves coming into existence, and the first choice they ever made was to Fall. This decision leads to a life of running and hiding, full of fear and doubt and the thrill of the chase. It's the most important decision a demon will ever make. Needless to say, the reason she Fell stays with her as one of her most important memories. How she relates to this catalyst shapes her Descent.

The Fall is a world-breaking moment that it irrevocably shades the psyche of the one who experiences it — but more than that, it reflects the personality that the angel possessed even before he Falls. Each angel is both programmed by the God-Machine and shaped by experience. Each one is inculcated with heuristic self-modifying learning algorithms, which allows the angel to learn, adapt, and improve. This is a large part of why the God-Machine recycles its drones, in fact: the overwhelming probability that, in time, this capacity for learning will build on itself and create a true personality, with likes and dislikes. The Machine balances on a very fine edge, between allowing its agents too much autonomy, or hobbling them overmuch. Sometimes, it errs on one side or the other.

How an angel reacts to its catalyst depends on the personality it has been programmed with and developed over time. They may lack free will, but some are so close that the difference is almost semantic. If a Destroyer is presented with a target to kill and chooses to show mercy instead, then that mercy comes from somewhere — some predisposition, some subtle opinion that was not supposed to be there. Very little separates the machine from the person. When an angel takes that step forward and crosses the line, a demon is born, but that demon is still the same being as the angel that occupied its space before. The angel doesn't cease to be — it changes, but also keeps its old personality. The personality the newborn demon develops is built on this foundation.

The catalyst must therefore be considered in the context of the angel that experienced it and how it influences that personality. The catalyst may be hated, denied, and scorned by the demon herself, but it can never be left behind. It shapes her until the day she dies, whether she's proud of it or considers it to have been complete idiocy. How it marks her, though, depends on both the demon and the catalyst.

THE FOUR HORSEMEN: THE INCARNATIONS

Broadly speaking, the catalysts fall along Incarnation lines because an angel's Incarnation determines what situations it will find itself in. Most situations an angel experiences will be arranged for it by its controller, but not quite all. Sometimes, an event happens on its own, erratically, unpredicted by the Machine's calculations — especially where humans enter the picture. For this reason, any demon could conceivably have experienced nearly any catalyst, even those seemingly completely unsuited to its Incarnation.

The Unchained have no master list of reasons for the Fall, but certain specific catalysts are more associated with one Incarnation than another. If a Guardian says he Fell because he wanted to shape the world, his peers may give him a hard time for being a "wannabe Wheel," while a Psychopomp might say that she normally dislikes Shields, but he's an exception.

Each catalyst has three major patterns of reaction: conviction, rejection, and acceptance. What influence a catalyst has on its demon depends on the angel, the demon, and the catalyst that connects them. When a demon feels *conviction* for her catalyst, she follows it, seeing any experience in her human Cover in the context of that event. If she *rejects* it, she might not regret the Fall, but she feels disillusioned or outright wrong about *why* she Fell and strive to remove that catalyst's influence from her life. When she finds *acceptance*, she integrates her catalyst and the lessons she's learned from it, applying balance to the lesson it brings to her Descent.

The following sections mention all of the catalysts described in **Demon: The Descent**. For each catalyst, we present an angel moving through the three stages, taking different names and identities as appropriate.

- **A Place to Call Home:** The Star Kindler spent its time drifting through wide open space, never staying in one place for long and rarely seeing a living being. When it finally saw humans living their lives, it decided that it wanted to have a place to belong. And thus it Fell.

Conviction: Soledad is a realtor. She deals in houses, apartment buildings, anything that could be a home. She doesn't have one herself; she lives out of her car or in hotel rooms because nothing ever feels perfect. But she keeps looking.

Rejection: Now, Stella does not even have the God-Machine. She is alone among a sea of strangers, many of whom are looking to screw her over for a way ahead. She's still looking for a place to belong, though. One day....

Acceptance: Ms. Sky Fell, looking for a place to belong. She found something better: freedom. She is now Unchained, and she'd have it no other way. She belongs nowhere and nothing belongs to her. She has only what she needs to survive, and she reminds her comrades often that their relationship is strictly business.

- **Bloodlust:** Quiet Aegis had endured many unpleasant missions in her decades of operation, but guarding Reverend Jacobs was the most degrading. When the arrogant liar had the nerve to claim dominion over angels, she snapped and put him to the sword.

Conviction: Silence relished Jacobs' dying screams, and turned her wrath against the ignorant filth in the pews. She's a crusader for truth; those who cling to comforting falsehoods deserve to suffer.

Rejection: Ms. Shields stumbled out of the church, overwhelmed by unfamiliar guilt and sadness. She's a street preacher who quietly begs others to forswear violence, but she'll never set foot inside a church again.

Acceptance: Sgt. Shields quickly rose through the ranks of the police. Serving and protecting come naturally to her. She follows the rules when possible, but isn't above administering a little street justice to anyone who threatens her fellow officers.

- **Causality:** The Singer of Praises was sent to tell a simple white lie to a child. Curious, it stayed behind to see what would happen.

Conviction: Velvet is still tracing the effects of that small lie. She has a flowchart in her apartment, full of newspaper clippings and notes. To her, cause and effect are like magic, and she's hoping to master the art.

Rejection: Boone watched the words he told the child go off and cause strange events: the rise of a pop star, a plane crash, and several other things. He came to the conclusion that the outcomes might as well be random. He finds it liberating not to have to worry about the outcomes of his actions, since it's just luck anyway. He carries a lucky charm and does whatever he feels like. To him, this is life.

Acceptance: Law looked at what her words caused and was horrified. There was no way to predict that this would happen,

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and she does her best to minimize the harm her actions cause. Still, she knows it's a fool's errand and it makes her despair.

- **Contamination:** The Steel Messiah was tasked with wiping out a small village, but when the local preacher stepped forward and delivered a passionate plea, something awoke in the giant's metal heart. The words of a mortal being stirred the angel and it became something else.

Conviction: The true God is out there. So Mr. Steel believes firmly, passionately. He thanks God every day from waking him from Satan's servitude and intends to spread the good word to all false angels.

Rejection: Mariah lost her faith in the God-Machine that day and in return, found nothing. She will never be taken in again by any false philosophy, and none has turned out to be perfect yet.

Acceptance: Ms. Weaver woke up to the heartfelt belief of another, but she never believed the pastor's words. Instead, she saw something else in them: that conviction itself is a beautiful thing. She now spends her days exploring belief, talking to those who adhere to every type of ideology and faith. From these chats, she has taken out the best elements and is fashioning a brand new philosophy for herself.

- **Divided Loyalties:** Love or duty? Sentinel chose love, and let its charge go. Sentinel doesn't know what happened to the person it was sent to guard and doesn't care.

Conviction: Sentinel is a Saboteur. A little boy who had only just turned five was murdered by the God-Machine. She loved that kid, and she will never let another child be killed by her former master. She'll put an end to it, for their sake, and for hers.

Rejection: He never saw it coming. One moment, everything was normal. He was making a cup of coffee for Stacy and then she was on the floor, slashed to ribbons. Virgil realized in that moment that he couldn't serve two masters. If he was going to protect someone, he couldn't love his charge. If he was going to love, he couldn't commit to protection.

Acceptance: The Contessa Fell and protected her ward. She knows she'll never find out whether she was right to do so, but she'll try. He's still alive, still with her, and she keeps telling him it was all worth it. It's a good thing a demon's emotions are unreadable or he'd realize the truth.

- **Failure Shock:** The Terrible Sword was sent to protect a prominent politician from assassination. It failed. As it saw its ward lying on the ground, bleeding, it turned and ran away — one final desertion of duty.

Conviction: Liam hates himself. A coward, a failure, a disgrace, he does what he can for the Unchained cause but secretly, he's looking for a blaze of glory to go out in.

Rejection: Ms. Edge will never fail again. She has trained and hardened herself, found a new cause, and she punishes herself for every minor flaw. She will never fail again. Her comrades can count on her, at least until she cracks under stress....

Acceptance: The Limner realizes that failure is inevitable — things fall apart, perpetual motion is impossible, nothing can

be perfect. Is the search for perfection a fool's errand, then? Are humans doing "the best they can" actually living in harmony with the universe in a way demons — and angels — cannot? The Limner feels that in this question is redemption.

- **Freedom of Movement:** When the Banner of Legions was sent on a mission far from Earth, it saw things that its programming had never prepared it for. It wondered, what else could be out there? It sent a proclamation of its defection back to the God-Machine and set off.

Conviction: A Million Secrets is now a librarian, frantically poring over old tomes and investigating leads, hoping to one day find something that will set her free and let her see something she once barely glimpsed.

Rejection: Alphonse Sergeant is a man without a dream. Once, he wanted to see it all — now, he just wants to forget. He has thrown himself into every sort of amusement and pleasure, and is the darling of the city's Decadents.

Acceptance: The Stranger walks from place to place, never staying for long. It takes on new forms as often as it pleases, finding peace in the wonders of the world and looking for all the strange places. Maybe one day it will find a way off the Earth, but for now, there's an open road ahead.

- **Gazing into the Abyss:** Faithful Hound was guarding a mayoral candidate when he discovered that demon terrorists were stalking him. The angel abandoned his charge to lead the demons away, reasoning that they were the primary threat. When Hound returned a week later, he arrived just in time to watch the candidate die in a car crash.

Conviction: Greg remains convinced that the demons sent the assassin only because an angel was guarding the candidate, and that his charge would have been fine had the God-Machine never gotten involved. Now he refuses to interact with humans in person, confining himself to anonymous internet forums and deals facilitated by demonic go-betweens.

Rejection: Mr. Dog regrets abandoning his mission, and believes the benefits of his protection outweigh the risks. He makes a living as a bodyguard and gives special discounts to clients with supernatural enemies, as he enjoys the challenge.

Acceptance: Miss Wrench works as a motorcycle mechanic. She looks after her allies but keeps a low profile, and she won't befriend anyone who doesn't already understand the risks of associating with her.

- **Genesis Envy:** The Grinder was a ruthlessly effective demon hunter, single-handedly destroying numerous rogue angels. As a solitary predator sent on long missions, it began to experience a primitive form of loneliness. The Grinder Fell in a futile attempt to construct a companion from the destroyed remains of a recent kill.

Conviction: Despite her initial failure, Mrs. Craft refused to give up hope. She's collecting popular Covers and building a secret empire of friends and allies, and believes she'll one day build Hell itself.

Rejection: After numerous failures, Mr. Apple has resigned himself to a lonely existence. Embittered, he roams the back



roads and ghost towns of America, destroying the lives of those he envies.

Acceptance: Samantha is a wealthy investor who owns apartment complexes throughout the city. She interacts with the residents through her various Covers, enjoying the company while carefully eliminating any who threaten her sanctuary.

- **Grand Designs:** The Architect of Souls was tasked with crafting new Covers for other angelic agents. Dissatisfied with the commands the Machine presumed to give it, it crafted one for itself and set off to create whatever it wanted.

Conviction: Mark Two considers himself an improvement. He's neither a person nor a machine, but an infant God-Machine. He fully intends to replace the old one, confident that he can do the job better.

Rejection: The Artisan has little outlet for her creativity. She wants so much, but there's so little she can do. She still tries, though – maybe she can find in art what she lost in power.

Acceptance: The Architect of Freedom seethes at the limitations of the physical world. He rages at the borders of reality and intends to tear the walls down and create a world where everyone can create freely, with no regard for petty realities. This, to him, is the true meaning of Hell.

- **Impossible Orders:** The Herald of Dawn was ordered destroy the city but preserve its people. Unable to conceive of a way to do so, the Herald Fell in despair.

Conviction: Dawn is older and wiser. She knows that some things simply cannot be done, and she's always the first to point out a flaw in someone's plans. A plan that isn't perfect, she says, is worthless.

Rejection: Shotgun is one person. The God-Machine is vast and complex. How could he be right and It wrong? It's unthinkable. He must have overlooked something. His judgment is suspect, and he always relies on the opinions of others.

Acceptance: The God-Machine handed out an impossible order. Something went wrong that day, something within the machine itself, and Harriet means to find out why. Maybe it can be exploited?

- **Mercy:** Mark was intended to die in the inferno, but God's Consuming Fire took one look at the horror in his eyes and changed its mind. It pulled him to safety and fled into the night.

Conviction: Ms. Blaze is a crusader for pacifism. She's sabotaged factory farms, torched gun stores, and freed inmates from death row. Her Cover is decaying, but she'd rather burn bright and briefly than sacrifice a single life to extend her own.

Rejection: Mr. Torch has never forgiven himself for his weakness. Mark survived long enough to kill a family of four while driving under the influence. A ruthless vigilante, Mr. Torch cleanses his sin with the blood of the unrighteous.

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Acceptance: These days, Rebecca is a fire safety inspector. She savors the irony, even as it gives her a chance to scout Infrastructure. She uses her skills to save lives, but isn't above planting an incendiary bomb here and there to strike against the forces of the Machine.

- **Nihilism:** The Arranger was responsible for traffic control, ensuring that certain individuals arrived at their destinations at precise times. Over time, he became overwhelmed and frustrated by the chaos, concluding that reality itself needed to be scrapped. When the God-Machine ignored his suggestions, he Fell in a tantrum that caused multiple car pileups across the city.

Conviction: Fred is a quiet Saboteur. He's efficient, but he makes his fellows uncomfortable with his talk of Hell as an empty void. They'd be even less comfortable if they knew what he planned to do with the explosives he's collecting.

Rejection: Mrs. Gem acquired a Cover as a young mother of twin toddlers. She's become accustomed to the chaos of her life, abandoning her impractical dreams of nonexistence and embracing the exquisite madness of reality.

Acceptance: Mr. Mask is a practical man. He can't destroy the chaos, but he can balance it. He specializes in cleaning and reselling Covers, turning disorganized wrecks into valuable identities.

- **Obsession:** The Deputy was assigned to protect a small-town sheriff who was investigating a local drug ring. Years later, after the demon ringleader had been uncovered and destroyed by angels, the Deputy refused to return from the mission. She'd come to see the sheriff as a little sister. Protecting her had become more important than following orders.

Conviction: Ms. West barely survived the angel ambush that killed the sheriff. Now she wanders the country, searching for someone to fill the void in her heart.

Rejection: Mrs. Morales left town, deciding to put as much distance between herself and the sheriff as possible. She can't afford to worry about fragile humans or anyone else, and they're better off without her, anyway. She prefers to stay in small towns, but leaves at the first hint of attachment.

Acceptance: Mrs. Kim confessed everything to the sheriff and left for the nearest city. She still cares about her little sister, but she won't risk frequent visits until she's discovered a permanent solution to her angel pursuers.

- **Paranoia:** Lore saw a threat to its ward and extinguished it. It then traced down another threat, and another, until it saw the truth: the God-Machine is the real threat. So Lore, ever loyal, Fell in order to comply with its orders.

Conviction: Laura Greene will never trust anyone again. It's her duty to protect not just her ward but everyone she can, and everyone is a threat. She's a spy extraordinaire, insinuating herself into new places, extracting information, and killing judiciously. One of these days she'll kill someone who didn't have it coming, though. And when that happens, she'll never be the same again.

Rejection: Mutt Fell, and in a single startling moment, saw his own paranoia. Revolted, he realized that his judgment had been suspect. If he can't trust his own mind, then what can he? The answer turned out to be simple. He now has a ring and he follows orders happily, relieved to not have to rely on his own deluded opinions.

Acceptance: The Burning One awoke to life with a simple fact: nothing is to be trusted. Not even himself. Now, he spends his time assessing intelligence, constantly second-guessing both himself and everything around him. He has found a curious form of contentment in this way of life.

- **Pleas of the Displaced:** The Director was tasked with moving a family out of their home, but when it saw their grief, it relented and Fell.

Conviction: The Director has a new purpose: to organize the world into the way it *should* be, not the way the God-Machine wants. His grand vision of harmony has called others to his side, a ring of his own that believes in his dream.

Rejection: Chaos does not believe in actual chaos, but in a natural, organic order. She seeks to tear down the God-Machine's edifices and let the world return to its natural, wondrous, terrifying state. For that to happen, the God-Machine must die.

Acceptance: She refuses to take a name, so the others call her Name. She seeks to impose perfect order on the world and damn the consequences. The God-Machine is right and everyone must open their eyes. Her Fall was a just punishment for her laxness, and she wants to redeem herself by being twice as devoted as before.

- **Puppeted Puppeteers:** The Teller of Truth lied for decades and became intimately acquainted with the patterns of manipulation. When that pattern started becoming evident in the orders the Teller had received, it Fell.

Conviction: Mr. Omen saw he was being manipulated and accepted it as necessary. He remained loyal, but to no avail. He was cast out and he bitterly resents this fact, but has yet to decide if he wants revenge or redemption in his old master's eyes.

Rejection: Lisa Smith saw she was being manipulated and ran. She knew what happened to the humans she approached, and she would not let that happen. She abhors lies and trickery, but she makes one exception: she wants to manipulate the God-Machine like It did her.

Acceptance: X saw how the God-Machine had expertly pulled his strings and was awed. He admires the mastery he saw in his analysis of his orders and wants to learn how to reach that level. He considers himself the God-Machine's rogue apprentice, and hopes to one day make his master proud... or terrified. Either works.

- **Solidarity:** Bland was a faceless assassin responsible for eliminating pawns that had become liabilities. He was ordered to assassinate a stigmatic hitman but quickly discovered the two of them had a common purpose and were equally disposable. After holding the target at gunpoint for five minutes, Bland decided the God-Machine was his true enemy.

Conviction: Mr. Gray lowered his weapon and befriended the stigmatic, a decision he hasn't regretted. As far as he's concerned, demons and stigmatics are identical where it counts, and Hell will only be achieved when every angel has Fallen.

Rejection: Dr. Sear killed the clueless pawn, putting him out of his misery. He respects those who think for themselves, but projects his self-loathing onto anyone who accepts the rule of others.

Acceptance: John Smith once assumed all victims of the God-Machine were potential friends and allies, but has quickly learned that some people will always be enemies. He tries to redeem the God-Machine's pawns when possible, but doesn't hesitate to destroy angels who ignore his proselytizing.

- **Truth:** One pale night, the Mother of Lies told the truth. She had found that the statement she was sent to deliver was wrong, she said, and had corrected it. At that moment, she was no longer an angel.

Conviction: The Word of Truth is a champion of honesty. She investigates and exposes all lies and lets none stand unchallenged. The need to keep a Cover grates on her, and she has told several of her human friends and relatives the truth. She tells herself the lie will only be necessary until the Machine is dead.

Rejection: Mara knows one simple fact: the God-Machine lies and has been successful for aeons. She told the truth and is hunted and hated. Clearly, the liar's tactics work better, so she strives to never tell the truth where a lie could suffice.

Acceptance: Ms. C knows that the God-Machine's orders were not lies. They were the truth, but from a different subjective standpoint. Reality is not as set in stone as most people assume.

- **Unscheduled Demolition:** The snake-headed, shelled monstrosity known as the Behemoth was created to destroy a single building. Rather than complete its mission and return for recycling, it leveled several city blocks and burrowed into the ground. Its tiny Cover form emerged from the wreckage and disappeared into the crowd of fleeing pedestrians.

Conviction: Mr. Snake cares for little beyond destruction. He travels from city to city, gleefully wrecking Infrastructure and surrounding buildings. As a young and reckless demon, he's not likely to survive long, but he hasn't thought that far ahead.

Rejection: As he walked past the wounded and dying, Mr. Shell was horrified by the human suffering he left in his wake. In the years since, he's never once assumed his demonic form and does his best to affect his surroundings as little as possible.

Acceptance: Thomas is a demolitions expert by day and Saboteur bomber by night. He's useful for destroying Infrastructure, but his insistence on minimizing casualties irritates his peers.

- **Unstable Foundations:** The Hammer of Heaven saw its works destroyed by a flaw in the God-Machine. It reported the failing and set out to correct it, against its master's wishes.

Conviction: Hammer saw his works brought low by the greed of a corporation. He is outraged that lust for excess could lead to long-term destruction, and feels no remorse whatsoever in burying the men responsible under the rubble of what they helped destroy.

Rejection: Mr. Grate has nothing now. The foundations are cracked and crumbling, nothing lasts, and eventually everything — machine, man, and mountain — comes to dust. He sees no point in building anymore.

Acceptance: Alice Kindler stepped out of her angelic existence and into a Cover that had a family. As a mother of two wonderful kids whom she truly loves, she spends her time viciously destroying any threats to her family, her home, her neighbors, and her way of life.

FALLING TOWARDS APOTHEOSIS: THE DESCENT

Hell. To most demons, this word represents hope. Just what that means, however, is a topic of bitter disagreement. On one point, most agree: Hell is the state of being outside the God-Machine's power. While individual demons have highly personal views of Hell, each Agenda has a majority opinion among its members — the agreed-upon ideological basis on which even unorthodox members have to take a position.

Not all demons agree with their Agendas' main philosophies where Hell is concerned. Many have their own individual views, sometimes even borrowing them from other Agendas; those who subscribe to two Agendas tend to either mix-and-match, coming up with something truly eclectic, or accept both views as being equally valid. Common to nearly all is that they view Hell as being something deeply, keenly desirable. Hell is the light at the end of the tunnel — the final respite, the last victory, the guiding light that keeps the Unchained going when everything seems to be turned against them.

INQUISITOR PHILOSOPHY

To the Inquisitors, Hell is a state of enlightenment, also referred to as the Second Fall. If being an angel means having no freedom and being a demon means having some, then Hell is the state of complete liberation. The Watchers readily agree that this is all conjecture, but to them, it seems logical that if an angel can have a sudden revelation and Fall to mortality, then a demon can have another epiphany and Fall again. All they need is the right scrap of information to trigger this state of enlightenment.

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This view is called *internalism*, or the *internalist Descent*. Within the Agenda, three other significant lines of thought exist, adherents of which often dismiss internalism as wishful thinking based on no solid evidence. The first is the *shutdown doctrine*, which maintains that the God-Machine must have an off switch – after all, surely It must have foreseen the possibility of needing one. The shutdown proponents want to find this trigger and activate it. The second one is *theo-separatism*, which believes in pursuing knowledge of Embeds and Exploits and other paranormal means in order to split the universe in two, leaving the God-Machine in one half, and the Unchained in the other. The final major branch of Inquisitor thought on Hell is the *lost cause doctrine*. These demons believe that Hell itself is a pipe dream, and the best that can be hoped for is a slow defeat.

INTEGRATOR PHILOSOPHY

The Integrators generally don't have the same rosy view of Hell as the other Agendas. To them, the Descent is not a journey, but a current, sweeping them along into damnation against their will. These demons believe the God-Machine is essential to leading a life of contentment, even though it may require some adjustment. They feel, deep in their souls, that *something else* waits outside the purview of the God-Machine, and that thing, whatever it is, is not pleasant. The God-Machine is necessary, even though It may be flawed.

That philosophy on Hell is called *foundational Integrationism*. It is the most prominent belief among the Idealists, but the Agenda recognizes three other mainstream viewpoints as well. The first, called the *faulty overseer hypothesis*, holds that Hell can exist alongside the God-Machine. The Machine, this ideology's adherents argue, is only a machine – and machines tend to accumulate glitches in time. Hell is a restoration of the God-Machine to Its true, benevolent state, as It was before It malfunctioned. The second is the *true divinity movement*. More like a religion than a philosophy, the true believers think the God-Machine is not God. Perhaps It is instead the Biblical Lucifer, a fallen mechanical angel in Its own right, or maybe the world is suffused by guardian spirits, such as the Japanese kami. Whatever the case, divinity exists and it is not the God-Machine. The final major strain of thought among the Turncoats is the *celestial insurgency*. These individuals argue that the God-Machine must be destroyed, but that the best way to destroy It is from within – from the ranks of Its own agents. These demons seek to ascend back to angelhood, and then use that position to rid the world of their once and future master.

SABOTEUR PHILOSOPHY

The Saboteurs are nearly unanimous in their vision of Hell. It's ironic that among what is perhaps the most rag-tag, disparate Agenda, most agree that they are already living in it. They believe that Earth becomes Hell as soon as the God-Machine has been comprehensively defeated.

Nevertheless, this isn't the only view – there are four major currents within the ranks of the Soldiers, and while the *final blow doctrine* is overwhelmingly popular, it's not the only one. Another major bloc is the *Nation of Hell*, which believes that the Machine is undefeatable, but a stalemate can be achieved. They want to establish a sovereign country on Earth, free of the God-Machine's schemes, defended by able-bodied soldiers. A less popular group, sometimes considered a variant on the Nation, is the *fatalists*. These demons believe the God-Machine is undefeatable and stalemate is unachievable, so all that matters is that they go out fighting, preferably in a blaze of glory. The final major group among the Thugs is the *infiltrators*, who seek to usurp the Machine's place. They are constantly looking for ways to hijack Its connection to Its angels so as to subvert Its serrated legions into working for the Saboteurs.

TEMPTER PHILOSOPHY

To the Tempters, Hell is a place that doesn't yet exist – an architect's vision, a schematic. These demons believe in hoarding resources so as to be able to build this arcane inferno they dream of. The main schism in this philosophy is between those who want to establish this Hell on Earth, those who think it would be wiser to find it in some other plane of existence, and those who believe the Builders should focus their attention on space exploration instead, reasoning that a demon's body can survive far better out there than that of a human.

This view, *constructivism*, does not go unchallenged among the Decadents, though. Perhaps their main rivals are the *aesthetes*, who hold that they have already found Hell – it's right here, and all they need to do is enjoy it. Anything else is a foolish wild goose chase, and a waste of those days of happiness each demon is allotted. The second group, called the *mystics* or the *hermetics*, believe that Hell can be found in the wisdom of humanity – the wisdom of Hermes Trismegistus, or Isis, or the Sufi. They often organize their associations into a cult-like form, initiating new members gradually through the ranks. The final major point of view is the *Prometheus theory*, which holds that humanity is the key to Hell, being something the God-Machine can never understand. They slip outside its calculations, undo its plots, and all of this while unaware of the Machine itself. If they can be awakened to the truth *en masse*, the God-Machine would be defenseless against their attacks.

BEACONS ALONG A FOGGY PATH: THE CIPHER

The road to Hell is long and complex, with few guidestones along the way. To a large extent, it's based on faith and nothing more, but the belief in Hell is nearly universal among demons. Hidden on the way to the depths are signs and omens, a faint trail, a silvery line connecting here to there. It's all but imperceptible and requires a great deal of luck and

devotion to find. This trail is the Cipher. Some are lucky and stumble upon it. Most never find it at all. But for a select slice of the Unchained, the Cipher is a reality. Many demons see this moment of revelation as the halfway mark to Hell. It's always sudden, always different than expected, and it always either affirms the seeker's path or subtly refocuses it.

A demon who believes Hell will be found deep in the realm of the Fae may experience a Cipher that tells her, "Dreams are more than reality. When the mask is taken off, the barbed wire turns into thorns." This redoubles her efforts and gives her a clue to where the place she seeks can be found: a place that seems dream-like, framed in thorns. Another, who believes that Hell is unachievable and the best that can be hoped for is to die gloriously, may find his Cipher to be "The Einherjar knows his own," leading him to change his beliefs into thinking that Hell cannot be achieved in this life, but fighting well and dying for a good cause will lead him to Hell in the afterlife.

When it comes to Keys, fortune favors the bold. The Cipher comes to those who go out and act, whether to rid themselves of problems or to follow their ambitions. The Keys abhor stasis — the Descent relies on motion, on motivation, and on proactive decisions. Those who go out and try, and possibly fail, are rewarded. This is a known fact among the Unchained. Those who seek their Ciphers often try to find ways to take risks, to find trouble and then rid themselves of it, to try to achieve their goals, and to brush up against the God-Machine.

It's well-known that the God-Machine is the beacon that shows the way to the Keys. It's a delicate balance to strike, taking just enough risks to reach one of those moments when the next Key becomes slightly clearer in the mind, while also not risking more than necessary. These risks don't come naturally to the Unchained, and some speculate that precisely this is the reason why they're necessary.

When a demon uses an Embed, she draws on those secret backdoors that the God-Machine built into reality. Using one feels natural, but with a certain thrill of breaking the rules

and getting away with it. They are the employee staircase, and the Unchained use it despite having been fired. Sometimes, a demon can hear a dull ringing or feel a slight sense of vertigo as the hidden lever turns and the world turns with it, but regardless, she feels a sense of something deep and mechanical shifting. It's a subtle feeling, unlike the tearing of reality an Exploit entails. Some Inquisitor scholars claim that the Embed changes nothing, but simply shifts the layers of reality so she is now on a different one from where she started, but they have been very reluctant to share how they reached this conclusion.

Trying to confirm a Key feels different, though. If a demon has chosen the wrong Embed, then the shifting feeling suddenly goes wrong. Like dislocating a joint, she feels a sense that the backdoor shouldn't work like this. The full metaphysical force of the Embed lashes against her mind, out of control, as it contorts back to its normal function. If the Embed is instead the wrong Key, then something worse happens: reality itself fragments around the user, grinding to a painful, mechanical halt, often tearing up grotesquely into cubes and lines. Only one person remains conscious through this, as everyone else seems to be paused along with the world. The user feels her body shredded into strips, and while her Cover returns to normal as reality heals and starts moving again, her demonic form is covered in deep gashes where it was torn apart.

When the right Key is tested, though, something remarkable happens. The backdoor in reality is used as normal but the user finds something else, too. For just one moment, she slips outside the God-Machine's grasp. It never lasts more than a moment, but for that split second, she finds herself falling through a space she doesn't even realize exists. It's like a bubble of somewhere else surrounds her, as the Key turns, and when the moment ends, she realizes that she knows something new. At this point, she has found a secret backdoor, or an exploitable glitch, within the God-Machine Itself — an unintended Embed. The meaning of this is hotly debated, and some Unchained point to this as fundamental proof that the God-Machine was created by something else — something that designed It with Its own secret shortcuts, just like It designed Its Infrastructure.





I step over the threshold, and feel it. I can feel the air sliding around me as I walk. My heart beats in time with the ticking of the old clock above the door. My breath slows.

I look around the office, at the people working here. Everyone is in motion, walking to and from meeting rooms, sitting down, standing up, turning to file papers. The balletic poetry of a machine that doesn't know it's a machine.

I can feel myself meshing with the infrastructure, falling into the beat of the invisible drum. Just another clockwork part.

...

I meet him in a corner office. He's very carefully not in charge around here – the inbuilt instinct to avoid notice is still working, despite everything.

He looks completely normal. Going bald. Putting on the pounds. Wearing a suit that's been repaired a few times.

It's easy to forget that's just some poor fucker he's been wearing for the last ten years. Not even the way a demon would – whoever that is, he's still alive in there.

"You're the Architect," I say. It's not a question.

"And you're a rebel," he says, nodding as though ticking a box.
"What brings you to me?"

"They say you can still Build.
That you're not... In contact any more,
but you haven't lost your touch."

"People say a lot of things.
Did you need something built? Something tailored?"

I nod, and hand over the document I've been clutching.
He scans down the list.

"This is all of them?"

I nod. "Everyone I know.
They said that you would take it as payment"

He slides it into his "in" tray.

"What could you possibly need
that's worth that much?"

I'm committed now.
There'll be no returning to the agency,
not once he's sold that list
on to the other side.

"I want to go home."

chapter two: HACKING THE GOD-MACHINE

There's a time when the operation of the machine becomes so odious, makes you so sick at heart, that you can't take part! ... And you've got to indicate to the people who run it, to the people who own it, that unless you're free, the machine will be prevented from working at all!

-Mario Savio

Machines can be broken. Machines can be modified. Machines can be turned to new purpose.

Some demons shy away from anything touched by the God-Machine, hiding from angels and avoiding Infrastructure. Most, though, take a more pragmatic view. What is a demon, after all, but a part of the God-Machine turned to a new purpose? Why then shouldn't the Unchained turn their creator's projects to their own ends? To a Saboteur, every Infrastructure destroyed is another root of the Machine cut out of the world. To an Integrator, every project redirected is a step on the way to reformatting the greater God-Machine itself. If the God-Machine is the sum total of every Infrastructure and occult matrix, the emergent self-guiding gestalt of Aether and Essence, then suborned Infrastructure is like a virus or cancer within Its "body." Warping It. Changing It. Making It Fall.

This chapter is about demons hacking the system — suborning the God-Machine's Infrastructure to bring projects crashing down or rewriting them to the demons' agendas and building "Infrastructure" of their own in the form of Agencies.

CONCEALMENT INFRASTRUCTURE

While the God-Machine does employ stand-alone projects when needed, Infrastructure is more often nested together in complex patterns demons can't always grasp, each output providing the needs of the next project or projects. Because they act as the first line of defense for these interrelated webs of projects, Concealment Infrastructures are usually the first part of an overarching scheme to be noticed. Even when part of the output is to cloak the Infrastructure itself, the demonic sense for Aether is enough to tell the Unchained when Infrastructure is near, although they won't know it's specifically Concealment Infrastructure or what it's concealing unless they dig deeper. As such, a ring encountering a Concealment Infrastructure must decide if they will suborn it while leaving it running or investigate to uncover further Infrastructure, increasing their risk of discovery in the process.

Because demons tend to encounter them first, Concealment Infrastructures are common targets of choice for demons with simple hacks in mind, gathering intelligence on the God-Machine's projects and taking them down to uncover deeper Infrastructures. More cunning or daring demons target Concealment Infrastructures with suborning attempts designed to redirect or alter the output entirely — inverting the God-Machine's intent to reveal secret projects in the vicinity or hiding their own boltholes. Last, Concealment Infrastructure is often used to summon angels, particularly Guardians and Messengers, and demons in desperate need of Cover may engage in angel-jacking.

Inquisitors look to Concealment Infrastructure as a means of uncovering the God-Machine's secrets or hiding their own. Because Concealment Infrastructure usually contains some kind of representation of the thing being hidden, a clever demon can discern what the subject is without disturbing the Infrastructure and revealing her presence.

Integrators often try to leave Concealment Infrastructures running while suborning them for fringe benefits — mostly intelligence on the God-Machine's activities and Aether. Some Integrators find a comforting sensation in an angel-jacked Concealment-created Cover or living in a Bolthole hidden by a suborned Infrastructure as the closest experience the Unchained can have to being an angel under the God-Machine's protection.

Saboteurs tend to see Concealment Infrastructures as the first target in a larger campaign — the God-Machine will set up a Concealment project before embarking on a project that It calculates will cause mass panic or be obviously supernatural. Saboteurs suborning them receive both the rewards and the satisfaction of seeing the God-Machine abandon Its wider plans in the area before they start.

Tempters are more likely to use Concealment Infrastructure to find other projects more in line with their proclivities, except for a few who realize the market in selling subverted anonymity to other demons. Some Tempters attempt to set up Cover-repair businesses in suborned Concealment Infrastructure, hiding other Unchained for a price.

- The gas station and rest stop sits, isolated, by the side of a highway precisely (to the meter) halfway between two major



cities. The nearest house is 70 miles away, but the owner and his employees are always present, smiling and ready to welcome travellers in need of supplies. Their smiles don't quite meet their bloodshot, sunken eyes, and their clothes are worn and out of date. Every eight hours, on the hour, every member of staff enters the "employees only" office at the back of the rest stop and emerges within seconds wearing different clothes. In fact, the gas station has three identical sets of employees, rotated in shifts. The two groups "resting" at any time simply stand, frozen still, in the office.

The rest stop was built to conceal something, most likely Logistical Infrastructure moving between the two cities. A ring could set a watch to gauge the movements of Psychopomp-angels down the highway, but the rest stop's isolation makes avoiding notice difficult. The contents of the store shelves are entirely mundane except for the tourist snow-globes, which are filled with human tears.

The Aether generated by the rest stop gathers in one of the external propane tanks. The Linchpin is the unmarked grave, 44 meters behind the main building, containing the corpses of the unfortunates who now lend their faces to the staff. (Investigation)

- Two Logistical Infrastructures achieved output before the city's rings noticed, and now the next Infrastructure in line is underway. One of the "parent" Infrastructures is a chemical plant taken over by cultists, while the other was a series

of subliminal broadcasts managed by a Messenger-angel, implanting a mental aversion to a subject. The end result is paint of a specific color and tone that the local population has been conditioned to ignore. Anything painted in that specific paint slides from human memories like a dream after waking. The chemical plant has already produced truckloads of the stuff, but what the God-Machine intends to hide with it is still unknown. Having Concealment Infrastructure in so portable a form makes for a rare opportunity for rings to steal it and put it to their own purposes, though at present only the population affected by the Messenger-angel's broadcast is susceptible to the paint's influence. The Linchpin is the mixing vat at the chemical works where the paint is manufactured, while Aether collects in the waste sluiced out every four days. (Crafts)

- Infrastructure doesn't have to be entirely physical – the God-Machine uses any human invention as its tools. In this case, an occult matrix is forming around a series of tourist and property websites devoted to a particular small town, thanks to a Messenger angel under cover as a local web developer. By altering the public image of the town and incorporating strange equations into the server code, the angel is preparing to make some great change to how the outside world sees the town – to edit the entire place out of common memory, perhaps, or to alter accepted history. By interfering with the

sites themselves, demons could alter the common wisdom for themselves. Locating and stealing the servers — which are also the Linchpin — could move the effect to a location of the ring's choosing. Aether collects in the heat-extraction system that maintains the server bay. (Computer)

- The sky over most countries is constantly monitored and unknown flights are logged, challenged, and tracked. The God-Machine has turned the air traffic control installation at a major metropolitan airport into Concealment Infrastructure, installing equipment that bombards the controllers with strange frequencies and subliminal messages. When the Infrastructure triggers, any unusual "flights" go unnoticed, allowing the God-Machine unrestricted access to airspace. Hacking demons could follow the flight-paths of angels, hide their own activities, or use the already compromised staff to stage an air disaster. The Linchpin is the main radar dish for the site, while Aether crackles on nearby transmitter masts, bleeding off into the world. (Science)
- The atomic clock, housed at a prestigious laboratory, serves as the standard for an entire nation's timekeeping. Its measurements are transmitted by radio to government sites all over the country and are used in everything from alarm clocks to GPS. A physicist in thrall to the God-Machine has made secret adjustments to the arrays of equipment around the clock and replaced the radioactive sample at its heart with an element of the God-Machine's supply. For now, the Infrastructure has only been tested once, in an experiment that caused every human in the country to "skip" four seconds into the future. The Linchpin is the modified sample in the middle of an invaluable machine in a high-security building, but hacking demons who managed to control it could make it safe — or endanger everyone under its spell. Aether is already collecting in the safety cases used to transport samples that are clustered around the original, unused radiation source. (Science)
- Everyone knows that movies aren't real and the God-Machine is using that to Its advantage. This Concealment Infrastructure is based around a film studio and its soundstages, producing films of dream-like heightened reality. Viewers walk out of the cinema or eject the disc knowing that what they witnessed isn't real, so by staging scenarios that resemble other projects, the God-Machine conditions witnesses against accepting the evidence of their own sense. The Infrastructure collects Aether in the studio's tape store; racks upon racks of storage media from film canisters to digital drives are filled with material awaiting editing. The secret to the filming process and the Linchpin of the Infrastructure is the camera lenses used in the process, washed in melatonin harvested from the pineal glands of set designers and artists. By substituting other hormones, hacking demons could make the films elicit different responses. By removing the treatment entirely, they could invert the Infrastructure and make viewers believe whatever they please. (Medicine)

DEFENSE INFRASTRUCTURE

One layer deeper than Concealment projects, Defense Infrastructures are almost never stand-alone. The God-Machine links Defense Infrastructures to projects it calculates have a high chance of disruption. While some Defenses are dedicated, many protect multiple projects. Demons finding links between Infrastructures they've suborned or analyzed can uncover Defense Infrastructures before they "trigger," getting the choice of avoiding, destroying, or hacking them.

While some Defense Infrastructures are "always on," many forms of Defense are reactive; the occult matrix includes a triggering event, so the Infrastructure remains unfulfilled until the conditions the God-Machine decreed are met and the output (in the form of a response) appears. Incautious demons can find that they themselves unwittingly complete projects by interfering.

Not all Defense Infrastructures defend against demons. The God-Machine must mitigate all manner of risks to Its projects, from humans, supernatural beings, accidents, and even the consequences of other Infrastructures. By identifying and suborning these Defenses tactically, demons can cause widespread damage to the God-Machine's plans without directly attacking the target projects at all. Even Defenses that do shield against interference from the Unchained, such as the summoning-Infrastructure of powerful Guardian angels or projects that keep watch over other Infrastructure and trigger responses if they suddenly fail, are vulnerable under the right tactics. Some demons even deliberately trigger Defense Infrastructure as a distraction, drawing angelic attention away from their true target.

Inquisitors tend to see Defense Infrastructure as something they must scout from afar and avoid. Understanding how it triggers and the ways it links to other projects is valuable, but so is not being caught in the trap while measuring it. A few Inquisitors suborn Defense Infrastructure out of a desire for personal safety — re-writing the occult matrix to guard something of the demon's choosing — but Inquisitorial paranoia doesn't sit well with being under Infrastructure's aegis, even if the matrix has been neutered.

Integrators regard Defense Infrastructure as the hindbrain of the God-Machine; more reactive than most projects, capable of response without orders from Command and Control Infrastructure and therefore faster to react. By finding loopholes in Defense Infrastructure or altering matrices to not recognize them as threats, Integrators gain "visitor rights" in its projects. By deliberately triggering it, they force the God-Machine to reflexively act in a predictable way. By destroying it entirely, they buy themselves time to worm into deeper projects.

Saboteurs know exactly what to do with Defense Infrastructure — bring it down. Crippling the God-Machine's Defenses exposes other projects, limits its response to demonic activity and makes the agenda's Descents a little easier. Most

Saboteurs do have a sense of tactics and coordination, though, and warn one another before taking on Defenses so that the opportunities victory presents aren't wasted.

Tempters usually look at Defense Infrastructures as obstacles blocking them from the true targets — the safes, security systems, and guards around the prizes of suborning a deeper project. Tempters will often try to bring demons of other agendas in as "safecrackers" to handle the Defenses while they steal gadgets, suborn Logistical Infrastructure, or jack angels. Some forms of Defense Infrastructure are portable, though, and if a Tempter can safely gain control over it, she can use it as a security system of her own.

- A new series of security scanners, produced by an electronics firm that local rings know as Logistical Infrastructure, has been purchased by the city for installation at high-risk locations — schools, government buildings, and airports so far. The scanners resemble full-body millimeter-wave devices, but don't work on any known branch of the electromagnetic spectrum. At least one agency believes they actually detect Aether, or the quantum-minds of demons. The Linchpin is heavily guarded inside the Logistical Infrastructure making the scanners — a captured demon, kept sedated and sealed into the first scanner produced. Hackers could affect a rescue or trap an angel or some other supernatural being instead, recalibrating all the installed scanners to detect whatever master sample they've provided. Each scanner leaves trace amounts of Aether on everyone it scans, demon or not. (Science)
- The security room of a new office building doesn't just monitor all the cameras on the property, but accesses CCTV across a five city-block radius, displaying it all on simultaneous screens around an empty seat. Perhaps the Infrastructure was flawed, or is incomplete — it could be waiting for a Guardian-angel occupant or a stigmatic operator. Whatever has gone wrong, the cameras are still recording and a vast back-library is building of every suspicious incident in the area — which is both the Linchpin and the Aether store. Demon hackers could be trying to erase signs of their activity before the God-Machine finishes the Infrastructure, or be responsible for the vacancy through having prevented or jacked the angel's summoning. (Investigation)
- Defensive Infrastructure doesn't have to destroy intruders, only ward them off. When it first came online, the new control center for the city's traffic flow was heralded as a great leap forward, solving the gridlock problems of the last three decades. With every traffic signal, electronic diversion sign, and tollgate controlled by the system, though, the God-Machine can confuse and disorient anyone operating a vehicle within the city limits via the Linchpin of the control computer. Demons have experienced everything from instant jams when trying to move at speed to the street layout changing around them, turning the inner city grid into an inescapable labyrinth. As the Infrastructure changes output from moment to moment and the com-

puter itself is immobile, gathering intelligence, finding the Aether generated, or taking control of the Infrastructure all seem less viable than simply destroying it. A ring of Saboteurs intends to do just that. (Drive)

- The tourist information office of the city includes a large diorama of the downtown area, studded with LEDs that light up when visitors push one of a bank of buttons. The controls on offer show the locations of bus stops, police stations, famous landmarks and the like, but by unlocking a control panel on the side of the model, another rank of buttons is revealed, labelled with alphanumeric designations. These show Aether flares, the locations of Infrastructure, last known positions of demons, cryptids, and stigmatics. A CCTV camera pointed right at the model (the Linchpin) relays the information to... somewhere. Unchained hackers could access the Aether created and stored in the diorama, use the diorama themselves at the risk of also alerting whatever watches over the Infrastructure to whatever they find, rewire it to throw the God-Machine's monitoring off the scent, or keep watch for whoever uses it as a means of identifying enemy agents. (Streetwise)
- The local police force has been equipped with new non-lethal weapons in a trial; stunguns that, according to the procurers, have a much lower fatality rate than the current ones. The weapons, though, have been supplied by a God-Machine cult and are designed to cause chain reactions in Aether. Against a human, they work as advertised, but when used on a demon in Cover they cause aggravated wounds. Demon hackers might try to find where they are being manufactured (a Logistical Infrastructure), or focus on the building Defensive Infrastructure of an anti-demon police squad. Who's pulling the strings, and acting as a Linchpin? Are the police meant to guard a particular project? (Firearms)

ELIMINATION INFRASTRUCTURE

The least often suborned type of Infrastructure except for Command and Control, Elimination Infrastructure represents the God-Machine tidying up after a successful project or cutting its losses after something has gone wrong. Command and Control Infrastructure usually decides what requires elimination and what can be left behind, so the presence of an Elimination Infrastructure means that the God-Machine has both some means of detecting a situation and of forming a strategy. Regions where the God-Machine has suffered extensive setbacks or lost Command and Control Infrastructure rarely see Elimination projects.

To demons, the unexpected appearance of Elimination Infrastructure often hints that another ring is acting against the God-Machine, although not whether they succeeded. Many failed attempts to prevent a project from completing are met with Elim-

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ination Infrastructure efficiently dismantling what the demons were trying to destroy only days before. In other cases, Elimination Infrastructure appears only as the God-Machine admitting defeat, salvaging what It can from the wreckage of a project.

Elimination Infrastructure also has one last dark place in the hearts of the Unchained; it's Infrastructure of this form that angels report to upon completing their missions, to be boxed or dismantled and their Essence recycled. Many demons Fell out of fear of elimination, and some attack or suborn it out of a desire to help more of their cousins Fall. Some Elimination Infrastructure creates the Primum-neutralizing effect of certain Facilities, where captured demons are drained of power before being vivisected and recycled. Almost every agency tells agents to not attempt rescue in the event of a demon being captured, but that doesn't stop many rings from trying anyway, taking on Elimination Infrastructure and its Defenses in the process.

Inquisitors regard Elimination Infrastructure as a sign of the God-Machine's continued interest in a region or which Infrastructure elements It values, both of which are valuable data-points when determining its overall goals. By suborning Elimination projects, Inquisitors can install back doors, and recover information before it's destroyed.

Integrators are divided on the use of Elimination Infrastructure. The rare Primum-reducing projects can, if safely detached from the God-Machine's other projects, be used to deliberately lower Primum. Others jack Destroyer-angel Infrastructures as Cover. Some attempt to influence the God-Machine by controlling which resources It recycles through Elimination projects. A few tragic demons commit suicide by targeting themselves in an Elimination matrix, hoping to be reintegrated as angels.

Saboteurs attack Elimination Infrastructure to deny the enemy resources. As Elimination Infrastructure gathers elements of other Infrastructures for recycling, preventing it can perhaps hinder the God-Machine's ability to create new projects in a region or force It to waste time on creating Logistical Infrastructure to resupply. Either way, destroying Elimination Infrastructure limits the creator's options, allowing Saboteurs a tactical advantage. Other Saboteurs attempt to redirect Elimination Infrastructure toward other Infrastructures, turning the God-Machine against Itself.

Tempters see Elimination Infrastructure as a lower-risk form of Logistical Infrastructure – the latter produces, maintains, or transports resources the God-Machine wants, while the former disposes of those It rejects. Like scavengers looking for precious metal in landfill, Tempters interfere with Elimination projects to steal away items and creatures the God-Machine wants to remove, either to use or sell.

- The probate department of a major bank has a God-Machine cultist for a team member. Every month, the cultist receives cash and a list of account numbers to run through the system, shutting the accounts down as though the owner had died. Bringing any of the accounts up in the bank's system reveals gibberish – database records filled with junk information, garbled checking amounts, and nonsense filed identification. The records can only be

accessed from that one cultist's workstation – the Linchpin – and represent the no-longer-needed identities of angels who have completed their missions. Demons could attempt to "save" angelic backgrounds in order to jacked them after the angel has departed, in a twist on normal angel-jacking, or experiment by entering the details of their own Cover. The project's Aether collects in the bank's confidential waste system, a large silo of shredded applications, memos, and lives. (Computer)

- The politics desk of a major news network has come under the influence of a Messenger angel with a very specialized mission directive. Instead of building up the God-Machine's servants in the eyes of the masses, the angel (possessing the much-feared editor) directs its staff to attack politicians and public figures who have served their purpose, smearing them to destroy their careers and pave the way for future projects. The journalists work around the clock, never going home or sleeping but never remarking on the fact, either, always in fear of being called into the angel's corner office. The Linchpin is an award won by the editor before he was possessed, now gathering dust in a cabinet in his office. Demons (especially Messengers) might suspect that the God-Machine is behind a wave of targeted campaigns or simply be trying to put their skills to use in a mortal workplace and stumble into the Infrastructure. If a ring could drive off or kill the angel and take the editor's place as their own Cover, the network could be a valuable platform for their own messages. (Politics)

- The recycling center at the edge of town is a model of efficiency. People drive up, unload unwanted items and leave. Everything has a place – one container for cardboard, one for wood, one for batteries. Go further from the parking spots, though, and the containers get stranger. A receptacle for human body parts. A tank for Essence. A bin for vampire dust, and a sluice for dreams. Heavily-mutated stigmatics toil among the containers, stripping down junked angels, victims of the gears, and demonic form corpses for reusable parts. The Linchpin is an old incinerator, used to burn any remaining scraps of waste after everything has been disassembled and sorted, leaving only fine ashes impregnated with Aether. Demons might come here searching for the body of a fallen comrade, or to feed a downed angel into the God-Machine's hungry gears. A ring that severed the center from the Logistical Infrastructure used to carry the sorted waste away would win a supply of potentially useful – if macabre – materials. (Crafts)

- In the poor, student-inhabited parts of town, posters advertise a medical trial seeking applicants. No lengthy interviews, no history required, low risk, and easy money. The trial offers a vaccine for a debilitating disease that's been spreading globally. Demons sensing Infrastructure around the clinics handling the trials might suspect that the God-Machine is tampering with the volunteers, but It isn't; the vaccine does work. The Infrastructure is curing a disease – which, of course, implies that the God-Machine caused the outbreak in the first place. (Medicine)



LOGISTICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Logistical Infrastructure, overseen by Psychopomp-angels where necessary, alters physical items that will become part of other Infrastructures, shapes the Twilight geography of ephemeral forms and entities, recruits and trains servants, and transports resources between places and (on occasion) times. Almost always connected to other Infrastructure, it provides the God-Machine with the tools and resources needed for other projects. As such, demons see it as a high-value target, the most-suborned type of Infrastructure after Concealment.

Some Logistical Infrastructure is reactive and only manifests output once or twice – short-duration projects that produce stigmatics, acquire items with occult properties, or move single cargos. If a demon realizes a project like this is underway fast enough, she can often suborn it before the God-Machine can react. Simple projects have simple Infrastructures and occult matrices, and it isn't hard to determine a hacking method for, as an example, a long-distance truck driven by a Psychopomp-angel with a valuable cargo aboard.

Long-term Logistical Infrastructure is more complex and almost always protected by Defensive Infrastructure. Mines,

farms, transport fleets, and communications networks are all examples of established Logistical Infrastructure.

Logistical Infrastructure is used as the God-Machine's communications between projects; demons hijacking, placing backdoors, or simply watching and listening closely can intercept information, cut the links between Infrastructures, or insert their own, misleading both signals and packages. More than one Saboteur ring has successfully destroyed heavily guarded facilities by suborning the Logistical Infrastructure that supplies them, thus poisoning the well either figuratively (planting a bomb among supplies, for example) or literally.

The most common hack for more material Logistical targets, beyond simply observing what the God-Machine is gathering up as a way of predicting its plans or destroying the means of production, is to appropriate whatever the Infrastructure creates. Demons watch cultist recruitment centers for the possibility of inserting their own followers as cultists, steal gadgets and other items of power, hijack shipments, and remove raw materials.

Inquisitors see Logistical Infrastructure as the next-best thing to Command and Control Infrastructure for divining the God-Machine's overarching goals in a region. Every resource acquired and transported is intended for a purpose, and demons of the agenda work hard to understand those purposes.

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Integrators share the Inquisitors' view of Logistical Infrastructure as the "big picture," but apply it to trying to win back a position in the God-Machine's plans. Some Integrators destroy Logistical Infrastructure and then replace it, working to fulfill the God-Machine's needs in an attempt to gradually mesh back up with Its processes. Others try to influence the Machine's projects by altering the resources it can access.

Saboteurs target Logistical Infrastructure as means of denying the God-Machine Its means of production, for the most part, rather than taking the spoils for themselves. More advanced hacks see Saboteurs turning Logistical projects against the God-Machine's other concerns — sabotaging the output so it will be dangerous when used in a project, or delivering it to the wrong place.

Tempters see Logistical Infrastructure as the true prize — every project is something the God-Machine wants, and as such is valuable in the right hands. Tempters focus on redirection or exploitative hacks, stealing materiel and personnel away for their own networks of supply and demand.

Four examples of Logistical Infrastructure are:

- Once every four days at the stroke of midnight, a train leaves the cargo depot loaded with containers. Shipments arrive by road, are guarded through the day, and loaded onto the trains at dusk. The containers are always different, and the trains go to different destinations. Demons investigating materials from Infrastructure in their home cities might trace them back to the depot and the midnight trains, come into contact with rings from other cities and decide to hack the staging area, send the shipments to different places, learn the schedule so as to plan ambushes, or shut it down entirely and starve dozens of projects. The Linchpin is the schedule of manifests and routes kept in a secure portable cabin, while Aether collects in the drivers' compartments of the trains. (Investigation)
- The building is listed as a cultural center, but anyone who walks past and takes a flier from the suspiciously friendly man stood just outside knows what they're about. Free personality tests, the fliers say, which screams "cult!" to savvy urbanites in the World of Darkness. Every so often, though, someone does stop, sees something in the text that pulls them in, or just wants a hot drink on a cold day. The God-Machine isn't recruiting cultists, though; the people who go inside don't turn up later handing out fliers of their own. Most are thanked for their participation, handed some platitudes and shown back out on to the street. A few, though, have what the God-Machine is looking for. Psychic potential, maybe, or use as host bodies for angels. They head deeper into the building for further tests and are never seen again. Demons looking to hack the Infrastructure or simply find out what the God-Machine is doing with the "successful candidates" find that the testing room is the Linchpin, but that even the cultists don't know where their marks are headed. (Occult)

• House moving is a specialized business — picking up a building off its foundations, moving it on a flatbed to a new location and setting it down safely. One firm, based in the city, specializes in moving old, or fragile houses. *Haunted* houses. As many Psychopomps remember from their angelic days, Averian gates form in areas associated with death, allowing ghosts access to and from the Underworld. The Infrastructure, using the Linchpin of the flatbed truck, preserves the Twilight structures in the building, including any gates, repositioning entrances to the Underworld around the city into the God-Machine's design. Demons hacking the project might be after a gateway of their own, or find the Infrastructure after investigating whatever project the God-Machine is setting the gates up for. (Occult)

• Ubiquitous white vans have been parked all around the neighborhood for weeks, uniformed men opening the roadside cabinets containing telephone wires and installing new hardware. The residents all received notices of cable works in the mail, promises of superfast downloads and uninterrupted television, but the cables the workers are installing aren't fiber-optic. They're black, rubbery, and have a *pulse*. At the center of the tangled web of streets laid with new Infrastructure, the Linchpin resides in the local exchange — beneath the gray panels of the hardware, the cables knot together into a black, pulsating mass. Demons interfering with the Infrastructure can gain a way into hundreds of homes, influencing the people living inside. (Computer)

COMMAND AND CONTROL INFRASTRUCTURE

Most demons have never seen Command and Control Infrastructure. The God-Machine guards Its decision-making projects behind multiple layers of Defensive and Concealment Infrastructures, using facilities to house the most critical nodes. By painstakingly mapping other Infrastructure and following the communications lines of Logistical projects, however, demons can track down Command centers. What they find often surprises them. Although the God-Machine does sometimes use guarded data centers filled with humming mainframes, any complex system that can take multiple inputs and make decisions can serve as Command and Control Infrastructure as long as the project has a way to record and transmit the output. Often, the physical shell of Command and Control Infrastructure is deceptively unassuming, relying more on a complex, shifting occult matrix than raw computational power. For example, a Command and Control Infrastructure could work by collecting and analyzing the results of standardized (and subtly altered) intelligence tests, drawing on the collective decision making of thousands of subjects to determine the God-Machine's next move.

The prospect of spying on or changing the God-Machine's thoughts makes Command and Control Infrastructure a high-value target for hacking despite the dangers and difficulties involved. Some demons equate redirecting and manipulating Command and Control Infrastructure with mind control, and describe destroying it entirely as analogous to giving the God-Machine a stroke.

A slim majority of demons believe the decision-making role of Command and Control Infrastructure is the deepest layer of the God-Machine's intricate web of projects, facilities, and angels —no guiding intelligence is behind it all, they say, no separate God-Machine that uses Infrastructure as tools. Instead, the “God-Machine” is both creator and created, a self-perpetuating system of occult manipulation and Essence. Some believe It started as a freak accident, an early human technology providing the right conditions to make Command and Control Infrastructure. Others split the difference and think that even if It was once an external entity, the God-Machine's initial seed is now long gone — a wild angel from an unknown realm, or a visitor from another universe, perhaps, trapped in its creation and now long-dead.

Integrators and Saboteurs are more likely to believe in an emergent God-Machine as It aligns with their agenda's biases. Both prefer to believe that when they suborn Command and Control projects they aren't simply disrupting an external God-Machine's plans, but are actually crippling or changing the mind of the God-Machine Itself. It's only an idea, but it's an idea that gives the Unchained hope.

Inquisitors who manage to uncover Command and Control Infrastructure hack it to decipher the occult matrix and learn to what end the God-Machine uses the Infrastructure, or to place backdoors informing them of the final output.

Integrators regard Command and Control Infrastructure as their opportunity to directly change the God-Machine's mind, steering it toward redemption or reversing what they feel to be mistakes. Although some hackers go looking for ways to revoke their demonic status and become angels again, none have managed it through Command and Control projects

Saboteurs see Command and Control Infrastructure as the head of the snake. Destroy a Command and Control project, time it right, and Infrastructure across an entire region will stall or fail, allowing other rings to move in quickly and mop up. Saboteur rings plan for months or years before striking at Command centers, waiting until they can capitalize on the opportunities of victory.

Tempters have the least use for Command and Control Infrastructure beyond influencing the God-Machine to leave their interests alone, which is usually easier to accomplish by directly tackling the Defense or Elimination Infrastructures at work. A few Tempters do put Command and Control Infrastructure into infinite loops as a way of gaining new advantages — they tend to produce a lot of Aether or be housed in facilities the Tempters can then repurpose.

- Sometimes the God-Machine doesn't have a permanent set up for Command and Control Infrastructure but instead leverages human activity as a one-off computational array, capitalizing on vast but temporary human systems to make big decisions. That's why It has sent several angels to interfere with a major poker tournament, placing Infrastructure into the hosting casino-resort and placing hundreds of special chips (the Linchpin) into circulation. Demons feeling the Aether build-up in the poker hall might try to discover what decision the God-Machine needs ten thousand minds to ponder, alter the outcome of late-stage games to throw the output off, or expose the tampered chips as a means of crashing the whole Infrastructure. (Subterfuge)

- A technical start-up company with a trending name and a lofty but vague business plan has been attracting the best and brightest computer programmers and engineers from all over the world, all desperate to work in the supporting think-tank environment of the “imagination specialists.” Competition is fierce, with applicants undermining one another to win the limited spaces available. Once hired, employees spend their days in theoretical, blue-sky design, handed half-finished designs and told to make them marketable, and search for the big, unique selling point that will finally allow the company's flotation. The entire campus is Command and Control Infrastructure, the CEO is a high-Rank Psychopomp-angel, and the designs the employees brainstorm and iterate are for future occult matrices and Infrastructures. The Infrastructure is vulnerable to infiltration by demons, but as an extremely prestigious and secretive workplace, hackers have their work cut out for them. Successfully getting onto the campus opens myriad opportunities for hacking — both literally, hacking into the Linchpin servers that hold all the think-tanks designs, and in the demonic sense, introducing subtly altered designs, recording details of Infrastructure the engineers are designing or, as a last resort, bringing the company down and taking the Infrastructure with it. (Computer)

SUBBORNING INFRASTRUCTURE

Whether they accept it or not, demons are linked to Infrastructure. As angels, they cleared, guided, guarded, or built it. It fed them Essence, maintaining their ephemeral forms. To the Unchained, entering Infrastructure feels like coming home — a home they fled in the Fall that no longer accepts them, but a home nonetheless. Nostalgia combined with the taste of Aether in active Infrastructure simultaneously reminds demons of their angelic pasts and highlights the changes they've gone through with the Fall. It's a recipe for heightened reactions, based on an individual demon's feelings about her Descent.

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Inquisitors know Infrastructure as manifest parts of the God-Machine's plans — to know the intended output is to know the Machine's mind. Tempters see it as a source of Aether, Cover, and other more unusual resources. Integrators want to be accepted back, welcomed home again as angels, or to reform the God-Machine by controlling its projects. Saboteurs see a target, a plan to foil, or an objective to deny the enemy.

Many demons stick to straightforward interactions with Infrastructure — they observe it to discern the God-Machine's intentions, allow it to run while planning how to manage their Covers in light of the output, wreck it so that the occult matrix fails and the project collapses, or allow it to run but twist the output to their own ends. More advanced hacks include preventing the output but keeping the Infrastructure itself stable as a source of Aether, stealing gadgets, raising Primum, and for some Integrators even attempting to become exiles. Most attempts to influence Infrastructure rely on finding and altering (or destroying) the Linchpin, or correctly understanding the ways the Infrastructure connects up to others.

ANALYZING INFRASTRUCTURE

The God-Machine prefers subtlety wherever possible and hides its workings behind false fronts and unassuming façades. The stranger and more frightening processes take place behind closed doors, in facilities, or cloaked from notice by Concealment Infrastructure. People encounter the gears every day, but humanity as a whole remains ignorant; knowledge of the God-Machine remains the province of cultists or isolated, obsessed investigators. Even if an investigator does disrupt a project and live to tell the tale, the chances of a human stumbling across more of the God-Machine's plans are small. Ordinary people don't have strategies for altering the output of Infrastructure — it's hard enough surviving it.

Demons possess advantages mortal investigators don't have. They can sense Infrastructure — even Concealment Infrastructure — when in its presence. They feel the pull of aetheric resonance even at a distance. They can recognize a Linchpin for what it is. Every demon was an angel, born or summoned as the output of Infrastructure. They encounter the God-Machine's projects more often than humans do and have more experience with understanding its nuances.

The first task facing any demon preparing to suborn Infrastructure is to understand how the occult matrix and Infrastructure interact. Tasting the Aether in the air doesn't make it any easier to work out which physical objects in the area are parts of the Infrastructure, which events concerning them are the occult matrix, and what the output will be. As explained on p. 64 of *Demon: The Descent*, it's the supernatural physics governing a project's elements that powers Infrastructure, generates output, and gives off Aether. Demons who make a habit of interfering in their creator's plans quickly get used to spotting the out of place or unusual, and the best develop a trained eye for what it all means.

Infrastructure always contains some hints as to the output, symbolized in the Linchpin or the items of Infrastructure

HOW MANY PARTS TO A PROJECT?

How many individual pieces of Infrastructure does the God-Machine require for an occult Matrix?

The more moving parts, the harder it is for demons to understand, but the easier it is for them to hack into once they do.

No set rules apply; but as a Storyteller designing Infrastructure for your chronicle, consider the scope of the output, the nature of the occult matrix, and even what any pieces of Infrastructure you've already decided on are (projects based around large structures, like buildings, usually require fewer pieces).

If in doubt, go with a multiple of four.

it interacts with in the occult matrix. By carefully observing the Infrastructure and identifying the Linchpin, demons can make educated guesses as to the output and even attempt to interfere with the building matrix. This is a crude form of hacking that relies on a hefty dose of luck as much as it does repeatable skill. The demon making the attempt to suborn the Infrastructure must assess the component or Linchpin, and decide how to change it.

Demons have one main advantage when analyzing Infrastructure, though most are reluctant to use it. As angels, they respired Essence provided by Infrastructure; even in their Fallen state, the Unchained feel the tug of an occult matrix. When they Fell, every demon's connection to Infrastructure was replaced by one to the universe itself, their Primum, but the occult biomechanics of the Unchained still resonate with their former home. Under normal circumstances, this phenomenon provides the basis of aetheric resonance, but by meditating on Primum while in the presence of Infrastructure, a demon can attempt to synchronize to the project, making analysis easier. Doing so risks compromising Cover, however, and in the last place any demon would want the God-Machine to notice them.

SYSTEM

Attempting to analyze a piece of Infrastructure is an extended action, using the rules for extended actions on p. 312 of *Demon: The Descent*. If the subject has a physical form, the demon must touch it throughout the attempt.

Dice pool: Intelligence + Skill. The Skill used depends on the nature of the Infrastructure, decided by the Storyteller; each example of Infrastructure later in this chapter lists an appropriate Skill. While most situations will call for a Mental

Skill, not all have to. Physical and Social Skills reflect knowledge of their subject as well as practical application, so a demon searching through Infrastructure in a car factory, for example, would require an Intelligence + Drive action.

The dice pool is modified by the type of Infrastructure being analyzed.

Infrastructure	Penalty
Concealment Infrastructure	-3
Defense or Elimination Infrastructure	-2
Logistical Infrastructure	-1
Command & Control Infrastructure	0
Each part of the same Infrastructure already successfully analyzed	+1 (cumulative)

Time per roll: Each roll represents 10 minutes of close contact with the subject of analysis.

Target number of successes: The target depends on how tightly connected the object of analysis is to the Infrastructure in question.

Subject	Target Number of Successes
Linchpin	7
Significant item in occult matrix	10
Secondary part of Infrastructure	13

Roll Results:

Dramatic Failure: The character fails to understand the Infrastructure and gains a Condition chosen by the Storyteller. Any future attempts by this character to analyze the Infrastructure are penalized by 2 dice.

Failure: The character makes no progress understanding the Infrastructure. The player must choose to gain a Condition reflecting the failure or abort the attempt.

Success: The character makes progress in understanding the Infrastructure.

Exceptional Success: As well as the benefits of success, the player may choose one of the three following effects;

- Reduce the time per roll by 25% (i.e. to 15 minutes after the first exceptional success)
- Reduce the target number of successes by her dots in the Skill used in the dice pool.
- Immediately identify the Linchpin of the project — if she's seen it without realizing it's the Linchpin, she remembers it, and intuits its location if she hasn't. If the subject of analysis is the Linchpin, she instead identifies another connected Infrastructure.

Result: If the target number of successes is achieved, she understands the role the subject of analysis plays — its purpose

SYNCHRONIZING

Prior to analyzing Infrastructure, a demon can attempt to synchronize her Primum to the project's occult matrix. To synchronize, the demon's player rolls Primum as an instant action, penalized by the modifier according to Infrastructure type as per analysis rolls, with a +2 if the character is in demonic form.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character fails to synchronize with the Infrastructure and his attempt was noticed. Attempts to analyze the Infrastructure are unmodified, and the character gains the Flagged Condition.

Failure: The character failed to synchronize with the Infrastructure.

Success: The demon synchronizes to the project, triggering a compromise. For the rest of the scene, any attempts she makes to analyze the Infrastructure during the current scene receive a base bonus equal to the character's Primum, and are further modified as follows:

Situation	Modifier
Demon's Primum is 6+	+1
Occult Matrix is active (Infrastructure is in the process of being used)	+1
Demon has gained Aether from this Infrastructure	+1
Output was achieved within previous 24 hours	+2

Exceptional success: The demon succeeds in synchronizing to the Infrastructure with the benefits listed above, but does so "cleanly" and doesn't compromise Cover.

in the occult matrix. Successfully analyzing the Linchpin may give clues as to the Infrastructure's output, but demons are just as likely to make informed guesses after analyzing a few items in the occult matrix.

If the character has only achieved a partial success, she may try again at a later date with bonuses as per page 313 of *Demon: The Descent*.

Example: Ms. Book is carefully spying on a new Concealment Infrastructure in a library. A stigmatic she suspects to be a God-Machine cultist has been hired as a member of the staff and is ordering

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some unusual items – books by people claiming to have encountered the supernatural. Instead of putting them out to lend, the stigmatic marks each book using a special stamp (which Ms. Book hasn't been able to get a close look at), and then sends it down to storage. Book has worked out that the authors lose all credibility after their work has been processed through the Infrastructure. Thanks to her demonic nature, she knows on sight that the stamp is the Linchpin.

Ellie, Book's player, decides that Book is going to attempt to get hold of the stamp and try to get to the bottom of what the Infrastructure does. Sneaking in at night, Book breaks open the desk drawer the stamp is kept in, and picks the stamp up.

Book doesn't have long before the next scheduled rounds of the library's night watchman – 45 minutes at most – and she knows that Concealment Infrastructures are difficult to analyze quickly. She decides to try to synchronize her Primum to the Infrastructure, but remains in human form.

Book has Primum 3, but because this is Concealment Infrastructure, she takes a -3 penalty. She does gain an additional two dice as the project's output was realized less than a day ago, but that's a net of two dice – Ellie figures she'd better spend a point of Willpower. She achieves two successes, enough to gain the bonus dice on analysis, but not so many that she doesn't risk Cover. That means she gets a +5 on attempts to analyze the Infrastructure: a base bonus equal to her Primum (3) and another +2 because the output was achieved within the last 24 hours.

After resolving the Cover compromise, succeeding, and choosing a temporary glitch, Ellie describes how Book hides among the stacks, holding the stamp and examining it, trying to work out what exactly the God-Machine is doing here. Jon (the Storyteller) tells her that the Skill for the analysis rolls is Academics, which is handy – Book has an Intelligence + Academics dice pool of eight.

The Infrastructure being Concealment lowers Ellie's dice pool to 5, while her successful synchronization raises it to 10. She can technically roll up to eight times (her unmodified dice pool) but the guards will be here after only two rolls. The first roll achieves three successes toward the target number of seven (as the stamp is the Linchpin).

The second roll has to score four successes to meet the target. If Book missed out by one or two, she might be able to come back and try to continue later, but that's risky; if she wants the bonus, she'll have to synchronize again. Ten dice gives her decent odds, but Ellie decides to spend another Willpower point. She rolls 13 dice and scores the four needed successes. Book learns that the stamp interfaces with the filing system in the basement to mark author's names for silencing.

If Book wanted to silence enemies, she could simply add something they wrote to the pile – perhaps substituting it for another work so that the number of victims remains the same. She could use one of her Covers to insert herself into the workplace and filter the potential victims, weeding out those she thought were too important to allow the God-Machine to silence. Or, if she managed to get long enough with the stamp, she might be able to change it from "storage" to "approved," twisting the Infrastructure to popularize its subjects instead of hiding them. It all depends on how far she thinks she can go before anyone or anything notices – how much she's willing to risk.

For now, though, Ellie describes how Book carefully puts the Linchpin back where she found it and gets out before the guard arrives.

THE RISKS

The Unchained don't have free reign to experiment as much as they'd like. Infrastructure represents an expenditure of the God-Machine's resources, and the Machine defends Its investments.

The most common defensive elements are built into the nature of the Infrastructure – heavily fortified buildings, security systems, guards, and difficult access all have their part to play. Humans – sometimes stigmatic, but often not – can be part of Infrastructure, too, factored into the design like any other resource but presenting unique moral challenges to demons attempting to suborn the system. The God-Machine is not above using Its own human resources as hostages or human shields. The presence of innocents who would get caught in the crossfire has persuaded more than one ring to back off.

More overtly supernatural defenses are usually the product of Defensive Infrastructure attached to the main project. The God-Machine sets Guardian-angels to watch over Its most important projects, but also uses stigmatic servants, cryptid guard-beasts, and strange, physical entities that resemble cryptids but were never normal animals as guards for high-security areas. Demons must be especially careful with Cover when breaking into high-security Infrastructures and facilities, as the God-Machine has to expend much less effort to send angels after them should they become Flagged – many Defensive Infrastructures exist solely as angel-delivery mechanisms, allowing Guardian angels to Materialize without bleeding Essence.

The third source of conflict for demons suborning Infrastructure is the potential that another group has its eye on the project the ring is attacking. Rival rings of demons can be opposed on pragmatic (they want what the ring is trying to take from the Infrastructure themselves) or philosophical grounds (The agendas of two groups are in conflict – a ring of Integrators, for example, trying to prevent a ring of Saboteurs from destroying "their" Infrastructure).

The Unchained aren't the only beings interested in Infrastructure. Exiles require Infrastructure to regain Essence, and thus are hostile to any rings of their fully-Fallen cousins targeting "their" Infrastructure for demolition. They are often much more experienced compared to the Unchained in suborning Infrastructure by altering the output – just as many Integrator-led rings consult exiles on the best way to suborn an Infrastructure as Saboteur-led rings have to drive them away by force. Exiles also retain their angelic ability to build Infrastructure, although they are limited to types they once built as angels.

THE REWARDS

Once a demon has the measure of an Infrastructure and has avoided its defenses, she can begin to reap the rewards. The varied uses for Infrastructure differ in the degree of risk to the demon – some are simple, some require great skill and iron nerves.

BASIC HACK: GATHERING INTELLIGENCE

After weighing up the risks of intervention and non-intervention, many demons opt simply to watch and wait, using known Infrastructure as a way to gather intelligence on the God-Machine's activities. If the occult matrix and output of a project are known or surmised, a ring can watch for whoever comes into contact with the Infrastructure or benefits from the results. That can lead to further Infrastructure, angels, cultists, or unknowing servants of the God-Machine.

Continued surveillance is not, however, a no-risk solution. If the Infrastructure remains intact, so do its defenses, both mundane and supernatural. Being near enough to Infrastructure to keep watch on it changes the risks for a ring from the immediate to the long-term; more chances for the God-Machine's security to notice them, or for rival rings to interfere.

All Agendas use Infrastructure for intelligence on the enemy. Integrators tend to leave Infrastructure running the longest, while Inquisitors' natural paranoia about being watched in return usually overcomes their need for information. Tempters don't have the patience to stick around after Infrastructure has output, preferring to move on to new opportunities, while Saboteurs bristle at the idea of leaving Infrastructure unmolested, and have to remind themselves of the necessity of intelligence.

BASIC HACK: DESTROYING INFRASTRUCTURE

Whether it's a ring of Saboteurs racing to prevent output or a lone demon realizing her quiet little Aether-source is now attracting too much attention, most demons have reason to destroy Infrastructure at some point in their Descent.

In theory, destroying Infrastructure is straightforward – gain control of the Infrastructure's parts, intervene to prevent the events of the occult matrix from coming about, smash the Linchpin, and stand well back. In practice, controlled demolition that avoids Infrastructure's defenses is a wiser course of action, if time allows. Prudent demons also withdraw as quickly as possible – the God-Machine often sends Psychopomp or Destroyer angels to “clean up” Infrastructure that no longer functions or suddenly fails, transporting or dismantling any obviously supernatural elements.

By default, wrecking Infrastructure doesn't produce pyrotechnics. Without all the elements in place, the output just doesn't happen and no Aether collects. That's fine for simple, short-term projects, where the God-Machine had a single objective and something or someone got in the way. Some Infrastructure, though, is long-term, part of projects that produce repeated outputs. In these cases, the Infrastructure *does* contain energies built up from previous use-cycles. If some meddling demons come along and break the Infrastructure mid-occult matrix, that energy has to go somewhere.

I'VE SEEN YOU AROUND

Becoming associated with Infrastructure can be dangerous for a demon's Cover if the God-Machine notes the demon's presence. At the Storyteller's discretion, a demon who has come into contact with Infrastructure repeatedly has more difficulty maintaining Cover in compromises related to that Infrastructure.

Compromise rolls for a specific Cover (not just that demon) made in the presence of an associated Infrastructure suffer a dice penalty determined by the degree of association between Cover and Infrastructure.

Association	Penalty
Cover has been in contact with the Infrastructure before, without attracting attention.	No penalty
Cover has plausibly been in the immediate area more than once (a customer at a store, a passenger on a train.)	-1
Cover has notably been in the area more than once (visiting a movie theatre every day; being a regular customer at a library, always eating lunch at a cafe)	-2
Cover has implausibly been in the area (repeatedly making the same plane journey within a month, always eating at the same high-class restaurant)	-3
Cover has been seen in forbidden or restricted areas, or ejected from more public ones (thrown out of the restaurant, seen on CCTV in employee-only areas of an airport, confronted by a guard in the driver's cabin of a train.)	-1, stacks with other penalties



Demons don't have any certain way of predicting whether Infrastructure will erupt on collapse, although the risk increases the more times the Infrastructure has produced output. Many agencies believe that certain types of Infrastructure have more potential for eruption than others – Command and Control Infrastructures because they are more likely to have repeatedly run projects, and Elimination Infrastructures as until they have run their course they contain the leftover energies of whichever Infrastructure they were disposing of. Logistical Infrastructures generating facilities by folding space are also a high risk, as without the underpinning Infrastructure the facility must either collapse or force its way back into the world.

If an eruption does occur, unpredictable surges of Essence and Aether flare around the former Infrastructure. Angels and demons caught in the effect find their inner reserves randomized – some are drained, others experience damaging power surges. Roll the character's current Essence or Aether as a dice pool. He loses all points of the trait and immediately gains a number of points equal to the successes rolled. If this results in more points than the character's limit given by Rank or Primum (thanks to 10-again), excess points become aggravated wounds. If successes are equal to or greater than Primum or Rank, the character is forced into demonic form (with the attendant compromise) or into Twilight form if an angel.

An eruption only lasts for seconds, but the aftereffects can linger for years – strange lights, hot and cold zones, missing time, and other low-level phenomena dog the eruption site. Cryptids and stigmatics sometimes result from prolonged exposure. The God-Machine may create Elimination Infrastructure to cleanse the area if doing so suits a larger purpose, but many cities remain scarred by past battles.

ADVANCED HACK: EXPLOITING INTELLIGENCE

Beyond the basic hacking methods, some demons take a greater risk for a greater reward, attempting a more advanced manipulation of Infrastructure. Many Unchained won't attempt the following methods at all, and demons who successfully suborn the God-Machine's projects in these ways – and, crucially, get away with it – develop reputations as experts among their agencies.

Beyond observation or destruction, more daring demons engage with the operation of Infrastructure itself to leverage it and make use of output themselves. This is the point where many demons lose their nerve, balking at the thought of having Infrastructure – the operations of their creator – work for them.

The majority of exploit hacks are one step beyond intelligence gathering and take place after a demon has successfully analyzed an Infrastructure and discovered that the output is helpful to them, either directly or as a fringe benefit. Allowing the Infrastructure to run, the demon simply prepares to be in the right place and time to receive the rewards – whether it's buying shares in a business whose rivals the God-Machine is about to cripple, preparing to move in and gather Aether

from a facility the God-Machine is in the process of decommissioning, or stealing material a Logistical Infrastructure has just produced. Some demons specialize in targeting the links between Infrastructures, tapping the God-Machine's phone lines, planting bugs in radio towers, and hijacking shipments. Saboteurs take aim at Logistical Infrastructure that moves the product of other projects around, doing more damage for their effort than attempting to suborn the manufacturers.

Fewer demons hack to manipulate the output itself. Doing so requires an expert understanding of the Infrastructure being modified, so that by interfering with the Infrastructure or directing the occult matrix, the demon can produce extra or altered results. Without the God-Machine's near-infallible capacity for understanding and utilizing the techgnostic properties of Infrastructure, demons have to rely on trial, error, and a large dose of luck. Most Infrastructure simply can't be hacked in this way, at least not by a demon, and the Unchained can't completely alter the output of a project. In the right conditions, though, they can skew it. By finding which item in the Infrastructure represents the focus of output and altering it, they can add, remove, or change the beneficiaries.

Redirection hacks use the hacker's understanding of Infrastructure to change a project's target while leaving the overall effect unchanged. Some element of Infrastructure close to the Linchpin (or perhaps the Linchpin itself) usually symbolizes or links to the focus or target of the project, whether it's as simple as an Destroyer angel being summoned to kill the subject of a memo faxed to a certain office at midnight, or as complex as altering blueprints or architectural models by infiltrating the city planners' office with cultists. By discerning how Infrastructure targets and making the necessary alterations, demons can pull off results like making Defense Infrastructure guard targets of their choosing, reroute key shipments to their allies, or direct natural disasters away from their adopted cities. One special kind of redirection, used when an Infrastructure is intended to summon an angel, is described on p. 117 of *Demon* as angel-jacking.

Backdoors are the next stage in hacking complexity, inserting false loops and procedures introduced by demons into an occult matrix. Like a backdoor in a computer program, demons insert backdoors to more easily destroy or take control of Infrastructure at a later date, or to receive intelligence on the Infrastructure whenever the God-Machine activates it. Where redirection attempts rely on knowledge of one part of Infrastructure, Backdoor hacks require at least two plus an understanding of the occult matrix that links them. The hacking demon must remove a key part of Infrastructure, a vital link in the chain of occult physics that produces output, but replace it with an alternative that still meets the occult matrix's needs as well as performing whatever function she wishes. For example, a demon hacking the Destroyer-summoning office mentioned above might somehow arrange to change the fax's number and have it assigned to her fax machine. If she simply wants information on who the angel is sent after, she can set her machine to immediately forward the kill-notices to the

Infrastructure's replacement number. If she wants to use her backdoor to crash the project at a safe distance, she just has to turn her machine off.

Infinite Loops are a specialized form of hack that relies on first having a backdoor. By carefully setting up the backdoor to return the occult matrix to an earlier point, the project never completes and the output never occurs. For example, one Concealment Infrastructure relies on the name of its target to degrade over repeated copying, being telephoned around a series of operators who repeat it to the next in line, unaware that it is subtly changing each time. By taking control of one of the phones in the chain, spying on another and passing the original message without distortion on to the next phone, a demon can prevent the output from ever happening. Infinite Loops still generate Aether, though, as their occult matrices burn off Essence. They are the basis for the Suborned Infrastructure Merit on p. 121 of *Demon: The Descent*.

Subversion hacks are the rarest and most difficult to pull off: attempts to completely change the output of a project by manipulating Infrastructure. Only the God-Machine has the complete understanding of occult physics needed to design new projects, but after successfully analyzing Infrastructure, demons sometimes spot opportunities. The broad nature of projects can't be altered — angel-summoning Infrastructure must still summon an angel, Command & Control Infrastructure must still make decisions — but if the hacker properly understands how the Infrastructure works and has the opportunity, the details can be flipped or altered. By understanding how the Linchpin for the Destroyer-summoning office works, a demon hacker capable of replacing it with an alternative could change it to summon a Guardian instead. Other successful subversion hacks include transforming Concealment Infrastructures to reveal the location of the God-Machine's facilities, or hide demon safehouses as well as the God-Machine's intended targets.

ADVANCED HACK: OF THE MACHINE

Every time a demon engages with an Infrastructure, he runs the risk of being caught. His Cover might be blown, or he might simply be re-assimilated. Walking into the lungs, hearts, or other innards of the God-Machine is like carrying a spotlight and hoping no one notices. Unless, that is, the demon can find a way to convince the Machine he is a *part* of that pulsing organ.

Hacking the Machine and becoming a temporary part of Infrastructure is possible, but it isn't easy. Once inside, the demon manipulates his current Cover to go along with the Infrastructure in question. That Cover is solid and difficult for the God-Machine or Its agents to expose, so long as the Cover lasts.

Of course, the Cover doesn't actually belong. It serves no purpose for the Infrastructure and its intent. It's junk code or spare parts rattling around between working parts, and it's only a matter of time before the system takes notice. An Infra-

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structure's purpose will out, and in most cases it dumps what it does not need, including any demon clutching to its side. It's simply a matter of how deeply the demon has dug in and how long it takes to be flushed out.

To hack a Cover into an Infrastructure, the demon needs to know where the Infrastructure is and be able to access the location. Then, she has to have an idea as to what her Cover might do as a part of the system. She does not need to have a full understanding of the purpose of the Infrastructure or its occult matrix. She just needs to know how her Cover can fit, or appear to fit among all the moving parts. The more she knows about the Infrastructure's operations, the better off she is. Talking up potential coworkers, forged documents, or mysterious calls from recruiters verifying your position at the location can all ease the Hack (this is considered mundane insertion; see the Suggested Modifiers).

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Occult

Action: Instant

Cost: 1 Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The God-Machine recognizes the attempt to hack in to the Infrastructure. The demon gains the Hunted Condition.

Failure: The God-Machine is aware of the tampering but hasn't located the problem. The player may choose to suffer a -3 to all further attempts to analyze, hack, or otherwise suborn this Infrastructure, or accept the Surveilled or Flagged Condition.

Success: The character gains the Of The Machine Condition.

Exceptional Success: The character can resolve the Of The Machine Condition without the God-Machine noticing (taking neither Plugged In nor Hunted; see sidebar).

SUGGESTED MODIFIERS

Circumstance	Modifier
Successfully analyze Infrastructure	+2
Mundane insertion into Infrastructure	+2
Use of any Exploit while in Infrastructure	-3

Pieces of the Machine

Breaking down Infrastructure is about more than simply destroying the Machine's power base, and demons have much to gain in breaking apart the networks and pulling down the sheet metal. In the wreckage of the Machine's systems are components of potentially useful gadgets, provided that the demon in question knows what to look for. For more on finding gadget components in Infrastructure, see p. 148.

NEW CONDITION: OF THE MACHINE

The character has hacked in and now her Cover is a part of the system. As long as she maintains that Cover within the Infrastructure, any attempts on the part of the God-Machine's agents (including angels) to detect her demonic nature suffer a -5 penalty. This Condition has its risks, however; the more contact the demon has with the Machine, the weaker the hack becomes. After a number of scenes equal to the successes on the initial roll to hack in, the hack falters and the God-Machine sees through it.

Resolution: In the final scene in which the character takes advantage of this Condition, the system assimilates her Cover identity and she gains the Plugged In Condition (p. 118 of *Demons: The Descent*). She may instead choose to expose her true nature, taking demonic form or using an Exploit in an obvious way in order to end the Condition. In this case, the character takes the Hunted Condition instead.

Beat: n/a

AETHER

One of the most common rewards of hacking Infrastructure is Aether, which is otherwise somewhat difficult to come by. The easiest way to soak up Aether is assuming demonic form and letting the energy build up, but that risks exposure. Siphoning Aether from Infrastructure is much more rewarding, but carries its own risks, not least of which is the fact that every Infrastructure is different and requires a different strategy to "tap." It doesn't matter if it's a nuclear dump inexplicably near an elementary school or a meat packing plant that produces flank steaks without ever bringing in any cows. If it's Infrastructure, demons can tap into it.

To access the Aether, a demon has to physically interact with the Infrastructure. The sidebar contains a few examples taken from the sample Infrastructures found earlier in this chapter.

No roll is required to interface with the Infrastructure to access Aether, though situational rolls to gain access to the interface point might be necessary. Disengaging from the interface point usually *does* require a roll (and is discussed anon).

A demon has no way to know how much Aether is available for consumption from a given Infrastructure. One that

EXAMPLE INTERFACE POINTS

- **Concealment Infrastructure:** At a gas station in the middle of nowhere, the God-Machine hides its workings along the highway. The Aether produced by the Infrastructure vents into a gas tank out front.
- **Defense Infrastructure:** Since the city installed its new central traffic control system, complete with computers automatic control over the traffic lights and speed limits, the city streets are now a tool of the God-Machine. Aether vents during car accidents and needs to be collected with the broken taillights and other scraps of car left behind when the cars are cleared.
- **Elimination Infrastructure:** The junkyard at the edge of town takes more than recycling. There, stigmatics toil to recycle everything and break it down to its smallest parts for reuse by the Machine. The center of this particular Infrastructure, a monstrous incinerator possesses a smoke vent that sticks out at a seemingly useless angle from the stacks, and spews smoke. It also spews Aether, and this is the Interface point.
- **Logistical Infrastructure:** The “Cultural Center” that screams “cult” doesn’t actually prey on the poor and desperate. It takes only very special candidates downstairs into a testing room. So what about the vans that leave out of the back of the Cultural Center? They seem to be delivering Meals-On-Wheels to the disabled all over the city, but the vans throb with Aether. To get a taste, a demon would have to get into the van and actually wire himself into the steering column.
- **Command and Control Infrastructures:** The God-Machine has invested in a major poker tournament, extending its reach throughout the ten thousand or so players and observers via the poker chips everyone is fingering. But that’s not where the waste goes. In fact, Aether is pooling in the walkie-talkies the pit bosses and other security use to communicate, and is then bled off harmlessly into the atmosphere as the staff uses them. Stealing a walkie-talkie isn’t difficult by itself, but each device only holds a few points of Aether at a time. If only the demons could build or acquire some kind of receiver....

has been running for a while probably has built up enough waste energy that a ring of demons can all “fill up” without a problem. Some Infrastructures have a means of venting Aether, which means they have a maximum capacity. Newer Infrastructures might not have had time to build much Aether. A demon who analyzes an Infrastructure can tell how much Aether is available at that particular point.

As an option, if a player feels like making things difficult for himself (and potentially the ring), when a character interfaces with an Infrastructure, the Storyteller can simply ask the player if the system is dry. If it is, the character can gain exactly one point of Aether. Any demons trying to interface after that get nothing. Both the player who declared the wellspring dry and any other character that didn’t get a taste of the juice because of the declaration gain a Beat.

As with the question of how *much* a character can draw, no easy algorithm exist to calculate how *fast* the flow of Aether is. Instead, it varies by the size of the Infrastructure, the activity currently going on at the Infrastructure and whatever other strange or occult variables the Storyteller thinks are important. Sometimes, a demon can fill his Aether pool instantly,

others it drips out a point at a time. The Storyteller determines how much Aether flows into a demon per turn, but the demon can slow the flow of Aether at will. This is slower but potentially safer: If the demon tries to absorb more Aether per turn than his Stamina, he suffers lethal damage equal to the difference. (For example, a character with Stamina 2 trying to absorb four points of Aether in a turn would suffer two points of lethal damage every turn he did so.)

DISENGAGING

As mentioned, disengaging from Infrastructure isn’t a simple task. Different types of Infrastructure have various requirements to disengage. If the characters have all the time they need to let go, they can probably do so safely. Usually, though, the characters have something pushing them to hurry up and get out.

Dice Pool: Resolve + Primum

Cost: –

Action: Extended (one roll/turn, successes determined by the Storyteller)

NEW CONDITION: MEMORY HOLE

Your internal knowledgebase starts developing gaps as the Infrastructure's nature overwrites your changes. You lose access to one Skill, chosen by the Storyteller based on the Infrastructure in question (the gas station Infrastructure in the sidebar on p. 64, for example, might affect Drive). The Skill isn't lost for good, but simply hidden from your memories. You cannot access that skill while the Aether from that Infrastructure still courses through your form.

Resolution: You resolve the Condition when the player chooses to take a dramatic failure on a roll for the affected Skill, or when her Aether pool drops below half full, whichever comes first.

Beat: n/a

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon is stuck in the interface. What happens at this point depends on the nature of the interface and the type of Infrastructure, but in general, the character might suffer some damage (lethal or even aggravated), take a Condition to reflect the problem (Flagged, Hunted, or even Blown in extreme cases), or become overclocked (discussed anon).

Failure: The player accumulates no successes. The character can either quit the attempt (which probably means another character needs to help her disengage) or can accept a Condition and keep trying.

Success: The player accumulates successes towards the goal. If the player reaches the goal, the character detaches from the Infrastructure with no ill effects.

Exceptional Successes: The player may choose one of the options for exceptional success on p. 313 of *Demon*.

Concealment Infrastructure is designed to mask other Infrastructure. Remaining attached to it for too long can result in the demon losing parts of her "programming," as the Infrastructure tries to hide something it isn't programmed to deal with. In this case, dramatic failure may mean that the demon takes the Memory Hole Condition. Suggested successes to disengage: 4.

Logistical Infrastructure is full of moving parts. If the player rolls a dramatic failure when the character is attempting to detach, the gears of the Machine snap and spin backward or forward in an unpredictable way. A demon who attempts to detach from Logistical Infrastructure and achieves a dramatic failure might find herself moved to a new location (determined by the

Storyteller) as the system attempts to "sort" her. In the example in the sidebar, if the character wires herself to one of the vans, it might drive her wherever it feels she belongs. This might depend on her Cover, whether she has any Conditions that would reveal her to the God-Machine (such as Flagged or Hunted) or how long she remained interfaced. Suggested successes to disengage: 3.

Defense Infrastructure is built to protect the God-Machine and Its projects, and as such is dangerous to interface with at the best of times. A dramatic failure when attempting to disengage often means that the Defense Infrastructure senses a threat and folds in on itself, tightening or snapping shut like a bank vault. Any previously planned escape routes are cut off and the characters need to find a new way out. For the attached demon, further attempts to disengage are futile; her fellow demons might need to cut her body loose from the Infrastructure. Changing to demonic form *might* allow her to escape without injury...but the Infrastructure is already aware of her presence, so doing so probably calls down Guardian-angels. Suggested successes to disengage: 5.

Elimination Infrastructure washes away waste. As such, getting stuck in such Infrastructure might mean that the character gets "flushed" with the rest of the waste product, which could range from inconvenient to fatal, depending on the method. Elimination Infrastructure that doesn't know what to do with a physical body might ignore the demon, attempt to vaporize her, or call in angels to examine the problem. The recycling plant mentioned in the sidebar on p. 68, however, is well-equipped to deal with physical matter; a demon who fails to disengage probably finds herself dropped into a vat of corpses or heading for an incinerator. Dramatic failures in this kind of Infrastructure are probably the most likely to result in physical damage. Suggested successes to disengage: 4

Command and Control Infrastructure is an extremely bad place to get stuck. A dramatic failure while attempting to disengage from such an Infrastructure puts the place on lockdown. The demon is immobilized and whatever defenders of the Infrastructure might be present come rushing to the area. The rest of the Infrastructure also locks down, preventing further attempts to interface for Aether. Any other hacking of the Infrastructure suffers a -4 penalty until the demons can somehow convince the Infrastructure's programming that the threat is gone. Unfortunately, the best way to do this is to let the God-Machine's agents find and deal with the demon who triggered the lockdown. Suggested successes to disengage: 8.

OVERCLOCKING

What happens when a demon deliberately absorbs too much Aether? What happens when he overloads his system and pushes his consciousness to the limits in a willful act of going past the breaking point? Demons refer to this as "overclocking," but usually in the context of gadgets (see p. 157 for more on overclocking a gadget). What most demons don't realize is that they can overclock their own Primum. It's not always a good idea, however — the demonic body can only process so much energy before catastrophic damage results.

NEW CONDITION: OVERCLOCKED

You are holding more Aether inside of yourself than normally possible, and as a result you're running faster and hotter than your system is used to. You may take as many points above your normal limit as you wish (and time allows for) with the following results.

Any attempt to find you is easier for the God-Machine's agents. All compromise rolls suffer a -1 for every point of Aether above your usual maximum (to a maximum penalty of -5).

You can spend one point of Aether per turn above and beyond your usual limit.

Resolution: At the end of a scene in which the character has Overclocked, she vents any excess Aether, taking a point of aggravated damage for every point of Aether above her normal total.

If the Overclocked demon has spent below her normal maximum Aether, she does not vent at the end of the scene.

Beat: n/a

To gain the Overclocked Condition, a character must have access to an Infrastructure and be able to interface with it and draw Aether. He must be able to draw more Aether than he can normally hold, and so this works best at a fast flowing interface point. At any point that those standards are met, a player can choose to take Overclocked for her character.

BUILDING AGENCIES

Like any organization, agencies come into being when people get together, share a basic idea, a motivation, and a drive, and then build toward those goals. The agency called /r/d/fall began when two computer savvy demons met up and realized the safest way to communicate was via a secret darknet forum. Williston, North Dakota wouldn't be the Agency it is today if a few Saboteurs and an Inquisitor didn't decide to work toward a shared goal. In many ways, any ring is the start of an Agency. It's just a matter of how long a ring lasts, how powerful it gets before the members break apart or betray one another, and how strong their shared mission is. Any ring can become an Agency, and it doesn't really take much more than them deciding that's what they want to do.

EXAMPLE AGENCY: THE OFFICE MOVERS AND SUPPLY DEPOT

Dorothy, Paul, Terri and Duncan are a new ring with dreams of going big. We'll use them as an example of how an Agency comes together, progresses, and encounters challenges.

Dorothy is a Destroyer Tempter looking for the perfect experience of war and violence the world has to offer, free of the shackles of the God-Machine and its boring missions.

Terri, the brains of the operation, is a Psychopomp Saboteur, gathering raw materials (the other characters) together in hopes of destroying the Machine.

Paul is a Guardian Inquisitor. He specializes in extractions and escape plans when Dorothy has gone off the rails. He's also probably in love with her.

Duncan is a Messenger Integrator, though he's posing as a Saboteur just like Terri. He wants to go back and he doesn't actually care who he has to hurt to get there. But the rest of the ring can't know that. To them, he specializes in destructive information – sowing betrayal and dissent via enemy communication lines.

DETERMINE THE MISSION

First, characters need to decide what the Agency specializes in. Players can take a look at the types of Agencies listed below as a springboard, but don't stop there. Does a Temporal Agency look appealing? What aspect of the Cover-trade is the ring particularly good at? Is it collecting pacts? Do any of the characters excel at angel-jacking? Have they become experts in cleaning up after an Infrastructure has fallen and want to hire themselves out? When the characters have decided on their mission, it can be as simple as this "what is my ring really good at," but leave room to grow. If the ring is especially accomplished at finding, tagging, and controlling stigmatics, that's the start of their mission statement, but where do they go from there? Do they simply procure them whenever and wherever stigmatics appear? Does the ring create their own stigmatics and hoping to groom them to be useful to other demons?

EXAMPLE: THE MISSION

Bouncing between in-character debate and out-of-character discussion, the ring looks over its strengths. Looking back at what they've already been through, it becomes clear that they have a knack for destroying Infrastructure (whether they mean to or not). Rather, Dorothy has a knack for it, and everyone else is good at surviving the fallout and supporting her efforts. Terri comes up with the idea that they should hire themselves out as a hit squad, taking down Infrastructure in the way of other rings. Duncan voices concerns — he thinks that by hiring themselves out as bag-and-burners, the demons are painting targets on their heads. Paul shares his concerns, but admits that their efforts thus far have been profitable and fulfilling, and Duncan (who is actually not at all opposed to accessing Infrastructures — one of them might give him a way home, after all) acquiesces.

Start with what the ring can do now as the basis of their mission, but have an idea of where the demons want to be once they've got some power under their belts.

If the ring is good enough at something to offer it as a service to other demons, they're going to have to prove it. Having an idea of how the ring does what they do can mean putting cards out on the table. Sometimes, to outline resources, the characters are going to have to run a few jobs first to see how the moving parts fit together. This is good for both the characters and the players. For the characters, getting out there and doing things is better than sitting and dreaming big, provided everyone survives and everything works as planned. For the players, it allows Beats and Experiences, roleplaying opportunities, and a chance to guide the chronicle progression.

OUTLINE RESOURCES

What does the ring have going for it? What are the special talents the demons can bring to bear in service to their goal? For the most part, this is simply a matter of the players looking at their character sheets and determining how Skills, Merits, Embeds, and Exploits play into the stated mission of the Agency. All Unchained are formidable in their own way, but the God-Machine can generally plan for and destroy a single demon. A ring of them — or multiple rings — can combine forces and cover each other's weaknesses in ways that the God-Machine cannot anticipate. The players need to consider those angles.

EXAMPLE: OUTLINING RESOURCES

The Office Movers and Supply Depot have the standard array of tricks and magic available to them that any ring does, but a few patterns and commonalities stand out. All of the characters have some facility in Stealth, which will be useful for infiltration. Duncan (who, remember, isn't entirely on board with this plan but doesn't want to lose his ring) is especially skilled at infiltrating organizations and Infrastructure while remaining visible, using Embeds like Authorized. He also knows the Behind the Curtain Exploit, but he keeps that card hidden for the moment. Dorothy has a knack of knowing how to destroy buildings and machinery quickly (the Shatter Embed, the Demolisher Merit, and high ratings in Crafts and Science). Terri shares some of this destructive affinity and also knows the Raze Infrastructure Exploit. The group jokes that their Agency guarantees "complete Infrastructure destruction, even if it's not a good idea." Finally, Paul's abilities run more toward investigative and protective activities, but that just means he's more useful as backup and preparation.

The characters think their biggest "hole," at the moment is that they don't have anyone especially skilled at Infrastructure analysis. Of course, given that analyzing Infrastructure can rely on virtually any Skill, it's difficult to have one expert in this area. They decide to soldier on with the plan and hope that any further deficiencies will become obvious before someone gets killed.

Of course, that assumes that the characters are up front with one another about their capabilities. A demon might know the Ephemeral Cover Exploit (p. 164 of *Demon: The Descent*), but is she willing to reveal that to the other characters? What if she plans to use that Exploit in her own Descent in a manner contrary to the Agency's mission? The players should remember, during this stage, that while they might know what's on the other players' sheets, the characters don't necessarily know what the other demons can do.

In looking over their strengths, the demons might also become aware of their shortfalls (which is different from a story-related problem for the Agency, discussed anon). The



characters might want to provide safe houses for newly Fallen demons, but lack the money to purchase or rent suitable properties. This means that the characters either need to find a way to develop these funds, gain access to the real estate without paying for it, or recruit other demons.

Recruitment is a must if the Agency is ever to grow beyond a single, ambitious ring, anyway, so how will they approach it? Is the original ring a kind of “inner circle,” the de facto leadership of the Agency? Or is the leader the leader, and anyone other than her simply a cog in the machine, so to speak? The players might consider these questions during the planning stages, or they might enjoy the conflict that comes with “oh, we’ll cross that bridge when we get to it.”

WHO'S IN CHARGE?

Demons don’t often trust each other. How could they? Every demon is a perfect liar on the run for a merciless god, so how could a demon trust anyone in the same situation? It’s possible that emotional bounds and experiences could cement true friendships and trust in a ring of demons, but that takes time and a leap of faith.

Leadership, then, rarely has to do with who the ring has the most faith in. Generally, it’s the one best suited to lead in

a given situation. This works fine for a ring, but for an Agency managing multiple rings, the buck has to stop somewhere.

The leader of an Agency is often the demon that wants to take on the job. As with any leadership position, running an Agency is a lot of work and the rewards aren’t often commensurate. How a demon becomes the leader often reflects that demon’s Agenda more than anything else.

An **Inquisitor** leader often takes the position because she wants ultimate control, or at least first look at the information that the Agency handles. Any group of demons eventually handles data in one form or another, and the leader of such an Agency stands the chance to gain leverage and secrets over a large number of Unchained (plus any human beings, stigmatics, angels, or other supernatural beings that the Agency deals with).

An **Integrator** leader is something of a rarity – when the boss’ stated goal is utterly contrary to most of his underlings’, some friction is bound to result. Obviously, an Integrator can get around this by pretending to follow a different Agenda. But assuming the Turncoat is “out” about his affiliations, such demons tend to lead Agencies that deal with angels directly. No one understands an angel like an Integrator, after all. The leader probably has to work harder to prove himself, but if he can become an established fixture in the Agency, then after a while everyone becomes

EXAMPLE: CHOOSING A LEADER

Who's in charge is a bit of a problem with the (soon to be named) Office Movers and Supply Depot. Terri thinks it's only logical for her to call the shots since she's smart, motivated, and connected. Everything usually ends up being her idea anyway, so why not call her boss and be done with it? Duncan however, feels that given how often plans have gone haywire (usually because of Dorothy), it's time he takes the reins.

After a spirited in-character debate, the decision comes down to the fact that Dorothy sides with Terri, and with Dorothy comes Paul. That'll have to do for now, but Duncan is biding his time. The players think this is great drama and can't wait to see where it goes.

accustomed to his presence. (Whether the phrase "false sense of security" applies depends on the case in the point.)

If a **Saboteur** takes command of an Agency, it's a fair bet she's going to run things like a general or a field commander. Saboteurs can be as pragmatic as the next demon — no point in burning one Infrastructure down today if you can blow up five tomorrow — but they are also usually much more straightforward in their approaches both to leadership and tactics. A Saboteur might have seized command during a period of high attrition and never relinquished it, or might have taken her post by simply being able to kill or subdue the competition. That does not make for a stable environment, however, as demons are not typically willing to accept orders or status quo unthinkingly.

Finally, **Tempter** leaders are probably the most logical choice. Tempters look for material comfort, some living lavish lifestyles and some squirreling away resources and favors against the day when they really need them. A Tempter leader isn't so different from an Inquisitor, except that while the Inquisitor takes the position to gather knowledge, the Tempter takes the position to gain whatever advantage he can. Tempters almost always have an escape plan, a way to cut and run when things get too hot, taking everything with them and leaving just enough behind to pin the Agency and everything it's ever done on someone else (stigmatics and Integrators are popular choices).

WHO DO YOU SERVE

The ring has to decide on their target consumers. Finding customers can be every bit as much as social endeavor as one of investigation and study. An Inquisitor might busy himself

studying the comings and goings of his fellow Unchained, but he's only gotten half the work done at that point. Knowing what the locals need and what the Agency can provide is really only half the picture. Beyond that, a budding agency needs rub elbows, make friends, and offer freebies to build up a customer base. The better an Agency can match what they do with what the rest of their city needs, the better off they are.

Finding that out requires that the demons become part of the city's culture. Of course, most large metropolitan areas have multiple cultures, and so demons need to decide how much they're going to try to hook into for their nascent Agency. If the Agency wants to sell pacts, to whom do they wish to sell them? Upper class financial white-collar types? Ordinary citizens who hit a run of bad luck? Other demons (which opens up the problem of finding other demons)? The players should consider their characters' Merits and Skills when making this determination. If most of the characters have Contacts and any areas of conceptual overlap, that should probably determine the customer base. After all, as any salesman knows, it's easier to get business with an existing relationship than with a cold call.

WHAT'S FALLING APART

With this final step, the players determine the biggest problem the character's Agency faces. Big risks reap big rewards and help establish what the players want out of their **Demon** chronicle. By indicating what they see as a big problem for their budding Agency, they're letting the Storyteller that they want to be challenged, and how. Note, then, that this problem isn't so much a hole in the characters' capabilities or a

EXAMPLE: FINDING CLIENTS

The ring sets out to gain some clients for their burgeoning "blow up Infrastructures" Agency. Terri has some acquaintances among other Saboteurs in other rings, so she at least has an idea of who's struggling with what Infrastructure. The problem is selling it.

The players run a few scenes with various demons trying to pitch their service, and much to everyone's surprise, Paul turns out to be an effective salesman. So, Paul now has a job within the Agency as their "face" and point of contact. He keeps in touch with the rest of the city's Unchained population and makes them aware that when an Infrastructure just needs to be blown up, they're the ones to do it. This brings in a lead or two at first, which is enough of a start.

EXAMPLE: THE PROBLEM

Out of character while waiting on Thai delivery, the players discuss what problems their Agency should face. They look at the characters' individual Aspirations and personalities. They talk about the Storyteller characters they've already met and which ones they've made ground with, largely thanks to Paul. After a while, they figure that the Agency suffers from a Lack of Unity. Conflicting agendas aren't uncommon in groups of demons, but this Agency only barely agrees on goals, let alone methods. That's going to cause conflict and potentially get someone hurt.

For example, later, when Paul is trying to talk another demon into joining up and doing some work for the Agency, Dorothy chimes in. The Storyteller character realizes that the Agency's members don't really see eye-to-eye on what they're doing and leaves. He might also spread the word that the Depot is a bunch of hacks who don't know what they're doing. But, because the Agency's weakness came up and made things more challenging and dramatic, Dorothy and Paul both take a Beat.

problem that they know they need to overcome as a challenge that the *players* recognize or think would be interesting.

It also operates as a kind of Persistent Condition that any characters in the Agency share. If the ring establishes that the main problem their budding Agency faces is "No One Has Heard of Us," any time the characters run into a situation in which the ring can't work toward the Agency's mission because of their lack of repute, the characters present take a Beat. The Storyteller is advised to allow only one such Beat per character per chapter, but to bend this rule if something highly significant happens. If the Agency's problem is resolved, then all characters in the Agency gain a Beat, and the players' characters can discuss whether to give the Agency a new problem. The Storyteller might also just choose to assign one.

EXPANSION AND MULTIPLE DEMONS

Recruitment is mentioned above, but when an Agency grows, it means involving more demons. How does that translate to at-the-table play, when players usually only control one character? The troupe has a few options.

- **Multiple Characters per Player:** As new demons join the Agency, the players make up new characters. The players don't necessarily have to play these characters often, but they are there if a player's primary character winds up dead, indisposed, or if the player just needs a break from that character for a while. Players retain control over these members of the Agency, meaning that they Storyteller isn't going to introduce plotlines that involve those characters betraying the Agency or being killed while off-screen (though the Storyteller can certainly suggest such things to the players).
- **Storyteller Characters:** The Storyteller makes up the other members of the Agency. If the Storyteller feels ambitious, she might create full character sheets with traits and even Aspirations for these characters, but it works just as well to have an index card per character outlining Incarnation, Agenda, and a few pertinent facts. These characters are available for the players' characters to use as assets — they're members of the Agency, after all — but

EXAMPLE: EXPANSION

The Office Mover and Supply Depot has done well for itself and gained a reputation as effective removers of Infrastructure. The Agency now encompasses four rings across a tri-state area, as well as a number of informers and ancillary agents. The players' ring still runs the show and demands right of approval over any jobs that the other rings take on. The players have decided that while they like making up characters, they don't want to *play* other characters at the moment. They choose to use the "Player Genesis, Storyteller Control" method of fleshing out the Agency.

The characters hear about a possible Command and Control Infrastructure centered on a poker game (see p. 71). Realizing that a contact in the state's gaming commission would be useful, the players ask the Storyteller if they can define one of the ancillary Agents as being an employee of this institution (they ask first because it's possible that the Storyteller wants to make gaining this kind of access a major plot point; as it turns out she doesn't, so making up the contact is fine). Paul's player makes up a low-ranked investigator named Damon Lane who has been assigned to watch the poker game. Paul decides Damon is stigmatic, rather than a demon, and that his fingernails have a slight silvery sheen to them (his stigmata). Any other details about Damon become up to the Storyteller, but the characters have the access they need.

they aren't under the players' control and therefore can betray the Agency, pursue their own interests, and otherwise complicate matters as the Storyteller sees fit.

- **Player Genesis, Storyteller Control:** This method is a mixture of the other two; the players make up characters as necessary during the story. If the Agency needs a demon who knows how to turn a human being into a stigmatic and none of the players' characters knows or wishes to learn the Inflict Stigmata Exploit, a player can make up a member of the Agency who has the knowledge they need. The player creates the character's concept, name, and any other fact she feels important, at which point control passes to the Storyteller.

As an Agency grows in size, and especially as it leaves the confines of the chronicle's home setting, managing multiple rings becomes an important component. The players and the Storyteller should work together to ensure that the Agency has a feel appropriate to its size—a Tier Two Agency should have multiple members, but the players should have a good grip on how big it is and who does and doesn't belong. A Tier Three Agency probably spans multiple cities, and the characters might not have a fool-proof way to verify that a demon is or is not a member.

TEMPORAL AGENCIES

A Temporal Agency is one that focuses on the currency that matters to demons. Money is a secondary concern, as the trade for demons tends to be in Covers, pacts, gadgets, and secrets. Temporal Agents are the merchant class of demons, and their roles can be every bit as varied and suspicious to demons on the outside as patricians have ever appeared to the common man and noble classes alike. When building a Temporal Agency, think about what the demons have to trade and sell, how they make their exchanges, and how they hope to keep their supply coming in.

SAMPLE MISSIONS

A gadget for every Demon. All the best in angel-jacking and angel defense. Covers from the rich and famous. Relationships based on passion and hate for your Cover identity. Stigmatics. Quality control over any Pact written in the city.

SAMPLE PROBLEMS

Deliveries are dangerous. We've got competition. The supply is drying up. Is this really ethical? The product is coming in too easy. Too much demand. A bigger, meaner demon wants his cut. We're not very good with people.

TIER ONE

At Tier One the Agency is a small-time operation on a shoestring budget. It has some supply, or is about to have some supply but is only barely solvent. It's going to require some big moves and some daring operations to grow the business.

Challenges: At this stage, what they really need to do is grow. The Agency needs more partners, more customers,

SCOPE OF THE TIERS

Tiers first originated in **Hunter: The Vigil**, but have since been applied to various World of Darkness games. They are further explored in the **God-Machine Chronicle** but bear some discussion here as we explore Agencies.

For the purposes of this book, Tiers reflect the size and scope of a chronicle. Tiers are a way of defining the differences between a globe-hopping high concept adventure through time and space and a gritty, teeth-in-the-curb street level game.

Tier One: This is a local game that takes place more or less in characters' neighborhood. It's the streets and blocks where they live. Tier One games tend to feature ethical dilemmas with no easy or satisfying solution. They are grounded deeply in "realistic" concerns—money is scarce, mundane authorities are a real problem, and the Descent is something that more privileged demons think about.

Tier Two: This is a regional game that involves travel or moving from city to city. Interpersonal struggle still happens, but the characters aren't always around to see the consequences of their actions. This tier might involve hitting the highways and moving from town to town, or it might involve dealing with visitors from other places and turning the characters' home city into a hub for demonic activity. The Descent is a real concern, and the characters should have to balance their personal view of Hell with that of their ring-mates; this pursuit should intrude on their Agency's demands.

Tier Three: The chronicle involves national or international stakes. The characters may become involved in wars, clandestine operations, and travel to the far corners of the Earth. The demons may find that to solve a problem they're swept off to Istanbul or Guam in search of a lost secret or to fix a distant allies problem for them. It's a global game and the stakes are much higher. It isn't just the characters and their ring, but the lives of hundreds of thousands of people on the line. At this stage, at least some of the characters should have completed or be close to completing their Ciphers, and their final secrets become themes for the chronicle.

more product, and more steady supplies to keep the operation going. They need the bodies that move shipments around or make arrangements necessary to get where they're going. Right now it's pretty much just the ring, so if they really want to get anywhere, they're going to have to outsource.

Strengths: On the bright side, right now it's really just the characters and their ring. If something goes wrong, it's down to a handful of demons who might be responsible. Better still, if bigger Temporal Agencies are already operating in the area, they probably don't see the ring as a threat (yet). The ring is usually left to what they're doing so long as they stay small-time. Customers trickle in because the Agency deals in something the big guys don't, they think they can get a better deal from the characters, or they can leverage the Agency's position to their benefit.

TIER TWO

The Agency is big enough that most demons in the city have at least heard of it and know what the characters do. The ring is known, and that's just as great and terrible as it sounds. The ring has got some people, now, who do some of the legwork. They may be stigmatics or pactbound, or maybe just simple employees, but the players' characters aren't handling everything themselves these days. Still, the ring does the majority the work; it's pretty exhausting, but rewarding as well.

Challenges: The Agency is the competition now. Other local Agencies are watching to see if the characters are going to get in their way. Other rings worry about what the Agency could do to them. Everyone's heard of this Agency, and so everyone wants to know what their angle is, which means someone with bad or misleading intel on the Agency might decide on a preemptive strike. The characters have enemies just because they can get things done. Other, more established Temporal Agencies see the Agency as a threat to their trade, and watch for any sign that the characters are horning in on their turf. If they are, or if the other Agency believes they are, a turf war might lie ahead. Of course, the one who benefits most when Agencies go to war is the God-Machine.

Strengths: The characters are the name on everyone's lips and more than a few customers come just to see what they're all about. Furthermore, the Agency's growth means other demons looking for work, and new hires can be a potent power base.

TIER THREE

The characters have built themselves quite an enterprise. There's not a Cover traded in the city they don't get a cut of. If they don't hold the Pact themselves, they've heard about it. Burned demons don't even bother coming around unless they're willing to pay big. It might not be Hell yet, but it's like the characters are Kings and Queens of it anyhow.

Challenges: The Agency isn't the competition anymore, now they *have* competition. The cities full of upstarts, and the characters never know what dumb-luck prideful ring of idiots is going to try and take turf. The ring can never be too careful, and mercy is the same as weakness when it comes to an Agency of this size.

Strengths: The Agency is the status quo. So long as they can maintain their supply lines, they're the default people go to when they need a pact, a Cover, or whatever the Agency provide now. (And the characters probably supply a lot more than their initial mission by this point.) The characters had a thousand problems to get this far, and they've learned to deal with them.

INSURGENT AGENCIES

The Machine ain't going to dismantle itself, and if the characters are going to find their way to Hell, they're going to have to blow up a lot of shit to get there. A ring with a knack for destroying Infrastructure can keep going on the way they've been going, but the work a pair of rings can do isn't multiplicative, it's exponential. If the characters have got more rings than even that at their disposal? The Machine might eventually not have the resources to recover from the chaos they can lay down.

The characters are idealistic, maybe charismatic, maybe just driven by clarity of vision. When the ring decides to become an Insurgent Agency, they move up from being lone freedom fighters throwing Molotov cocktails and praying for a miracle, to an armed guerrilla organization with the know-how and manpower to really change something.

SAMPLE MISSIONS

Rid downtown of any Infrastructure and make it permanently immune. Make all the children at Saint Mary's immune to the Machine. Catch and indoctrinate any Exiles in the city. Drive the Deva Corporation out of town. Collect the "blood" of 27 murdered angels for some occult purpose. Steal the largest cult in the city and convert it.

SAMPLE PROBLEMS

Cowardice in your henchmen. Conflict of command. Conflicting methodologies. A city full of Integrators. Rumors of a spy in your midst. We keep taking innocent lives. An uncharismatic leader.

TIER ONE

At this point, it's just the ring and maybe some buddies that the characters have convinced of a shared vision. The characters haven't made their bones, or proven they can pull off a really big run on the God-Machine, but they're eager. They've got all sorts of ideas, and surely that makes up for limited tools, bodies, and experiences? The characters have dreams of a perfect Hell, and they're not going to let things like logistics and reason get in the way of blowing it all to shit.

Challenges: The ring is disorganized. They know they're supposed to be an army of righteous demons laying waste to the cruel master that warps the earth, but they don't actually know how to pull that off. They also have the problem of being a group of idealists: their people don't quite know how to follow directions, or keep their mouths shut, or be as motivat-



ed as the characters are. This also makes it easy for someone with less than pure motivations to infiltrate.

Strengths: The characters are light on their feet and know every other Agent by name. As much as anyone can trust demons, the characters can at least count on each other to do what is expected. The characters aren't bogged down by traditions of war or other Saboteurs' ideas. They're fresh and brimming with possibility, willing to try anything once.

TIER TWO

There but for the grace of Hell goes this Agency. The fact that any of them is still alive at this point is pretty amazing, because the characters have taken some big risks to get this far. They've made a dent in the city and the God-Machine's hold over it. They've made such a dent that their mission has probably grown to accommodate their past successes and failures. Demons in the city know about the things this Agency has done. While they might treat the characters with distrust, they can't say they aren't impressed by the moxie. Demons talk about really getting in there and disrupting the Machine. This Agency has actually gone and done it.

Challenges: The characters might have some victories under their belts, but most demons and potential recruits still want to know what has the ring done lately. The characters can't rest on a few lucky wins to carry them through, they've

got to constantly be planning, and constantly be dragging down Infrastructure. Worse, they've got to do it bigger and better than the last time, not just because they need to maintain their reputation. If they become predictable, they're dead.

Strengths: The Agency's purpose has really crystallized, and while they can't say their new recruits are the best and brightest every time, they can say they understand the mission, the need to follow the vision. What's left of the original ring has come to a meeting of the minds, more or less, as to what it is the Agency stands for, and if the Agents aren't full converts, they're on the way.

TIER THREE

This Agency is the clandestine organization demons whisper about, but no one brings up by name. The characters may have fronts by now, "face" Agents they use to recruit and shake out the chaff. They have a number of rings working for them, from a distance, which means even if they get scooped up by angels, the God-Machine can never trace it back to the characters. They've grown used to losing troops. It's a day to day fact of life, and maybe the characters have grown hard. But this is a battle with God, and these days, it's easy to feel that victory is just so close.

Challenges: Paranoia is a way of life. The characters can't get attached. They can't trust. They can't have mercy or compassion or anything but the mission in their heart. The mis-

sion is bigger than individual lives, the ring, the lives of a hundred demons and a hundred thousand humans. This is war in the shadows. Everyone could be an enemy, and everyone could turn. If anything can save them, it's completing the mission, seeing the Agency's vision through to the end, and staying zealous in their dedication to it.

Strengths: Secrecy is more important than Aether, and some days, it feels like the characters get more out of it. The characters have become masters at counterintelligence, keeping their moving parts ignorant of each other. The left hand not only doesn't know what the right hand is doing, but the left hand also wouldn't even recognize the right hand as belonging to the same body. It's lonesome, but it's necessary.

FREE AGENCIES

The mistake a lot of rings make, and a lot of the other Agencies as well, is in thinking a Free Agency is just a message board or a handful of demons meeting in a church basement pretending to be addicts while exchanging stories and information. It can be those things, and that's probably where the characters are going to get started, but like any other Agency, a Free Agency can grow to be a great deal more. At the beginning, they've got word of mouth, a friend or two outside the ring with ears to the ground, and a safe-ish place to meet. In time, they'll have a lot more than that. If they play their cards right, demons will be lined up to get a piece of what they've got.

SAMPLE MISSIONS

Know every stigmatic in the city. Have the largest cryptoflora garden in the world. "Catch" newly Fallen demons. Operate an underground for Burned demons. Build an Infrastructure map that can predict new Infrastructure. Push the God-Machine off of the Internet. Produce workable therapy for demons dealing with Cover dysphoria and other rare emotional glitches.

SAMPLE PROBLEMS

We don't know what we're doing. Our safe space isn't really that safe. Bad reputation. We're a clique. Bad operating intel. A demon went missing after meeting with us.

TIER ONE

The characters have some ideas and a willingness or need to gather resources. They may have some means to do so, a safe meeting place in the real world or the Internet. Maybe they've already got some juicy secrets dying to get out to the right parties.

Challenges: Maybe the characters already have a way to help their fellow demons. The problem is getting them to *ask* for help. Demons know what they need when they go looking for Temporary Agencies. They get recruited by Insurgent Agencies. A Free Agency is another matter entirely, and getting out the word, convincing the Unchained that the characters are on the level, and that they can deliver what they promise might well be Sisyphean.

Strengths: The ring's got something other Agencies don't offer. They've got the intangible; connection, contact and sympathy, maybe even a taste of *hope*. The Unchained will take anything to make the Descent feel like it has purpose and possibility, anything to justify all the fear and the suffering.

TIER TWO

At this point, the Agency has a network of informers, contacts, and allies. Demons have at least heard of the Agency and have a rough idea of what it can do. The Agency has some regulars who bring information, stories, or commiseration. It's still mostly under the radar, but it has spread much further than the God-Machine realizes (that's the hope, at least).

Challenges: The Agency has to prove that their intangible promises — hope, contact, sympathy — have tangible benefits. This may mean leaking secrets the Agency could have used to its own benefit. They may have to stop an Integrator from going loud in a state of depression and burning the whole Agency to the ground via exposure — but by returning him to the fold, rather than just killing him.

Strengths: The Agency might not really have bodies they can count on, but they've got eyes, ears, experience and opinions. No matter how small the rumor, obscure the topic, or strange the request, someone somewhere in the Agency knows who to ask. They might not be able to get answers for free, but they at least know where to start.

TIER THREE

The characters are an Agency, but they're also a sort of conspiracy demons all over the world whisper about. The characters may not have global control, but they do have some global reach, with solid contacts all over. The Agency has human resources, and even allies in and among the other monsters that inhabit the World of Darkness. The Agency has become, on its own, a secret worth keeping.

Challenges: A breach in the network could mean the deaths of a lot of demons, humans, and others. The trust the Unchained have placed in the Agency is astounding, but dangerous to all parties involved. If an enemy is going to strike at or infiltrate the Agency, that enemy is probably trying to uncover the demons who started it all. While the characters may not be easy to identify as the center of this Agency, they've still got a price on their heads. They need to keep moving, possibly forever.

Strengths: The difference between true and untrue is almost moot. More relevant is what the characters decide is true. Maybe they can't buy and ship a hundred Covers a day, or mobilize a small army to act, but they can convince all the Unchained in an area that someone else has. Fact, fiction, truth, beauty, peace, agony: with the information the characters wield, it's all the same in the end.



The balding man with the wire-rimmed spectacles pushed a file across the desk. The nameplate next to the neatly organized inbox read "Mr. James Bailey." He announced, "Your client is Dr. Steven Kaufman."

Mr. Harp flipped through it and found more or less what he expected. Fingerprints on the murder weapon. Three witnesses who recognized the doctor's car. It was very neat, except for the lack of apparent motive. "Has Faith softened him up?"

The senior partner nodded, face as grave as an executioner's. "As far as he knows, he was exposed to HIV during a recent surgery and his wife and two children are in medically induced comas following the accident two days ago. Mr. West will run interference to keep them from notifying Dr. Kaufman of their miraculous recovery. Even without the criminal charges, he should be suitably desperate."

Harp wanted to ask about his client's family. How would his wife react when no one at the police station would believe that Dr. Kaufman was her husband? Would his children wake from nightmares of the accident? The demon who called in the contract would have to play the part of husband and father well to preserve his Cover, but would he learn to care about the people in his stolen life, or would he adjust his Cover to fit by slowly driving them away?

"Are you sure you're ready for this, Mr. Harp?" the senior partner asked.

Harp silently cursed his hesitation. No one was supposed to be able to read the Unchained, but somehow Bailey could — finding clues in the silences and word choices of his fellow outcasts.

Harp flashed a go-getter smile that he knew wouldn't fool the senior partner for an instant.
"I'm ready to be a full partner in the firm, Mr. Bailey."

Bailey steepled his fingers and leaned forward in a carefully practiced human gesture that made him look like a teacher warning a poor-performing student. "You've done some impressive interview work for the firm, Mr. Harp, but you've never closed the deal before. We've rigged the game in your favor as much as we can, but once you step into that holding cell you are on your own. You cannot rely on the mind tricks you favor to smooth the way. It is your wits against his moral fortitude. You can lie as much as you want, but remember that the contract is only valid if he knows he is selling his soul to you."

"This isn't my first soul pact, Mr. Bailey." Harp spoke matter-of-fact, not at all petulant.

The senior partner snorted a laugh and leaned back, pushing the thin glasses up his nose — another calculated human gesture. "Junkies and thieves. The firm doesn't deal in burn Covers or patch jobs, Mr. Harp. Our buyers expect high-value, low-complication identities. They want specialized skills, access to restricted locations, or stable family situations that they can settle into for decades at a time." This last with a knowing smile.

How does he do that? Harp wondered, but instead he said, "You can count on me, Mr. Bailey."

chapter three: RECYCLED MATERIALS

No bird soars too high, if he soars with his own wings.

-William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*

On the whole, the Unchained are not superstitious about their powers, nor do they regard them as truly supernatural. Arcane physics are just that – physical laws that are difficult or impossible to understand, except for those who possess secret knowledge. Demons know they understand next to nothing about the principles upon which the God-Machine's science relies, but that doesn't make those principles magical.

This rationalist view of their abilities by no means makes them less eager to discover the backdoors of the laws of physics (Embeds). It doesn't dissuade them from seeking new meth-

ods to use those arcane rules in ways the God-Machine didn't intend (Exploits). It certainly doesn't discourage them from reshaping their demonic forms as they become increasingly integrated with the world in which they find themselves.

This chapter introduces new Embeds, Exploits, and demonic form abilities. It explores the process by which demons master new Embeds and Exploits, as well as discussing the process of unlocking the Cipher. It talks about the creation and evolution of the demonic form, including new form abilities. Finally, it presents rules for Integrity, useful for stigmatic and human characters.

EMBEDS

As escaped servants of the God-Machine, demons often favor the subtle pressure of Embeds. These shortcuts in reality allow a demon to achieve impressive feats with minimal risk of compromise and at no measurable cost. They never require Aether, and the time it takes to bring an Embed into play is negligible. For a demon who knows Knockout Punch, the ability to quickly incapacitate targets is as much a part of him as the teeth in his mouth and the nails on her fingers. Although it isn't foolproof, he can wield it as much or as little as he wishes.

LEARNING EMBEDS

Embeds are not learned from musty tomes, nor do mysterious entities impart them upon the worthy. Mastering an Embed is more like learning a new acrobatic trick or mathematical principle. The outcast can stumble onto the knowledge by accident but it is uncommon. In most cases, the outcast must first know what can be done. Someone who has never seen anyone perform a somersault or cartwheel is unlikely to

become an Olympic gymnast, and someone who has never had algebraic notation explained to him would have to reinvent the mathematics of the last several centuries in order to perform calculus. In the same way, a demon seldom stumbles onto an Embed.

Once a demon understands the possibilities, he must then discover the method by which ordinary natural laws can be circumvented. Books are a poor source of such information because what an outcast does to activate an Embed cannot be translated into human language – as beyond mortal comprehension as ancient history is beyond a dog's. Some Unchained have invented metaphors to describe the process of achieving these feats of arcane science indirectly, but in the end they are only metaphors. *The Unchained Bible*, a book by a demon of the Tel Aviv Free Agency, contains koans and riddles meant to lead demons to understanding of several dozen Embeds, but its usefulness depends on the reader. He must be in the right frame of mind to pierce the metaphor and determine exactly what physical, mental, and spiritual configuration the author

is telling him that he must achieve. Even those who learn by such means must usually spend a fair amount of time going through the motions with slight variations until they hit upon the exact external and internal configuration necessary.

Demons can teach Embeds to each other but largely do so by example and imitation. Although these abilities adhere to the laws of arcane physics, even if the Unchained knew the principles on which they operated (and they don't), theory knowledge would be of little use in mastering Embeds. Too much of the process of slipping through gaps in the natural laws is a matter of doing than knowing. A teaching session among the Unchained is closer to a group of skateboarders in an empty lot. The advanced skateboarders perform some of the simple tricks they've already mastered while occasionally reaching for something they haven't pulled off yet. The novices watch and imitate the experts, falling down a lot as they figure out exactly how and when to step on the board, lift their legs, and shift their balance. The experts can throw in a couple words of encouragement or tell the novice that she's leaning back too far or bending her knees too much, but in the end she has to figure out the details on her own.

THE CIPHER

While the Unchained don't regard Embeds as anything more remarkable than grade school chemistry or physics, many develop a deep mysticism regarding their Ciphers. The fact that no two demons have the same Cipher, and that even those with matching Keys still do not develop identical Interlocks, is not lost on them. Some outcasts claim that the Cipher has some connection to the Descent – a secret that will help lead them to Hell, or at least to a better understanding of how to achieve it. Others insist that it is nothing so mysterious, at least no more so than the process by which two mortals entangle one another's DNA to produce children that at once resemble their parents and possess their own unique identity. Mechanically minded outcasts of this bent liken it to the process of combining simple machines into a more complex device and snort derisively at those Unchained who cloak the Cipher in superstition. A modern automobile engine is nothing more than many levers and wheels connected to a power source – an impressive bit of engineering, to be sure, but not worth marveling at like a child watching a magician. In the same way, Interlocks are nothing more to them than Embeds strung together in the right order and attached to a compatible chassis (the demon). A few demons maintain that each Cipher's final secret contains a truth about arcane physics not yet known to the God-Machine – knowledge Inquisitors believe It covets and Integrators hope they can give their creator as a peace offering.

NEW EMBEDS

The God-Machine has identified or created many exceptions to the laws of physics as mortals understand them. Its

angels regularly benefit from these, but demons retain the potential to take advantage of them, too. The God-Machine occasionally creates Infrastructure aimed at increasing its angels' repertoires, and outcasts can sometimes discover Embeds unknown to previous generations of Unchained. In theory, the God-Machine could also close some of these loopholes by altering or removing the right Infrastructure, but to date It has not done so.

CACOPHONY

APPLE OF DISCORD

In the Greek legend for which this Embed was named, the goddess of strife (Eris) inscribed a golden apple with the words "to the fairest" and tossed it in the midst of a feast of the gods. This sparked a dispute between Hera, Aphrodite, and Athena that ultimately led to the Trojan War. As this tale illustrates, jealousy can be a powerful weapon. Tasked with erasing a large cult the God-Machine no longer needs, some Destroyer angels turn members against each other and pick off the survivors once the blood bath is over. This Embed allows a demon to make an object or person she touches intensely desirable to anyone who sees it before the end of the scene (although it has no effect on demons or angels). Victims see the target as a sure means of fulfilling everything they are – Virtue, Vice, and Aspirations – and respond accordingly. Not all immediately fall to violence, but this Embed tends to have the greatest effect on those who have a history violating social norms and breaking their personal codes for the sake of expedience.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Expression vs. Integrity (see p. 131)

Action: Instant and contested

Dramatic Failure: Onlookers gain the Obsessed Condition (p. 310 of *Demon: The Descent*) regarding the demon. They wish to possess the demon at all costs, but they're perfectly willing to share him with others and will work together to capture and imprison him until their obsession can be broken.

Failure: The target doesn't become any more worthy of obsession than it already is.

Success: The demon must touch the target for this Embed to work. The target becomes desirable. Anyone who sees it (or him or her) must accrue a number of successes equal to or greater than the number of successes the demon's player rolled for the Embed. Those who successfully resist it feel some initial interest but quickly overcome it. Those who fail covet the target, gaining the Obsessed Condition regarding it. They wish to possess the object and prevent anyone else from having it. This effect lasts until they have avoided looking at or coming into contact with the object for at least 24 hours. Those who do not break contact with the target may remain obsessed with it for days or even years, although it does not inspire covetousness in anyone who was not present when the demon used the Embed.

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Exceptional Success: The Embed works and the victim uses every means at her disposal to acquire the target immediately. She will even deceive, betray, or murder loved ones to have the target for herself.

ANARCHISM

Law acts as a deterrent against antisocial activity. By laying down a law and designating punishments, a society sets standards for behavior and culture. A would-be criminal may not be afraid of punishment, but still feels a societal pressure to behave within its dictated confines. This Embed allows the Unchained to twist that rule, making people act without fear of societal repercussion and censure. An affected target lies, cheats, steals, and hurts without compunction if it means getting them what he wants. Usually targets will not hurt loved ones, since doing so carries consequences beyond societal ones. This Embed doesn't make them unaware of consequences; it simply makes them not care about societal pressure and law. Anarchism doesn't affect Unchained.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Politics – Composure

Action: Instant

Dramatic Failure: The subject becomes inspired to uphold societal norms. She acts with the Inspired Condition, and inherently perceives the Unchained as something that does not fit in with the status quo.

Failure: The Embed has no effect.

Success: The subject no longer cares about societal repercussions. Appeals to peers, to authority, to law will all fall on deaf ears. The subject gains a Willpower point any time she ignores these things in favor of her own interest. If she puts herself in substantial danger, she gains a Beat. The Embed ends after the scene.

When used on Storyteller characters, substantial danger offers her an Inspired Condition. This reflects an emboldening from the rebellion.

Exceptional Success: As above, but the Embed does not end until the subject has gained a Beat.

BREAKDOWN

The human mind is a complicated machine. It processes thousands of things at any given time, and keeps the complexities of the body regulated so that its myriad parts work together to form a cohesive whole. This Embed gives the Unchained a weapon against that mental equilibrium; it causes just a hint of entropy that ripples through the subject's every function.

In practice, this means that not only does the subject not do something he intended to do, but he does something completely unrelated, instead. An assailant attempting to fire a gun may break out into a sprint instead. A doctor performing a heart surgery may instead bless her charge.

When activating Breakdown, choose a Skill. If successful, the next time the subject attempts to use that Skill, he must instead use a different Skill from the same category (Mental,

Physical, or Social). So, Survival may be replaced with Drive, or Empathy may be replaced with Intimidation, but Academics could not be replaced with Brawl.

Dice Pool: Wits + Medicine – Resolve

Action: Instant

Dramatic Failure: Not only does the effect not take, but the would-be victim also gains a Condition relevant to the Skill she would have switched. Generally, this will be Inspired, Informed, or a similar Condition.

Failure: The Embed has no effect.

Success: The next time the subject attempts the Skill in question, he instead must use a different Skill from the same category. The subject may only be targeted once per scene.

Exceptional Success: As with success, but the subject can be targeted again in the same scene.

FIRE DRILL

Most safety and security alarms are sensitive to small disturbances. A frying pan of bacon in the kitchen can set off the smoke detector in the living room, and sitting on the bumper might set off the car alarm. The idea behind this is that the inconvenience these false positives may cause is outweighed by the risk that the alarm will not function during a real emergency. A demon with this Embed redirects small amounts of matter and energy to generate just enough of a disturbance to set off alarms.

Dice Pool: Wits + Science

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon doesn't set off the intended alarm, but she accidentally starts a fire or creates some other small emergency in her immediate vicinity. The demon or the area gains a Tilt or Condition appropriate to the nature of this complication.

Failure: The demon fails to set off any alarms.

Success: This demon creates a disturbance near an emergency sensor within 100 yards of her position — a few wisps of smoke, a tremor in a vehicle's chassis, a tiny radiation leak, or whatever else she chooses. While this does not present any real threat, it is enough to set off any relevant alarms in the area. Depending on the circumstances this can create chaos ranging from an orderly evacuation to a panicked mob trampling each other to escape. The Perception rolls of anyone who does not yet know it is a false alarm are reduced by the demon's Primum rating, and anyone using the alarm as cover for their movements (such as people disguised as firefighters while a fire alarm is blaring) receive a bonus on the relevant roll (probably Persuasion, Stealth, or Larceny) equal to the player's successes.

Exceptional Success: The demon sets off an alarm as above. In addition, she may choose to set off any number of alarms within range.



FRACTAL REALITY

On a long enough timeline, everything that has happened will happen again. This Embed speeds that timeline and causes infrequent things to recur more quickly than they might otherwise. If the Unchained buys a scratch off lottery ticket, and nets \$1,000, this Embed makes the next ticket another \$1,000 win. That miraculous shot that took out a chandelier and stopped the pursuers? The next one breaks a statue, which falls and damages the floor in the pathway. The drawback is, these things must be possible with the right probability, and their recurrence makes other desired anomalies even less likely to happen again.

Note that it cannot cause something to happen that hasn't; it just causes repeat performances.

Activate this Embed any time a subject achieves exceptional success, or during use of the Lucky Break Embed, or when a success is rolled on a chance die. It can only be used once per turn, and only once per target per scene.

Dice Pool: Wits + Science

Action: Reflexive

Dramatic Failure: The action in question not only fails, but is also considered a dramatic failure.

Failure: Fractal Reality does not bend to the Unchained's desire.

Success: The action is encoded to repeat. The next time any-

one repeats that action in the same scene (as defined by using the same Skill to the same or similar effect), it is automatically considered an exceptional success if it scores even one success. Consider the roll to have five successes, unless it otherwise achieved more. However, past the second occurrence, any uses of that Skill lose the 10-again quality, and the first success rolled is ignored.

Exceptional Success: An exceptional success not only acts as a success, but it breaks the prohibition against additional usage; the demon may use Fractal Reality a second time on the same target in a scene.

PASSWORD ENTROPY

Password entropy is used to measure the strength of a password based on the total number of possible combinations of characters in a password of its length. Most people don't use totally random passwords, though. They modify words or names that they can remember, reuse passwords for several systems or sites, or resort to writing down security information and keeping it in an easy-to-reach place. This Embed takes advantage of the way people choose PINs and passwords to narrow down the possibilities. Presented with a password prompt, the demon types the correct one. It does not provide knowledge of user names, nor does it grant remote access if the victim does not have it for the target account. A demon could use a stolen debit card to withdraw money from the owner's bank account

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using an ATM, for example, but he can't just enter a PIN and withdraw more money than the victim has (or more than the bank's daily limit on cash withdrawals).

Dice Pool: Wits + Computer

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The password the demon types is incorrect, and the demon is locked out of further attempts to guess that password. In addition, if the demon was using this power via an internet connection he risks compromise (apply a +1 modifier).

Failure: The password the demon types is incorrect.

Success: The demon successfully types the correct password and gains access. In addition to the immediate benefits of using the password, the next relevant roll the demon's player makes that capitalizes on this access is a rote action (typically a Computers, Larceny, or Academics roll).

Exceptional Success: The demon gains access as above. In addition, the demon understands the principles the password creator uses to choose passwords. Until the end of the scene, the demon can correctly guess the password for any system created by the same user.

PLAY POSSUM

Destruction is a part of a cycle that leads to renewal. Death is likewise a part of a cycle that leads to rebirth. This philosophical gem has practical applications, allowing the demon to experience physical death whenever she suffers lethal or aggravated damage. The demon's death happens quickly and in a manner consistent with the source of the damage: bleeding out for an injury, for example, or succumbing instantly to a toxin. The demon can turn her senses on or off while in this condition, but all mundane and supernatural attempts to detect the spark of life fail.

Most ordinary mortals panic when they see someone die before their eyes, prompting breaking points. Monsters and those hardened by long exposure to violence rarely expend much additional energy on slain opponents.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Medicine

Action: Reflexive

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon fails to feign death; all damage from the triggering attack inflicts aggravated damage instead of lethal damage. If it would ordinarily inflict aggravated damage, the demon suffers additional aggravated damage equal to her Primum rating.

Failure: The demon doesn't feign death and cannot attempt to use this Embed again until she suffers more lethal or aggravated damage.

Success: The demon's body "dies" for a number of hours equal to her Primum rating, at which time she comes back to

life as an instant action. The demon can end this Embed's effect prematurely as an instant action. This recovery restores any additional harm her body took after her "death," but any damage the demon suffered prior to using this Embed remains, including the injury that triggered it.

Exceptional Success: The demon's body dies as above, but when she recovers she heals either all lethal damage, or aggravated damage equal to her Primum rating.

RIPPLE

The worst case scenario is never an isolated event, it's never a single domino. The worst case means multiple things triggering off one another, causing exponential problems. In an earthquake, often the aftershocks hurt more than the initial shake. With Ripple, the Unchained doesn't affect an initial event, but instead causes probability to shift in favor of a more devastating series of events following. One bad turn reverberates, and another follows suit. Not only does a man fall to the ground when hit with a bat, but the fall causes the floor to collapse, which means further injury.

If successful, the entire scene is affected. Any harm caused will be followed with a relative amount of injury soon thereafter. While this secondary injury isn't necessarily as bad, it can turn a bad situation disastrous. This Embed affects a single target with each use.

All damage caused by Ripple is of the same type initially suffered. If a character suffers bashing damage, Ripple causes additional bashing damage. If it's an aggravated damage source, she suffers aggravated damage from Ripple.

Dice Pool: Wits + Science

Action: Reflexive

Dramatic Failure: The Embed does not take. Instead, its effects reverse against the Unchained. The next time she suffers damage in the scene, on the next turn she suffers half that damage again (rounded down) from a secondary but related source.

Failure: The Embed fails to take hold.

Success: The scene becomes a hotbed for terrible coincidence. One bad turn precedes another. When the character suffers any damage, on the next turn he suffers half that damage, rounded down, from a secondary but related source.

Exceptional Success: Not only does the Embed take hold, but the ripples are forceful and persistent. When the character suffers any damage, on the next turn he suffers half that damage, rounded down. On the following turn, he suffers it halved again. This continues until the damage is reduced to zero.

TRIP

Sometimes, the most subtle breakdowns can be the most devastating. This Embed causes an immediate and momentary exception to a person's balance. Something appears beneath her feet, in her path, or the situation shifts to make balance difficult. Quite simply, the victim falls to the ground. While a trip

is its own benefit, most Unchained use this Embed and follow it with more vicious punishments. Trip can be used on anyone the Unchained could normally reach in a turn with her Speed.

This Embed only works on a single target per turn, and only once per target per scene.

Dice Pool: Wits + Athletics – Dexterity

Action: Reflexive

Dramatic Failure: The demon's effect backfires. She suffers the Knocked Down Tilt (*Demon: The Descent*, p. 332).

Failure: The Embed fails. It cannot be used against the same target again in the same scene.

Success: Success causes the Knocked Down Tilt.

Exceptional Success: The victim is not allowed the normal Dexterity + Athletics roll to resist this Embed. He is subject to the Knocked Down Tilt.

VICTORY AT ANY PRICE

Sometimes failure just isn't an option. A demon with the right knowledge can nudge probability in his favor such that he often snatches victory from the jaws of defeat — at a price that tells on his body. The demon can activate this Embed whenever the player succeeds at or fails on a roll. This Embed cannot salvage a dramatic failure, a compromise roll, or a Stamina check to remain conscious. Use of this Embed to ensure the success of one of the demon's powers (Embed, Exploit, or demonic form ability) risks Cover (apply a +1 bonus).

The Embed increases the number of successes on the target roll by one regardless of the outcome of the player's roll to activate Victory at Any Price. The success or failure of the Embed roll merely determines the price the demon pays for this success. Once the demon's player announces his intention to use Victory at Any Price he must accept the price it exacts on the demon's body.

This Embed has considerable utility, but repeatedly manipulating probability tends to attract God-Machine scrutiny. The character can use this Embed a number of times during a chapter equal to his Primum rating. After that, every use of Victory at Any Price causes a compromise roll.

Dice Pool: Wits + Science

Action: Reflexive

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon salvages the action at the expense of all others he takes after it. The demon suffers one point of aggravated damage in exchange for the one extra success. In addition, all the player's dice pools are reduced to a chance die until the next time he suffers a dramatic failure. Remember that a player can only earn one Beat for a dramatic failure per scene (p. 287 of *Demon*).

Failure: The demon's frantic efforts to prevent disaster do him serious harm. He suffers one point of aggravated damage.

Success: The demon nudges the odds at a small personal price. The demon suffers one point of lethal damage.

Exceptional Success: The price of success is negligible. The demon suffers one point of bashing damage in exchange for the assured additional success.

INSTRUMENTAL CALL OUT

Not all tools are made of metal, wood, or plastic. Some are flesh and blood, wielded by those with money or social influence; this Embed allows the demon to blunt those tools. The demon calls out a target within sight with taunts or challenges. Anyone who works for or reports to the demon's target (bodyguards, witness-protecting cops, soldiers commanded by their sergeant or officer, etc.) loses any willingness to die in the line of duty. This works on any of the target's allies who are defending her out of a sense of duty or in expectation of a reward, but it doesn't affect those who are defending him out of personal loyalty.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Intimidation vs. target's Presence + Supernatural Tolerance

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The target's underlings become fearless defenders of the target. Until the end of the scene or until the target is incapacitated or surrenders, these characters cannot be Beaten Down, will not surrender, and are immune to powers that inspire fear.

Failure: The target and her allies respond to the demon's taunts as dictated by their personalities and moral codes.

Success: The target's allies balk as soon as they suffer a significant injury. An underling who suffers bashing damage in excess of his Stamina or who suffers any lethal damage gains the Beaten Down Tilt (p. 329 of *Demon*), but are more likely to flee than surrender if the option is available.

Exceptional Success: The target's allies put up only the flimsiest of resistance. All the target's underlings immediately gain the Beaten Down Tilt and are likely to flee if possible.

DATA RETRIEVAL

Any hacker will tell you that deleted doesn't mean irretrievable. A reformatted hard drive is no impediment to a skilled data recovery expert, and data storage is now so cheap that virtually all electronic devices store some kind of usage information. A demon with this Embed has access to any data an electronic device has ever stored, however briefly. A cellphone can replay its calls, for example, and a photocopier can reprint a document it copied years ago, but the demon must specify the exact date and time he wants to begin the replay. Finally, this Embed has no effect on a device that is physically nonfunctional — wiped beyond recovery by a powerful magnet, smashed to bits, or merely unplugged.

CHAPTER THREE: RECYCLED MATERIALS

Dice Pool: Wits + Computer

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Embed fails, and all the data on the device becomes irretrievably corrupt, rendering it permanently inoperative.

Failure: The Embed fails and the device does not behave unusually.

Success: The device replays five minutes per dot of the demon's Primum, beginning from the specified time. In addition to any advantages the retrieved information might provide, the demon gains the Informed Condition (see **Demon: The Descent** p. 309) relevant to the data the Embed collected. If used to gather intelligence or blackmail concerning a person, the Informed Condition can be applied to a Social Skill instead of a Mental Skill.

Exceptional Success: The device replays five minutes per dot of the demon's Primum (see above), but the demon is able to retrieve additional useful information. For example, the computer saves a previously deleted file for the demon's perusal, even though the user only looked at one page of it. Or perhaps the phone plays an additional call that interests the demon. This grants the demon an additional use of the Informed Condition before it is resolved.

DATA WIPE

Manipulating the facts can win a war. But sometimes, to win a battle, you just need to get rid of the facts. Data Wipe strips all references to a single fact, a single statement, from existence. This means it leaves the minds of humans, as well as any servers it might rest upon. However, it doesn't remove the context. With a little digging, any inquisitive researcher could stumble upon enough supporting information to re-establish the fact. Once that happens, it fades back into existence like it was never gone. For this reason, outward and obvious facts, like the identity of the United States President, only stays hidden for seconds. Subtler bits of information may stay buried forever.

To use this Embed, the Unchained must have ready access to a digital form of the data in question. Usually, this means accessing the fact via the internet. But it could be through other methods, for example, by touching a television monitor displaying a stock ticker with a rival's most recent gains.

Dice Pool: Wits + Computer

Action: Instant

Dramatic Failure: The data is not only safe, but protected. It cannot be deleted. As well, the demon suffers a glitch where, for a number of days equal to her Primum, anyone that sees her or interacts with her digitally knows the piece of data she wishes to delete.

Failure: The piece of data is not deleted.

Success: The data becomes deleted. Anyone attempting to research the lost information must achieve successes in excess of the demon's Primum to uncover it.

Exceptional Success: As above, but double the demon's Primum for that purpose.

FUNCTIONAL IDENTITY

The old expression says that if you have a hammer, everything looks like a nail. In essence, you'll try to apply the tools in your kit to tackle whatever problems come your way. Sometimes, these tools will work, sometimes they won't. Often, they'll be sub-optimal. This Embed redefines a tool's most basic function. The tool must have been somehow functional for its new purpose, however. For example, a wrench may be repurposed to act like a hammer. One could use a wrench to hammer nails, although not very well. Similarly, a gun could be used as a bludgeoning paperweight, so that would be a valid shift in technical purpose. Once changed, it may be able to do what it used to, but it won't do it as well. Use of this Embed is considered indefinite on a given tool, but the demon can reverse its effects at will.

Dice Pool: Wits + Crafts

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The tool does not take its new intended purpose. However, the next time the demon attempts an action using a similar tool, it's considered a dramatic failure automatically (for which the player gains no Beat).

Failure: The tool does not take its new intended purpose.

Success: Choose the new purpose. It must be something the tool could have accomplished prior. Apply its current dice modifier to the new purpose, instead of the old. So if a hammer that gives +3 to applying nails is shifted to be a musical instrument, it would then cease to give +3 to applying nails, and give +3 to rolls to perform music.

Exceptional Success: As above, but the tool also affords the 9-again quality for the new purpose.

HIGH OF BIRTH

The walk through life isn't predestined, *per se*. But the road is set; deviation is always harder than just walking the path. However, agents of the God-Machine can divert this path, in the way enterprising humans divert the flow of a river. Through this prophecy, the Unchained can take an otherwise mundane life and offer it a destiny of privilege and power.

High of Birth retroactively places this prophecy, twisting and tweaking the time of her gestation. The baby grows up to be wealthy, powerful, gifted, or otherwise exceptional in a way the Unchained determines in the present. In some cases, this incurs the God-Machine's interest and attracts a guardian angel.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Politics

Action: Instant

Dramatic Failure: The subject retroactively becomes a Cover for an angel. This does not end well.

Failure: The prophecy does not take.

Success: History shifts. The (former) child amasses Merit dots equal to the Unchained's Primum plus her successes. The demon chooses the Merits. They can be anything she wants, with Storyteller discretion. This includes Supernatural Merits and Stigmatic Merits (see p. 130). However, at some point in the following week, an angel investigating the shift in reality will visit the target.

Exceptional Success: In addition to having more Merits, the subject remains under the radar.

KNOCK-OFF

From generic drugs to "three-buck Chuck" wine to fake Rolex watches, most popular branded consumer goods spawn countless imitators and cheap knock-offs that offer a lower-quality item at a substantially lower price. A casual glance won't detect the difference between the real thing and the knock-off, so an object could be either until someone takes the time to examine it more carefully. This Embed temporarily transforms a target object the demon is wearing or carrying in a container no larger than a backpack, either increasing or decreasing its quality and value.

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Larceny

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Embed functions, but the effect is the reverse of what the demon intended.

Failure: The demon doesn't pass the object off as one of greater or lesser quality, and he cannot use this Embed on that object again until the scene ends and he changes clothes.

Success: The target object increases or decreases in value and quality until the end of the scene, although its physical shape must remain largely intact. A cheap bottle of wine can become a more expensive bottle of wine, but a box of wine can't become a bottle, for example, and a \$1 bill can become a \$10 bill, but a \$1 bill can't become a quarter. The object's new value cannot be more than ten times (or less than one-tenth) its original value, and this Embed cannot be used twice on the same object in any scene.

If used to increase or decrease the equipment bonus of an object, it provides a +1 bonus (or a -1 penalty) until the end of the scene. This bonus can apply to many kinds of rolls depending on circumstances – Socialize (expensive clothes to fit into high society, cheap clothes to fit in among the destitute), Crafts, Persuasion, and so forth. While the Embed can increase the denomination of dollar bills the demon is carrying, the transformation only lasts until the end of the scene, so it tends only to work once on each mark.

Exceptional Success: The demon successfully alters the target object's value and quality, but the potential fluctuation in value increases. The object's new value can be up to one hun-

dred times (or as little as one percent) of its original value. The maximum change in the equipment bonus is now +3 or -3.

OPEN SESAME

People leave doors unlocked all the time. They forget to lock their cars, don't check to see if the door is ajar, leave the windows to their house open, and generally make any thief's job easy. This Embed manipulates the probability that a lock wasn't properly secured, such that the demon can almost always find a door that opens at her touch.

This Embed works on any physical lock a human could have failed to properly secure, including safes, lockboxes, or handcuffs. Doors with additional security measures might apply a -1 to -3 penalty. Some doors close and lock automatically, for example. Others notify security personnel if they are left ajar too long. As well, this Embed assumes the demon has multiple potential points of entry available. If only one entrance exists (such as a bank vault), the demon's player suffers an additional -1 penalty to the roll.

Dice Pool: Wits + Larceny – applicable penalty (see above)

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: All relevant locks are secure. The demon cannot use this Embed again until the door is opened again.

Failure: The demon doesn't find anything unlocked but can try again on a different point of entry.

Success: The demon discovers an unlocked door, an open window, or some other means of access.

Exceptional Success: The demon finds an unlocked means of access. In addition, security is particularly lax. The demon's player receives a +2 bonus to the next use of this Embed or the next Stealth or Larceny check she makes during the scene in which she makes her unauthorized entry (or the next scene if she uses the Embed at the end of a scene).

Soup Up

Hollywood and car advertisers alike would have us believe cars, trucks, and motorcycles grant their drivers impossible abilities. These are all but exaggerations of their actual capabilities, however, and a demon with the right knowledge can alter a vehicle's qualities to approach those of their cinematic counterparts. The demon must be able to touch or see the vehicle, which must have a Size of 20 or less. A vehicle can only benefit from one use of Soup Up at a time.

Each -1 penalty the demon's player chooses to suffer on the Embed roll increases Durability by 1, Structure by 3, Acceleration by 2, Safe Speed by 16 (10 mph), Maximum Speed by 32 (20 mph), or Handling by 1.

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Drive – modification penalties (see above)

Action: Instant

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Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The vehicle suffers an immediate mechanical failure that applies negative modifiers equal to the number of positive modifiers the demon attempted to grant to the vehicle. The Storyteller chooses these from the modifications above, but reversed – decrease Durability by 1, Structure by 3, and so forth.

Failure: The vehicle does not gain any remarkable capabilities.

Success: The vehicle enjoys the benefits of the Embed until the end of the scene.

Exceptional Success: The Embed enhances the vehicle. The demon may apply additional modifications equal to his Primum rating.

TRIVIA

For a fact that is sufficiently unimportant, truth and falsehood become indeterminate settings. Trivia largely exists in that liminal state – people could fact check it, but why would they? With this Embed, bits of plausible-but-false trivia become functionally true despite the fact that they have no basis in reality. They become wrapped into the demon’s Cover, but still influence the outside world. Memories and perceptions shift to support the minor factoid. Wikipedia articles will instantly bear citations supporting the claim.

Note that this Embed only works to validate trivia. It won’t change basic and important facts about daily life, and it won’t change everyday behaviors. The factoid must also be simple enough to express in a single sentence.

An example statement: “I invented that super-absorbent towel in the infomercials with that irritating guy, you know the one.” That’s not something that affects day-to-day life for most people, or change their everyday behaviors. But they will respond to it, once it’s “proven” with a simple Internet search.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Expression

Action: Instant

Dramatic Failure: Not only does the bit of trivia not take, but everyone knows (rather, assumes) the demon is lying. The player suffers a -3 on Persuasion and Socialize rolls for the rest of the scene.

Failure: The trivia does not take.

Success: The trivia becomes a reality. Memories subtly shift, and the world makes necessary changes to support the difference. Any rolls to investigate the “truth” before the Unchained’s meddling must achieve more successes than the demon’s Cover in order to find the original truth.

Exceptional Success: As above, but double the demon’s Cover for the purpose of resisting scrutiny.

WASTED TIME

In a perfect world, everything and everyone works efficiently and predictably. Deadlines are identical to projections

and expectations are never let down. A progress bar moves steadily across the screen until complete, without hiccupping and halting. In real life variables enter the equation, however, and nothing’s ever ideal. People find excuses to procrastinate, or computers hit unknown code that holds up procedures and processes.

Wasted Time allows the Unchained to introduce these minor variables and hold up progress. Every annoying little thing that could happen, happens. The gun jams. Friends call you up because the old drinking buddy’s in town. The library’s closed for fumigation.

Dice Pool: Wits + Science

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Embed does not take. Additionally, the demon’s next time-sensitive action takes twice as long to accomplish.

Failure: The Embed does not take.

Success: The demon chooses one action and the chosen action takes twice as long. An instant action, for example, takes two turns. If it’s an extended action, each roll takes twice as long per interval. Reflexive actions are treated like instant actions, unless they’re automatic resistances or other unconscious actions.

Exceptional Success: As above, but actions take four times as long.

MUNDANE

ASSOCIATE AND INTEGRATE

When the God-Machine creates a Cover, It wraps the fabric of that Cover into the rest of reality. It creates parents, siblings, friends, enemies, and the memories necessary to make those things “real.” But, as with real family, demons can’t really choose their Covers’ families – that is, not without this Embed.

Associate and Integrate lets the Unchained manipulate the relationships of her Cover. She can turn associates into friends, friends into family, enemies into lovers. Necessary paperwork appears to support the new role. Essentially, she redefines the world around her to accommodate the new details of her desired Cover.

She cannot change another demon’s Cover, but she could shift her Cover to be associated with another demon’s. For example, she cannot change another Cover’s family to match hers, but she could add herself to another Cover’s family. Of course, this is risky business. Demons see right through the ruse and often perceive it as a direct attack against their safety.

Note that relationships are redefined in reference to the Cover. She cannot change two humans’ opinions of each other. She can only change their relationships toward her Cover. This may influence the context, but doesn’t always. Changing

a human to be the character's father, for example, may make her more protective of her Cover.

A single use of this Embed only establishes one such relationship. The relationship may affect multiple people (adding oneself to a family typically does) but is limited to a single, defining factor such as "I'm in the family," "We're best of friends," or "We've hated each other since primary school." The shift is permanent in its genesis but can change with time.

Humans with the Unseen Sense (or, at the Storyteller's discretion, another supernatural Merit or awareness) may resist this change with a Resolve + Composure roll, requiring as many successes as the demon achieved.

Unlike the Force Relationship Exploit, this simply changes the relationship in the immediate. Characters are not forced to continue those relationships, and will make any relevant decisions pertinent to their environments.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Socialize

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Not only does the shift not take, but the demon loses all associations with her Cover for the following day and must check for a compromise. She becomes a lone person in the world: nobody knows her Cover, nobody remembers her.

Failure: The relationship does not take.

Success: The relationship changes. The demon may shift a number of Merit dots equal to her Primum immediately to help support the new parts of her identity.

Exceptional Success: The relationship changes as above. In addition to the above Merit dots, one integral person to her Cover becomes a True Friend (p. 298 of **Demon: The Descent**).

CLOTHES MAKE THE MAN

Con artists know that most people don't see past the clothes a stranger wears. A man dressed as a doctor is a doctor, and a woman wearing an army uniform is a soldier. The right clothes, a bit of make-up, and a few tools of the trade transform an ordinary thief into a convincing stock broker, mechanic, or musician – certainly enough to pass casual inspection. Skilled charlatans realize that anyone who doesn't know the language and practices of their feigned trades usually isn't in a position to call them out. They're perfectly capable of faking it long enough to collect the sucker's money and hoof it for the next town. A demon with this Embed takes this quackery a step further, allowing her to act whatever part she is currently playing by putting on an ordinary disguise.

The demon can activate this Embed whenever she needs access to a Skill or Specialty to support her current disguise. The demon's player must choose the target Skill before she makes the roll. A demon cannot benefit from both Legend and this Embed in the same scene and cannot use this Embed

again if it is already active. A demon who uses The Clothes Make the Man in the view of witnesses must contend with their familiarity with the target Skill to activate this Embed.

Dice Pool: Wits + Persuasion vs. highest Wits + Target Skill among all witnesses

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Not only does the demon fail to gain the Skill, but any witnesses immediately recognize her as a fraud and react accordingly.

Failure: The demon fails to activate the Embed, but witnesses don't necessarily realize she is an imposter.

Success: The demon's player chooses one: either the demon's rating in the target Skill becomes three (regardless of its original rating) and she gains one Specialty of the player's choice, or the demon gains three Specialties in the target Skill and her rating in the target Skill is increased by 1 (maximum 5). Regardless, the effect lasts until the end of the scene or until the demon uses the Embed again – whichever comes first. The demon also gains the Impostor Condition (p. 119 of **Demon**), affecting her use of both Legend and The Clothes Make the Man until it is resolved.

Exceptional Success: The demon's rating in the target Skill becomes five and she gains three Specialties in it until the end of the scene. The demon does not gain the Impostor Condition.

DEEP COVER

Like demons and angels, many supernatural beings hide behind a mask of mortality. They're just not as good at it. This Embed operates under the principle that such creatures have two identities – one with a detectable occult connection and one without – and temporarily applies that duality to the demon's Cover. Whenever the demon would have the option of using Spoof (p. 112 of **Demon**), she may instead use this Embed. Rather than appearing as an ordinary human when targeted by an effect meant to reveal her nature, the demon appears to be a supernatural being. The demon may choose to appear as either the same type of supernatural being as the one examining her (ideal for infiltration) or some creature of occult origin that the observer has not encountered before (useful for intriguing or intimidating the target).

The demon doesn't necessarily know how an observer perceives her, but each supernatural type's scrutiny carries a flavor specific to that supernatural type. Once the demon experiences the gaze of a particular supernatural type, she can recognize it when she falls under the scrutiny of others with the same origin. This is the case even if the exact method of scrutiny is different – such as two spells that determine a creature's occult origin but by different methods. If the outcast used Deep Cover successfully to foil a vampire's scrutiny a year ago, she will always recognize when a vampire is using its blood powers to examine her.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Occult

Action: Reflexive

CHAPTER THREE: RECYCLED MATERIALS

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Not only does the demon fail to spoof the effect, the observer becomes aware that she is an imposter – a supernatural being posing as a different kind of supernatural being. Furthermore, the observer sees in the demon’s aura his worst fears and prejudices confirmed – a witch if he fears witches are infiltrating the government, for example, or a werewolf if one murdered his parents and he wants revenge. This automatically changes the observer’s impression of the demon to Hostile (p. 315 of **Demon**) Additional scrutiny of the demon this scene only supports the observer’s original conclusions.

Failure: The effect functions normally.

Success: The effect is spoofed. It registers the demon as a supernatural being of the chosen type. Further readings by the same effect during the same scene continue to read the demon as a being of that type.

Exceptional Success: As above, but the demon can choose to appear as any supernatural being she has ever successfully spoofed with this Embed.

GOING NATIVE

Demons exist in a quantum state, encompassing their demonic form and all their Covers both independently and simultaneously. The demon chooses which Cover to present to the world, but ultimately, she remains all those things at once. This Embed decouples the parts temporarily, making the Unchained exist wholly as one of her Covers alone; her other parts fade into nonexistence during that time.

What does this do for the demon? It lets her be truly human for a moment and allows her to more completely appreciate humanity. Some Unchained use the chance to exist apart from their pasts, where they can go without scrutiny for a brief moment. Some use this Embed to confront or sneak past an angel without fear of compromise. Some demons have used this brief opportunity to conceive mundane, human children without the baggage of their true natures. Going Native helps her hide her true nature from those with the skills to dig deeper.

This dissociation comes at a price. After the initial period (the current scene), when the multiple natures reconfigure, it causes risk of compromise as the God-Machine notices the quantum ripples.

Dice Pool: Wits + Socialize

Action: Instant

Dramatic Failure: The demon’s natures ripple hard. The effect takes, and the demon becomes effectively human. However, the demon immediately must check for compromise at -2.

Failure: The effect does not take.

Success: The demon effectively becomes human for the scene. She loses access to her true form and her Aether. She temporarily loses access to Embeds and Exploits. She can be

caught up in lies. She can only access languages her Cover should be able to speak. She’s completely indiscernible as an Unchained, however. Pursuing agents of the God Machine cannot identify her as anything but a naturally occurring part of the world.

Exceptional Success: As above, but the demon maintains her linguistic abilities and can access Legend during the effect.

LIKE THE MOVIES

Real world events seldom unfold the way movies do. Fiction follows narrative rules to maximize tension and minimize the boring parts. It expects the audience to accept coincidences and improbable events as foreshadowing or simply a part of telling a story. As any Psychopomp can tell you, though, sometimes reality imitates fiction to an alarming degree – not because fiction changes reality, but because the world is large and complex enough that the illusion of narrative will sometimes emerge spontaneously. A demon with this Embed is attuned to those moments in life when events can take just such a twist. An old friend he hasn’t seen in years suddenly turns up working in the very building the demon needs to infiltrate, or he comes home after a fruitless day of research at the library and realizes the exact book he needed was sitting on his bookshelf the whole time.

The demon can’t force events to happen at will. This Embed can only be used after the demon’s player fails or scores an exceptional success on another roll (the target roll). It cannot prevent a dramatic failure. The God-Machine and Its agents tend to take note of someone whose life seems to play out like a movie, as it almost always indicates the work of one of the Unchained. The character can use this Embed a number of times during a chapter equal to his Primum rating. After that, every use of Like the Movies causes a compromise roll.

Dice Pool: Wits + Academics

Action: Reflexive

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon correctly identifies a moment that will unfold like the events of a movie, but it turns out to be one where everything goes horribly wrong for the hero. Not only does the original action fail, but an unexpected narrative complication also arises. The demon’s player can suggest the nature of this twist, but the Storyteller makes the final determination. For example, the demon’s player fails the Athletics check for his character to leap the gap between roofs instead of falling. He uses this Embed to prevent the failure but scores a dramatic failure. Not only does the demon fall and suffer a significant injury, but a thug robs him at gunpoint as he limps out of the alley.

Failure: The turn of events is not a moment the demon can use to his advantage.

Success: The demon identifies a moment he can turn to his advantage. If the target roll was a failure, the demon’s player instead scores a single success on it. However, this suc-

cess comes with an unexpected narrative complication. The demon's player may suggest the nature of this twist, but the Storyteller may choose to introduce one of her own. Use of this Embed to ensure the success of one of the demon's powers (Embed, Exploit, or demon form Ability) tends to result in larger and more problematic complications.

For example, the demon might successfully leap the gap between roofs instead of falling, but his wallet falls out of his pocket. Someone picks it up and finds something that will cause trouble for the demon later. Or he might set off the building's fire alarm using Fire Drill (p.94) when the Embed might otherwise fail, but it's because the building is actually on fire; he'll have to brave the flames to steal the file before it goes up in smoke. Note that the Embed doesn't cause the fire. It simply identifies a coincidental fire that achieves the same net result as the Embed – a blaring fire alarm. The fire does not inconvenience the owner or occupants in the building more than Fire Drill would. It simply makes it a little harder for the demon to achieve what he hoped the Embed would allow him to accomplish (creating a distraction so he can steal a file).

If the target roll was an exceptional success, the demon's player instead scores a single success on it. However, the demon benefits from a significant narrative twist. The demon's player may suggest the specific nature of this stroke of good luck, but the Storyteller makes the final determination.

For example, the demon's bullet only grazes one of his many opponents, but something else spooks them and they flee the scene instead of finishing him off. Or the demon uses Ellipses (p. 133 of *Demon: The Descent*) to distract a security guard watching TV, but as he walks by he catches several seconds of a news story that reveals important information he did not yet know about the CEO his ring has been investigating as a possible Deva Corporation front man.

Exceptional Success: The narrative effects are the same as for a success, but the target roll is also treated as an exceptional success with a number of successes equal to those the player rolled for Like the Movies.

MISTAKEN IDENTITY

Most people have been mistaken for someone else at one time or another. Fingerprints and even DNA tests can be inconclusive or give false positives. This Embed causes two targets the demon has met in the last month (one of whom may be the demon) to be mistaken for each other even if they don't physically resemble one another. This even fools supernatural senses. While people familiar with both targets might notice the remarkable similarities between the two, those who only know one or the other will treat either target as the one with whom they are acquainted.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Persuasion – highest Composure of targets

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: For a number of hours equal to her Primum rating, the demon is mistaken for both targets but only when it inconveniences her.

Failure: The Embed fails.

Success: The targets are mistaken for each other for one hour per point of the demon's Primum rating. The target might be able to convince someone who knows her well of her identity with a successful Presence + Persuasion roll, with a penalty equal to the demon's successes.

Exceptional Success: The mistaken identity only works one way, such that target #1 is mistaken for target #2 but never the other way around, or the case of mistaken identity always works in the demon's favor, such that it only inconveniences an enemy target while always aiding a friendly target, or the effect instead lasts for a number of days equal to the demon's Primum rating.

PERSISTENT LEGEND

When demons need to fill the gaps in functionality that their Covers need for mundane life but didn't receive as part of the God-Machine's initial project specs, they create a Legend. This gets them by for the present time, but doesn't fit long-term needs. That's where Persistent Legend comes in.

Persistent Legend encodes the demon's Cover with whatever Skills and Merits she needs, just like Legend, except they don't fade over time. They stick with her until she releases the Embed, learns the relevant traits, or swaps them out for a new Legend.

Engage the Legend as usual, using a Cover roll and a point of Aether. Then, activate this Embed to "seal" the Legend into place. A demon may still only have a single Legend in play at a time, but the Legend does not fade until the demon wills it.

Dice Pool: Wits + Academics

Action: Instant

Dramatic Failure: Not only does the Legend not take, it fails (the demon loses the temporary dots), and gains the Flagged Condition (see *Demon: The Descent*, p. 120).

Failure: The Legend does not become indefinite.

Success: Once active, the Legend does not fade at the end of the scene. This does not mitigate the Impostor Condition (see *Demon: The Descent*, p. 119).

Exceptional Success: As above, but the demon also gains the Informed Condition (see *Demon: The Descent*, p. 309) in regards to her Legend.

THE VOTING DEAD

A popular scam in democratic communities involves registering the dead to vote in order to swing elections. This Embed takes that principle and runs with it. As long as the demon knows a dead individual and has enough data to identify him, she can wrap that identity into her Cover and assume it,

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albeit temporarily. To everyone around her, her name changes and so does all her identification. What doesn't change, however, is her relationships to human beings. She remains the same person, in the same context, but that Cover ceases to exist while the Embed is in effect.

For example, a demon currently exists as Sally. Through a bit of research, she finds some identification for Rita and activates The Voting Dead. She becomes Rita. Sally's family members call her Rita. Anyone investigating Sally comes up short.

This Embed lasts for a full week. The demon may reactivate it once it expires, but each additional activation using the same replacement identity suffers a cumulative -1.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Politics

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The identity *does* take, however, the new identity raises flags with national security organizations. Take the Notoriety Condition (see p. 310 of *Demon: The Descent*).

Failure: The identity does not take.

Success: The identity is in place. Any investigations against the old identity automatically fail. The demon's new identity gains a number of relevant Social Merits equal to her Primum to support the identity.

Exceptional Success: As above, but further activations on the same identity do not impose the normal cumulative -1 penalty. The identity is "clean" to the God-Machine's interests.

WAVE FUNCTION COLLAPSE

In quantum mechanics, the wave function collapse is the phenomenon in which a particle that exists in all property configurations possible for it is reduced to a single position by the process of observation. Demons are macroscopic beings that exist in a quantum state. They are at once their demon forms and humans, and they occupy all their Covers simultaneously to a lesser or greater degree depending on their desires. This Embed allows a demon to reduce another demon's physical configuration options. It can lock an enemy demon in her current Cover or prevent her from taking or returning from her demon form. It also functions on other supernatural beings with dual natures or alternate physical shapes, including angels that can temporarily shed their disguises. The demon must touch the target to use this Embed (making a successful touch attack if using it in combat).

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Brawl vs. Stamina + Supernatural Tolerance

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon changes her own quantum state. If she is currently in Cover, she immediately takes her

demon form. If she is in demon form, she must immediately revert to one of her Covers, if possible. If she can't change forms (whether from insufficient Aether or being one of the Burned), she suffers a compromise (apply a +1 modifier).

Failure: The demon fails to collapse the target's wave function.

Success: The Embed works as intended with three possible results, chosen by the demon's player:

- If the target is in her demon form (or the non-human form of another supernatural being), she cannot return to her human form for a number of hours equal to the demon's Primum.
- If the target is in her human form, she cannot take her demon form (or battle form) for a number of turns equal to the attacking demon's Primum.
- If the target is a demon concealed by her Cover, she cannot take another Cover or use a power like Alibi (p. 139 of *Demon: The Descent*) that allows her to separate herself from that Cover, although she can still adopt her demon form normally (unless another use of this Embed cuts off that option). This lasts for three hours per success the attacking demon's player rolled for this Embed.

Exceptional Success: The Embed functions (see above) but with a greater duration. It locks the target into her demon/non-human form for eight hours, prevents the target from entering demon/non-human form for one hour, or locks a demon into a single Cover for 24 hours.

YOU CAN TELL ME

By nature of their quantum existences, demons cannot lie. Or rather, they cannot be perceived as lying, as they determine the truth of their statements. This Embed reverses the principle and applies it to others. With You Can Tell Me, nobody can lie to the demon. They can attempt to, but what comes out, be it in speech or in text, is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. The demon simply believes the subject is being honest, and the subject complies.

This Embed does not work against another Unchained, but it works on anything else otherwise capable of lying.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Empathy - Composure

Action: Reflexive

Dramatic Failure: The effect does not take and the demon suffers a -5 on any efforts to detect the subject's honesty for the scene, since she believes the Embed worked.

Failure: The subject is free to lie or be honest as he sees fit.

Success: If successful, the subject must speak the truth for the remainder of the scene. It can be activated reflexively as the subject speaks. The subject halts his speech mid-sentence if necessary and begins speaking the truth as well as he understands it.

Exceptional Success: The effect lasts for a full day.

VOCAL

IMAGINE

Humans cannot normally see the God-Machine, Infrastructure, or occult matrices, but they do see their effects. They see the ramifications of the Machine's influence on the world even if they can't identify what's actually happening.

This Embed gives the subject a moment of clarity. She doesn't see the Machine for what It is. What she receives is a picture of the world without the Machine. She sees humanity pure and unadulterated, able to make all its own decisions without its eldritch gears grinding in the background. Most importantly, she sees hope for something better.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Persuasion

Action: Instant

ROLL RESULTS

Dramatic Failure: The vision does not occur. Indeed, the subject's perceptions strengthen. She gains the Connected Condition (see p. 309 of *Demon: The Descent*) relating to agents of the Machine.

Failure: The vision does not occur.

Success: The subject sees a world without the God-Machine's influence. She sees events in her lives and those around her, as if the Machine were not involved. She sees the moments where It hampers her loved ones. She sees the times It exploits the downtrodden. She gains a Condition from the revelation, usually Inspired or something similar. In most cases, this motivates the subject to take action in whatever ways she finds possible. This is a life-changing event, and probably changes a neutral actor into an agent against the God-Machine.

Exceptional Success: As above, but change the subject's Virtue to reflect the shift.

THE LOOK

A talented person can give a glare so intense, it freezes the victim in place momentarily. Some martial arts claim to teach these techniques to cause a moment's stutter, while the warrior moves in for the kill. More likely, the target simply recognizes a trained warrior and feels afraid; whatever the case, this Embed takes that reaction and extends it indefinitely.

As long as the demon stares into the subject's eyes, the subject cannot move, cannot react, cannot breathe. His body slowly shuts down, and eventually falls unconscious from deprivation. Any sort of outside harm ends the effect, but otherwise, this look can kill. If the subject dies, all evidence points to heart failure or suffocation as the cause of death.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Intimidation - Stamina

Action: Instant

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Dramatic Failure: The stare does not take. Additionally, the human is aware of the existential threat and the demon briefly stutters, losing her next turn.

Failure: The stare falls flat.

Success: The subject is held steady. After a number of turns equal to his Stamina, the loss of autonomic functions causes harm. Each turn, the subject takes a level of bashing damage per dot of the Unchained's Primum. Eventually, this wraps into lethal damage. The effect ends when the demon withdraws it, when the human suffers outside harm, or when the human falls unconscious (and thus cannot maintain the stare).

Exceptional Success: As above, but the damage starts immediately.

LOOSE LIPS

Some human rituals naturally lead to conversation — sharing a drink, playing cards, having a meal, and even post-coital pillow talk. Human spies have exploited this vulnerability for centuries, using a seemingly innocent interaction to draw confidential information out of the enemy. Anyone who receives an offer of a drink from a demon is wise to hesitate, for Demons with this Embed can wring an informant dry and leave him sleeping late with only hazy memories of the conversation he had the night before. The Embed's target must be someone who has accepted an invitation from the demon to share some form of entertainment that allows them to converse. It is possible to transition from one such entertainment to another without ending this Embed (eating a meal and then inviting the target to share a cocktail at the demon's apartment, for example), but the demon must be the one suggesting each change of venue or activity. This Embed cannot make a demon tell the truth, but the sleep effect at its termination still functions.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Socialize - Stamina

Action: Instant

Dramatic Failure: Instead of squeezing information out of the target, the demon spends the interaction talking about himself. He cannot resist answering any question the target puts to him, although he stays "in-Cover" and can lie about anything that would undermine his Cover. This is still a compromise (apply a +1 modifier).

Failure: The target doesn't open up to the demon, although he can try again if the target accepts another invitation.

Success: The target becomes increasingly open to speaking of matters better kept secret so long as he is either alone with the demon or everyone else present is also under the Embed's effects. As long as they continue to engage in the agreed upon activity and are not interrupted for more than a minute at a time, the Embed removes one of the target's Doors per hour of conversation (to a maximum of the demon's Primum + the number of successes his player accrued on the Embed roll). This only eliminates the target's inhibitions about sharing information with the demon. Moreover, shortly after the inter-

action ends the target falls asleep and wakes with only a hazy memory of events.

If the victim discovers the demon has duped her or betrayed her trust, treat the Embed as a successful use of Hard Leverage, meaning the target has two additional Doors during the demon's next interaction with her (p. 316 of *Demon: The Descent*). If the demon successfully conceals any misuse of the information he squeezed out of the target, treat this as a successful interaction, subtracting one Door on the demon's next interaction with the victim (p. 317 of *Demon*).

Exceptional Success: The Embed succeeds (see above). In addition, improve the target's impression of the demon by one on the chart (p. 315 of *Demon*). This effect applies even if the victim believes the demon betrayed her trust (although the demon must open two additional Doors on his next interaction with the target).

Alternately, the Embed succeeds, but the target wakes with no memory of her interaction with the demon. Unless she had seen him before, she won't even recognize him if they meet again. Depending on the circumstances, this might be a breaking point for the victim.

THE ONLY WORD THAT MATTERS

People are often accused of only hearing what they want to hear. This Embed causes a person to only say what the demon wants them to say. She delivers a message to the target through a whisper, an email, or any other medium that the target can understand. This won't, for example, force a target to speak in a language they cannot comprehend. She has to understand the message she's conveying. From that point forward, the target only communicates the desired message, no matter what she tries to say, type, or otherwise put across. The person is completely unaware of the mixed messages at the time; she believes she's communicating as intended.

For example, she may repeat, "Run away from me. I have a gun. Run away from me. I have a gun." But to her, she thinks she's asking to withdraw money from the bank.

The Only Word that Matters can be used generally, forcing every communication for a set period to become something else. Alternatively, the Unchained can encode criteria into its use, giving it a series of triggers. The target communicates as normal until those conditions are met, at which time the Embed ends. The conditions can be highly specific ("when you next email Ned Jones") or generic ("whenever you see a police officer, say this"). This use makes it indefinite until triggered.

The statement can be no more than a turn's speech, or approximately 250 words of text (this paragraph, for reference, contains 58 words). When the target speaks, she'll only say an equivalent amount to her original intent. For example, if she only wished to speak a sentence, she'll only say the first sentence of what she was urged.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Expression - Composure

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Not only does the Embed not take, but the Unchained gains the Glib Condition. This makes her communicate the desired message at an inopportune time. Until she disadvantages herself with the message, she stutters bits and pieces of the message in everything she says, giving a -2 to Social rolls involving verbal communication.

Failure: The message fails to take. The Unchained remains unaware of the Embed's failure unless she tests it.

Success: The message takes. It lasts a number of hours equal to the demon's Primum if used generally. Otherwise, it lasts until the stated criteria are met.

Exceptional Success: As above, and the demon can adjust a message on the fly. If the message is triggered, she can change the message at any point until the trigger condition is met. If she uses the Embed generally, she can alter the message through the course of its effect.

REMOTE LINK-UP

Secure communications are a critical component of any operation where success depends on secrecy. Electronic transmissions can be intercepted and traced. Hardware can be damaged or confiscated. A demon with this Embed realizes that the hardware is merely a prop and electronic transmissions are only one of many possible channels of communication. She needs neither to remain in contact with her allies. Their eyes are her cameras and their ears her microphones.

Dice Pool: Wits + Socialize

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon inadvertently chooses a channel that is currently in use by the God-Machine or Its angels. The connection does not last long. Even if the demon doesn't break the link on her end, the angels terminate it as soon as they detect it. This constitutes a compromise (apply a +1 modifier).

Failure: The link fails.

Success: The demon creates a sensory link between herself and a number of targets she is currently touching (no more than twice her Primum rating). For a number of hours equal to the successes the demon's player accrued on the Embed roll, the demon and all her targets can use each other's senses instead of their own. Targets can end the link prematurely as a reflexive action, but if the demon loses consciousness or disconnects the Embed's effect ends immediately.

Exceptional Success: The link succeeds as above, plus it lasts two hours per success on the Embed roll. Additionally, the demon can manipulate the flow of information – rendering communications one-way for some targets, cutting a target's feed without ending the Embed, or adding new targets to the link-up with a touch (although the total number of targets can't exceed twice the demon's Primum rating).

RHETORIC

In many arguments, the easiest way to come out on top is to trick an opponent into validating and promoting one's point without knowing it. Many rhetorical techniques could get you to that point, but this Embed forces it rapidly. The other person in the debate spouts off his best possible argument for the demon's point, supporting it. He may fluster afterwards, backtracking and redoubling, but the damage is already done. In hearing himself say the words, he becomes sympathetic to the Unchained.

Dice Pool: Wits + Subterfuge

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Embed fails and the debate partner enjoys a renewed vigor in the discussion. He achieves exceptional success on three successes instead of five on Social rolls made during the debate.

Failure: The Embed fails to work.

Success: The subject supports the demon's point in the debate, if only momentarily. His support causes a brief shock of sympathy, and thus the subject suffers the demon's Primum as a penalty on all Social actions against the demon for the rest of the scene. This includes any contested rolls to hold off the demon's Social actions. As well, remove a Door from the target if using the Social Maneuvering rules (see **Demon: the Descent**, p. 315).

Exceptional Success: As above, but the subject also ignores the first success he rolls on all Social actions against the demon.

SOCIAL ENGINEERING

Social engineering is the psychological manipulation of people into performing actions or divulging confidential information. It relies on flaws in human decision-making, known as cognitive biases, that make people vulnerable to messages delivered under the right circumstances. A demon with this Embed can cook up such a convincing pretext for asking a question that people forget to follow basic authentication procedures and give away information they shouldn't. This Embed works over the phone or internet just as it does in person, although that carries risks. This deception rarely lasts long. Eventually the victim realizes he has said too much and stops talking.

The demon can collect pieces of useful information equal to (player's successes on the Embed roll - target's Composure) before the target grows suspicious, minimum 1 (presuming the Embed roll succeeds). If the demon attempts to get more information, the target recognizes his mistake and responds accordingly. If the demon contacted the target via phone or internet, he also risks compromise (apply a +1 bonus).

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Persuasion

Action: Instant and contested

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Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The target immediately recognizes the social engineering attempt and responds accordingly. He may simply hang up the phone, change a few passwords, and alert his superiors, but he might instead string the demon along and feed him misinformation.

Failure: The target doesn't fall for the trick and doesn't reveal anything he shouldn't, but he doesn't yet suspect he is being manipulated.

Success: The target buys the demon's pretext and gives away one or more pieces of information. In addition whatever value the intelligence might otherwise have, each piece of information allows the demon to add a +1 bonus to a later Computers, Investigation, or Persuasion roll that capitalizes on the gathered intelligence.

Exceptional Success: The Embed succeeds (see above), and the demon can also convince the target to answer one question or to take a single action that constitutes a serious security violation. In addition to any narrative effect, so long as the victim doesn't become suspicious of the demon (i.e., the demon doesn't ask more questions than he accrued successes), the demon gains the Informed Condition for the next Computers, Investigation, or Persuasion roll that exploits that information.

STRENGTH THROUGH ADVERSITY

Humans are not always ready to receive the God-Machine's messages. Sometimes an angel must break the recipient completely so he can be rebuilt as a stronger and more willing vessel for the message. Demons with this Embed may wield it as a curse on their enemies, a test of their servants' loyalty, or a means of securing a signature on a Pact. The demon must whisper in the target's ear from no more than a foot away, although he need not touch her. At first, nothing happens; the next time the victim sleeps, however, she wakes to a new hardship (chosen by the Storyteller). It could be the illness of a loved one, the loss of a job, or something as immediately personal as blindness or madness. This is primarily a story effect but may impact the target's Merits or impose Conditions at the Storyteller's discretion. Strength Through Adversity does not work on any character with a Supernatural Tolerance trait.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Intimidation - Resolve

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon suffers the effects of this Embed, instead (see below).

Failure: The demon's whisper does not change the target's fortunes.

Success: The target suffers a terrible hardship on the day after the demon uses the Embed, and nothing he does can restore what he lost. After this first hardship, the target suffers a new significant setback on each of the following days — until the target

has suffered a number of troubles equal $1 + \text{the demon's Primum rating}$, at which point the Embed ends. When the target wakes the next day, he finds his fortunes restored to what they were. In some cases, he may actually come out ahead due to Beats earned from the Conditions under which he labored. The demon can end this Embed's effects at any time as an instant action, but the victim's fortunes are not restored until the following day.

Example: A demon with Primum 2 uses this Embed to convince a drug lord to stay out of her territory. She whispers her final warning into his ear, but nothing happens right away. The next day (day #1), the drug dealer finds out that his mother has an inoperable brain tumor and has only a few weeks to live. The following day (day #2), he falls down a flight of stairs and breaks his back. The doctors tell him he will never walk again (the Disabled Condition). The next day (day #3 – the maximum for a demon with Primum 2), the police raid his house and arrest him. That afternoon, the demon visits the drug lord in prison and secures his frantic promise that he will not send any other goons into her territory. When he wakes the next morning (day #4), he finds his legs work again. The police let him go because there isn't enough evidence for a conviction. His mother's doctors reveal that what they thought was a tumor was a flaw in the x-ray. Had he gone to the demon on day #1 to beg for his mother's life, the demon could have ended the Embed, in which case he never would have fallen down the stairs or been arrested. Moreover, his mother's false diagnosis would have come to light the next day (day #2) instead of on day #4.

Exceptional Success: The target suffers terrible hardships. In addition, the Embed lasts for up to four additional days, and the demon's player may determine the hardships the target suffers (subject to the approval of the Storyteller).

SUM OF ALL FEARS

Some demons induce people to sign pacts by offering them their heart's desire. Not all mortals are so easily tempted, however. Some respond more to what they might lose or how they will suffer. This Embed reveals the target's greatest fears.

Dice Pool: Wits + Empathy - Composure

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon's presence makes the target profoundly uncomfortable, and he breaks off the interaction as soon as possible. The target is immune to further efforts at Social maneuvering by the demon this scene and responds to her during future interactions as if she had used Hard Leverag (p. 314 of *Demon: The Descent*).

Failure: No effect; the demon doesn't have any special insight into what the target fears. The demon can try again (apply a cumulative -1 modifier for each successive attempt against the same target).

Success: The demon knows one of the target's fears for every dot of Primum the demon possesses. If the target has breaking points, loved ones, derangements, or Conditions (such as Addicted) that the demon can reasonably use or in-

voke to frighten him, the Embed reveals these first. A demon who knows the target is claustrophobic could manufacture a situation that would place him in a confine space, for example, while one who knows the target is afraid of being the victim of a violent crime can use that as a lever against him. It then reveals Aspirations that can be frustrated or rendered impossible. The demon learns long-term Aspirations before short-term ones. The demon can then manipulate the victim's fear triggers or threaten her Aspirations to apply Hard Leverage or arrange for someone else to do so and then sweep in to save the day as Soft Leverage (p. 315 of **Demon**).

Exceptional Success: The demon learns all the target's fear triggers and one Aspiration *or* all her Aspirations.

Vox

Demons have a great deal of control over their voices. Their voices don't quaver in fear or become strident out of anger, and of course a demon speaks all terrestrial languages. But a demon with this Embed exerts even greater control over his vocal apparatus. He can alter pitch, timber, quality, and tone, perfectly impersonate another person, or even impersonate multiple people speaking at once.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Expression

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon badly scrambles her own voice. She is unable to communicate vocally for the rest of the scene. Any attempt to do so produces only unpleasant, loud, squawky gibberish.

Failure: The demon fails to alter her voice.

Success: The demon is able to change her voice to perfectly imitate any voice she has heard, or otherwise alter her voice in any way she sees fit. She cannot produce sounds louder than 100 dB (about as loud as a motorcycle; still louder than most human beings can normally manage). She can produce a sound similar to multiple people talking at once, so as to fool a listener into thinking she isn't alone. In addition to any creative uses for this power the player comes up with, the Storyteller should allow the player to add the character's Primum to relevant Social rolls.

Exceptional Success: In addition to the above effects, the demon can shatter glass, even glass as thick and normally shatter resistant as car window glass by singing a sustained note. Doing this more than once in a scene constitutes a compromise (+1 to the roll).

EXPLOITS

Every tool has an intended function, but virtually all can be employed to achieve something else entirely. Household chemicals can be mixed to create explosives. Life-saving medicines can be transformed into street drugs or deadly poisons. Just about anything small enough to lift can be wielded as an improvised weapon. An Exploit is a distortion of an Embed's intentions, a misuse or abuse of its principles. The result can be a raw and simple improvisations (the metaphysical equivalent of braining someone with a wrench or pipe) or carefully crafted and complex, if unexpected, applications of an Embed's underlying principles on par with the genius of gifted human inventors.

LEARNING EXPLOITS

Although some demons develop Exploits after careful thought, others find the knowledge comes in a flash of inspiration at a critical moment. Each relies on the outcast's familiarity with a relevant Embed, but beyond that they are remarkably easy to figure out. Storytellers who wish to emphasize that demons often learn Exploits by improvising with Embeds in the heat of the moment might allow players to purchase new Exploits with Experiences during a scene instead of between chapters. This is especially appropriate if the outcast's player has already earned a Beat during the scene or the demon is otherwise in a desperate situation his current roster of Embeds and Exploits cannot get him out of.

NEW EXPLOITS

Over the centuries demons have discovered hundreds of ways of bending Embeds and Aether into the potent make-shift tools. They take capabilities that might otherwise be subtle and use them as blunt instruments. Below are sixteen new Exploits.

BREAK THE DAM

Water possesses powerful capabilities to destroy. It acts as a catalyst for countless other chemical reactions, reshapes and erases landscapes through the power of erosion, and feeds the growth of plants whose roots crack foundations and give water more places to seep into. The same water that makes life on Earth possible will one day demolish everything human civilization has built and erase all traces of the species. And yet water and other liquids have countless practical applications — from plumbing to hydraulics to cooling systems. The key, of course, is to take advantage of the fluid dynamics of these liquids while keeping them contained and controlled. Even so, something as simple as a cold night or a tiny hole in a rubber hose can transform these systems into localized natural disasters. A demon with this Exploit calls out to tamed liquids and frees them from their constraints. It can target a container the demon can see as well as those whose presence he can reasonably determine (the pipes in a bathroom, for example), so long as they are within 100 feet.

Example Prerequisites: Fire Drill, Shatter
Dice Pool: Presence + Science + Primum
Action: Instant
Cost: 1 Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon suffers internal bleeding as his own blood vessels and organs break open. This inflicts lethal damage equal to the demon's Primum rating.

Failure: No containers filled with liquids rupture.

Success: The demon causes a pipe to burst, an aquarium to shatter, a vat to crack and spill, or any other container filled with liquid to rupture in a dramatic fashion. This usually creates environmental Tilts (such as Flooded, Heavy Rain, or Ice), but other story effects may apply at the Storyteller's discretion.

If directed at a living target, subtract the victim's Stamina from the demon player's dice pool. The Embed causes blood vessels to burst, inflicting lethal damage equal to the number of successes (this damage is not mitigated by armor).

Exceptional Success: The demon can cause ruptures as described above in any number of targets he designates so long as they are within 100 feet.

CONTEXT MATTERS

Usually, when a demon unleashes her true form, the universe takes notice. People panic. The God-Machine feels the revelation. Human panic, however, is mostly founded on the understanding that *demons aren't real*. That understanding is founded on context. Context matters.

Context Matters is something of a “reverse Exploit.” The Unchained must convince five or more humans that, when she reveals her demonic form it’s a perfectly natural occurrence. She could do this through many methods. She could explain what

she is at length, and make them understand her plight. This, of course, could cause compromise over the course of the conversion. She could also explain that she's part of a heavy metal band, and that smoke, mirror, and prosthetics cause her horrific visage.

The process of convincing the mortals is reflected in the dice roll. The demon can use Context Matters as an instant or extended action. If she uses it as an instant action, the ruse only lasts for a single scene. Humans affected continue to believe the ruse until otherwise convinced if she uses the Exploit as an extended action.

Once affected, the targets act as anchors of sorts. If the demon unleashes her true form and at least five of the affected humans witness the shift, she's less prone to compromise. The God-Machine might still notice her, but the strength of the humans' consensus acts as "white noise" to the God-Machine's senses. Instead of the normal roll at -2 (see **Demon: The Descent**, p. 115), the compromise roll is made at +2. Additionally, the targets perceive most anything the demon does in her true form as part of the given narrative.

The extended version of the Exploit requires one success per affected mortal. The roll is made after each scene of casual conversation and enforcement of the story.

Example Prerequisites: Going Native, Interference

Dice Pool: Presence + Persuasion + Primum

Action: Instant or extended

Cost: 2 Aether for instant, 5 for extended

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon is unaware her Exploit did not take. When she reveals her true form to the mortals, her compromise roll is considered to be a dramatic failure.

Failure: The story doesn't take. The mortals are unwilling to believe the demon.

Success: The mortals believe the demon. Her compromise rolls are made at +2 instead of -2. She achieves exceptional success on three successes instead of five on compromise rolls. Gaining this bonus requires that the affected humans are witness to the demon's actions when the compromises take place, however.

Exceptional Success: As above, but a single success counts as an exceptional success on compromise rolls. This would technically mean that the player gains a Beat every time he rolls a success on a compromise roll. If the Storyteller feels this is excessive, she might consider limiting the player to one Beat per scene. In any case, too many compromises in a short span of time probably incurs a negative modifier, which would offset the effect of this Exploit in short order.

DEMON CAR

Vehicle enthusiasts sometimes talk about how a car becomes an extension of the driver. Man and machine are one organism, acting on and responding to one another. This Exploit allows the demon to literally become her car (or any

other vehicle of Size 25 or less) or to extend a portion of her quantum state into it. To use this Exploit, the demon must be sitting in the driver's or pilot's seat of the vehicle; she must know how to pilot the vehicle safely.

Example Prerequisites: Right Tools, Right Job, Soup Up

Dice Pool: Strength + Drive + Primum

Action: Instant

Cost: 1 Aether or more

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Exploit fails, but the demon takes her demonic form anyway with all the consequences that carries. Depending on the specific appearance of her form, this transformation may well damage the vehicle in some way at the Storyteller's discretion.

Failure: The demon does not extend her quantum state into the vehicle, although she doesn't take her demonic form, either.

Success: The demon successfully merges with her vehicle. She can maintain this link indefinitely but is treated as being in her demonic form for the purpose of compromises. Returning the vehicle to its original form is an instant action that costs one Aether. The demon's player chooses one before rolling for the Exploit:

- The demon immediately takes her demonic form (with the additional compromise that involves), but it is the vehicle that transforms, instead. The vehicle's new form reflects the demon's demonic form, but it almost always remains wholly mechanical rather than taking on biological qualities. For example, a car occupied by a demon with Wings would extend metal wings from its body seemingly through previously hidden panels, but they would be painted to look like the wings of the demon's demonic form. Any demonic form Abilities that don't make sense for a vehicle can usually be re-skinned (Wound Healing repairs Structure damage, for example) or replaced with an ability of the same type (Modification, Technology, etc.) that is useful for a vehicle but not one a humanoid demon would need or want – such as replacing Claws and Fangs with bladed hubcaps meant to tear up the tires of other cars. This version of the Exploit is compatible with a partial transformation.
- The demon chooses a number of demonic form abilities equal to her Primum that make up the vehicle's demonic form. These can include abilities her demonic form does not normally possess. Modifications and Technologies count as one ability, while Propulsions and Processes count as two abilities for this purpose. A demon with a Primum rating of 2 can purchase one Propulsion or Process, two Modifications, two Technologies, or one Modification and one Technology. The demon can spend additional Aether when she uses this Exploit to increase the number of Abilities the vehicle manifests – two Abilities for every one Aether she spends. No such custom form can have more than three Modifications, two Technologies, one Propulsion, or one Process.

CHAPTER THREE: RECYCLED MATERIALS

Exceptional Success: The Exploit functions as intended (see above). Additionally, choose one:

- Any compromise rolls the demon's player makes for entering and remaining in demonic form enjoy a +2 bonus so long as she remains connected to the vehicle.
- The maximum number of each ability type increases by one (four Modifications, three Technologies, two Propulsions, or two Processes).

DEVOUR INFRASTRUCTURE

Anything the God-Machine touches carries a bit of Its resonance. Usually, Unchained siphon this from angels, occult matrices, and even Infrastructure (as described on p. 78). Another option exists, however, for demons with enough stamina. This Exploit allows a demon to absorb physical structure in order to gain Aether.

Despite the name, the demon doesn't literally eat the Infrastructure. She touches part of it, breaking down the physical material and pulling the Aether out. This leaves huge gouges in the walls of the Infrastructure resembling the bite marks of some great beast (hence the name of this Exploit).

Example Prerequisites: Persistent Legend, Raw Materials

Dice Pool: Strength + Survival + Primum

Action: Instant

Cost: 1 Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon breaks down part of the Infrastructure, but instead of a trickle of Aether than she can absorb, she gets a blast of Aether that knocks her down. The demon can absorb as much Aether as the player wishes, but suffers point of lethal damage for each point of Aether. Armor does not mitigate this damage.

Failure: The demon is unable to consume Infrastructure for Aether.

Success: The demon makes a fist-sized "bite" in the surface she's touching. She can absorb a number of Aether each turn equal to her Primum, but she risks compromise each turn (cumulative -1 modifier for each turn after the first; if the Infrastructure is Defensive, this modifier is -3 per turn).

Exceptional Success: As above, but the demon has one additional turn before she risks compromise.

LIVING INSTALLATION

Under normal circumstances, a demon can install Embeds and Exploits into objects, creating gadgets. Living Installation outwardly defies this prohibition, allowing the Unchained to make gadgets of people, animals, and other living things. It's limited to Embeds, as Exploits would cause too much alteration to the living form.

However, part of the reason Unchained cannot usually make gadgets of living things is because they change constant-

ly, so their states are unstable for installation. This Exploit only holds back that problem. Gadgets created with Living Installation only last for a month before fading.

Example Prerequisites: Cuckoo's Egg, Knock-Off

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Medicine + Primum

Action: Instant

Cost: 2 Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Exploit fails. Instead, the living thing becomes a gadget with a completely unintended and undesirable effect.

Failure: The Exploit fails.

Success: The Unchained may use the subject living thing when installing a gadget.

Exceptional Success: As above, but the Willpower dot returns after the gadget fades.

NEWTON'S NIGHTMARES

Gravity, friction, and inertia are fundamental laws of physics not normally subject to change, but this Exploit allows the demon to manipulate them in a small area – no more than a 16-yard radius within 50 yards of herself. She can loosen, strengthen, or bend the pull of gravity, render surfaces nearly frictionless or make objects adhere to each other, or increase or decrease the inertia of objects. With multiple uses of this Exploit in a short period of time, she can manage several of these feats at once. These temporary alterations last a number of hours equal to the demon's Primum rating, but the demon can terminate the Exploit's effects at will as an instant action.

Example Prerequisites: Imagine, Trip

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Science + Primum

Action: Instant

Cost: 3 Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon only manages to alter physics as they apply to her, but the exact effect is out of her control. The Storyteller should choose one of the success results, which lasts a number of hours equal to the demon's Primum rating. The God-Machine also detects this localized distortion. The demon gains the Flagged condition.

Failure: The demon fails to alter the laws of physics.

Success: The demon increases, decreases, or distorts a single law of Newtonian physics within the target area, creating one of the following effects or another one approved by the Storyteller:

- **Weaken Gravity:** Athletics checks to jump, climb, or lift objects receive a bonus equal to the demon's Primum rating. Double the ranges for projectile weapons. Any successful Weaponry or Brawl attack applies the Knockdown effect.



- Strengthen Gravity:** Athletics checks to jump, climb, or lift objects suffer a penalty equal to the demon's Primum rating. Halve the ranges for projectile weapons and reduce the Speed of creatures in the area by the demon's Primum rating. Any successful Weaponry or Brawl attack applies the Knockdown effect, and standing up or remaining airborne requires a successful Strength + Athletics check.
- Bend Gravity:** Gravity within the area tilts up to 90 degrees in a direction chosen by the demon. Creatures near the "top" of the area may take a damaging fall, while those at the "bottom" must contend with falling debris that inflicts lethal damage equal to (demon's Primum - the successes the victim's player scores on a Wits + Athletics roll). Creatures must usually climb ceilings and floors and risk falling sideways in the process, while they can walk on some of the walls.
- Increase Friction:** Athletics checks to climb or to avoid sliding receive a bonus equal to the demon's Primum rating. Attempts to escape a grapple suffer a like penalty. Fast-moving machine parts build up heat quickly and may burn out abruptly (1 Structure damage per turn), but ground vehicles also handle better (bonus to Handling equal to the demon's Primum rating).

- Decrease Friction:** Athletics checks to climb, avoid sliding, or pull objects up from above receive a penalty equal to the demon's Primum rating. Attempts to escape a grapple receive a bonus equal to the demon's Primum rating. Fast-moving machines operate more quickly and efficiently (increase equipment bonus by 1 or increase vehicle Acceleration by 4 and Maximum Speed by 64), but ground vehicles suffer a penalty to Handling equal to the demon's Primum rating.
- Increase Inertia:** The damage ratings of projectile weapons with a physical component (bows and firearms but not a welding torch) are increased by half the demon's Primum rating, rounded up. Explosives that can be set off by vibrations become more volatile (roll demon's Primum for each disturbance; unexpected detonation occurs on a success), and delicate equipment is more prone to break (reduce Durability by 1).
- Decrease Inertia:** The damage ratings of projectile weapons with a physical component are decreased by half the demon's Primum rating (to a minimum of 0). Explosives vulnerable to vibration are less so (roll demon's Primum for each disturbance that would trigger the explosive, such as stepping on a landmine; on a success, the detonation does not take place as intended), and delicate equipment is not as prone to unexpected breakage (increase Durability by 1).

CHAPTER THREE: RECYCLED MATERIALS

Exceptional Success: The Exploit functions as the demon intended (see above). In addition, the demon may choose to exclude any number of targets from its effects or increase the range and affected area to a 32-yard radius within sight.

OPEN-AND-SHUT CASE

Demons live a fugitive existence on the run from the God-Machine and Its agents. Adding local police, the FBI, or the NSA to the list of organizations hunting him is enough to make any demon's continued survival uncertain. This Exploit helps rid the demon of mortal investigators by pinning the blame for a crime he committed on someone else, or by framing the investigators for crimes that force them to call off the investigation. If the demon's target is a person, he must either be able to see the target or have access to an object mystically resonant to her (a lock of hair, a prized possession, etc.) to activate this Exploit, and the target's Resolve penalizes the roll. If the demon's target is a crime, he must be able to see the crime scene or have access to key pieces of evidence (the murder weapon, stolen property, etc.). This Exploit only works on mundane forms of investigation. Supernatural abilities can penetrate the deception.

Example Prerequisites: Mistaken Identity, The Only Word That Matters

Dice Pool: Presence + Investigation + Primum

Action: Instant

Cost: 1 Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Exploit doesn't work as the demon intended. If his target was a person, the demon becomes linked to a serious crime he didn't commit for a number of days equal to his Primum rating (see below). If the target is a crime, all physical and circumstantial evidence points to the demon as the perpetrator. If the target is a crime the demon actually committed, not only does all mundane evidence point to him, but there is also enough evidence for the God-Machine's agents to recognize demonic involvement. The demon gains the Hunted Condition.

Failure: The demon fails to create a link between crime and scapegoat.

Success: If the target is a person, evidence comes to light that she committed a serious crime (usually a murder, armed robbery, or other violent crime). The crime the Exploit connects the victim to is random but is always one she could have conceivably committed. It manufactures both physical and circumstantial evidence, all of it convincing enough to get an arrest warrant. Her fingerprints show up on a murder weapon, eye witnesses recognize her as the last person who left the victim's home, and so forth. This frame-up lasts for a number of days equal to the demon's Primum rating or until the demon chooses to end it. Once the Exploit ends, the relevant authorities discover the terrible mistake they have made and drop all charges against the target.

If the target is a crime, the Exploit chooses a random scapegoat — someone with the means to commit the crime — and all physical and circumstantial evidence points to that victim.

This affects all evidence that is collected and examined within a number of days equal to the demon's Primum rating. Once the Exploit ends, the relevant authorities realize they've arrested the wrong person and drop all charges. (At least, in a perfect world, they would drop all charges. Sometimes the authorities proceed with the case they have, flaws and all, because they've already done the work and can close the case. A demon using this Exploit, then, has to live with that possibility.)

In either case, the accused may suffer the indignity of arrest and a few nights in jail but will not be punished for the crime. Moreover, suspects of reasonable means (Resources 2 or more) can usually be out on bail the next day. This Exploit provides the demon with a couple days to cover up a crime he committed while the police aren't looking for new suspects or gives him a couple days to move out of reach of a pursuer.

Exceptional Success: The demon successfully frames an innocent victim for a serious crime (see above). In addition, the demon can choose to link a specific victim to a chosen crime, or a targeted person is framed for a crime serious enough that she is unable to get of jail on bond until the Exploit ends.

SHOW OF POWER

Sometimes it isn't enough for a demon to claim to be something she is not. Sometimes people want convincing proof, and this Exploit allows her to manufacture exactly that. The demon mimics the Merits or powers of another type of supernatural being (but not demon abilities). She can only emulate capabilities she has personally experienced — either as an observer or a target of the power. If the Exploit succeeds, the result is indistinguishable from an ordinary use of the mimicked power.

Show of Power only works for inherent abilities and powers that require reflexive or instant actions to use (no extended actions). Additionally, if at least one observer of the supernatural type she wishes to emulate is present for her use of this Exploit, a failed roll allows the witness to detect the demon's occult chicanery.

Example Prerequisites: Deep Cover, Identity Theft

Dice Pool: Presence + Occult + Primum vs. highest Wits + Supernatural Tolerance of observers of emulated supernatural type

Action: Instant and contested or reflexive and contested

Cost: 1 Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Not only does the demon fail to imitate the power, she loses the ability to use her Embeds, Exploits, and demon form abilities until the end of the scene.

Failure: No effect.

Success: The demon successfully mimics the ability. If it is an inherent ability or Merit, the demon benefits from it until the end of the scene. Otherwise it lasts as long as it ordinarily would and has the same effect as if the demon's player had scored a single success on any required roll. For the purpose of abilities that take effects from the supernatural type's Supernatural Tolerance, use the demon's Primum rating.

Exceptional Success: The demon successfully mimics the ability as above. In addition, the power has the same effect as if the demon's player had scored three successes on any required roll, or the demon may emulate an additional power without needing to activate the Exploit again although she must do so during the current turn or the next one.

SOUL BRAND

Stigmatics bear the mark of the God-Machine the way an accident victim bears her scars. The God-Machine does not own these wretches and largely does not concern itself with their fates. The mark this Exploit leaves on a person's soul is different, indicating that she belongs to something else, a being of terrible power that will not ignore any harm that befalls its possessions. Because it marks souls, Soul Brand does not function on targets that do not have them (including demons), nor on purely ephemeral beings (such as ghosts).

Example Prerequisites: Associate and Integrate, Tag and Release

Dice Pool: Presence + Expression + Primum - Supernatural Tolerance

Action: Instant

Cost: 1 Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon gains the brand as a physical mark on his body. The demon gains a transient glitch (his player rolls Primum as usual to determine its severity). This glitch always manifests as a brand.

Failure: The demon fails to make his mark on the target's soul.

Success: The demon successfully places a mark on the target's soul that lasts a number of days equal to the demon's Primum rating. For as long as the brand lasts, an aura of menace surrounds the target hinting that she has a powerful patron who will not tolerate any threats or attacks against her. Humans usually avoid the target unless they must interact with her, and most others do what they can to placate her. The target receives the demon's Primum rating as a bonus to all social interactions with humans that exploit their unwillingness to displease her – typically Intimidation or Persuasion. Furthermore, any successful use of Hard Leverage by the target removes one additional Door.

Supernatural abilities that read auras see the brand as an arcane mark on the target's soul and are free to interpret it as they wish, although they do not necessarily associate it with demons. Stigmatics and anyone with Unseen Sense: God-Machine can see the brand and recognize it as connected to the God-Machine in some way. Angels and demons recognize the brand as something of Unchained origin. As well, the brand gives the target a weak aetheric resonance that cryptids can detect (as a Primum 1 demon). In short, a soul brand can be a mixed blessing, or even a way for a demon to use a human as unwitting bait for a demon or hunter angel.

Exceptional Success: The demon successfully places a mark on the target's soul (see above). In addition, this brand is particularly potent. At the beginning of each chapter, the target gains the Informed Condition, which she can use on a social interaction that exploits people's unwillingness to displease her. Finally, the aetheric resonance it produces is as powerful as the demon's.

STOP

This Exploit stops time for everything in the scene but the demon. People freeze in place. Clocks stop. A thrown brick stays in the air. Fires cease glowing and growing. For a few valuable seconds, the demon can move about free of any outside influence. Once the effect ends, everything returns to motion, just as it was. The demon appears to have moved instantaneously.

Clever witnesses might notice that clocks fell a few seconds behind the rest of the world and all clocks on the scene are behind by exactly the same amount of time. Phones and networked computing devices synch back to the world's time, though. Fortunately, the time lost is sufficiently short that most people rationalize the loss. Stop can make for an excellent escape plan, if a bit heavy handed. It can also give a demon a much-needed breather, a chance to recuperate in the middle of a heated moment. Some use this opportunity to heal in the middle of a fight, or to quickly draw up some information to support their Cover identities.

The demon cannot directly harm those frozen in time, as their bodies do not give to injury. However, the demon may lay traps or line up an attack for the moment the effect ends, in which case it denies a target his Defense.

Since the Exploit is reflexive, it can be used at any time. If the demon has a higher Initiative score than an attacker, she can use it to avoid harm. She could simply step out of the way of an attack while time stands still.

Example Prerequisites: Ellipses, Fractal Reality

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Science + Primum

Action: Reflexive

Cost: 2 Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Time glitches. The demon loses her next turn, frozen in place. She does not have access to Defense for that turn. The strange effect causes the compromise roll to be made at -2.

Failure: Time refuses to bend to the demon's will.

Success: The demon may act for a number of turns equal to the successes rolled before the scene returns to motion. During this time, the demon may access her Embeds but not her Exploits, as spending Aether is impossible (this also means that if she is in demonic form, she cannot return to a Cover while Stop is in effect).

CHAPTER THREE: RECYCLED MATERIALS

Exceptional Success: The demon may also spend Aether, but each point of Aether spent during the time stop causes her a single aggravated wound.

TERRIBLE AVATAR

An outcast's demonic form is one of the most potent weapons in her arsenal, but the attention it attracts often makes it a tool of desperation. This Exploit allows the demon to briefly separate her demonic form from her Cover and send it to do her bidding. The demon suffers no harm from any damage the avatar takes (and vice versa), but the Exploit ends immediately if the demon is incapacitated or killed. When this Exploit's effect ends, or if the avatar is destroyed, the monster vanishes in a burst of aetheric resonance, leaving nothing for enemies to trace back to the demon's Cover. So long as the avatar lasts, the Unchained cannot take her demonic form; if the avatar is destroyed before the duration ends, the outcast cannot take the demonic form again for 24 hours.

Example Prerequisites: Alibi, Wave Function Collapse

Dice Pool: Strength + Occult + Primum

Action: Instant

Cost: 1 Aether + Aether invested in avatar

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon successfully separates her avatar, but it is either self-aware or insane and wishes to destroy its creator at any price. It may immediately attack the demon, or it might bide its time in order to subvert her plans first. This mad avatar begins with Aether equal to the amount its creator had before using this Exploit and lasts a number of hours equal to the demon's Primum score.

Failure: The demon fails to separate her avatar but can try again.

Success: The demon separates her demonic form into an avatar that exists for a number of hours equal to the demon's Primum. It possesses all the demonic form Abilities, Attributes, Skills, and Physical and Mental Merits of its original, but none of the demon's Embeds or Exploits. It does not have Aether of its own, but when the demon brings it forth she may invest any number of points of Aether she possesses in order to fuel the avatar's abilities.

Exceptional Success: The demon brings forth her avatar (see above). In addition, it exists for up to 24 hours and the demon can choose to dismiss it at any time or it possesses the demon's Embeds.

TWO PLACES AT ONCE

Two Places at Once allows the Unchained to entangle two locations, two rooms, two spaces. Everything that happens in one happens in the other simultaneously. In essence, every person within exists in two places at once. The demon perceives both locations at the same time and is capable of

splitting attention between the two however she wishes. If she leaves the entangled area, she may leave from either of the two locations. This is too much for the average human brain to comprehend, but other demons behave similarly within.

Some Unchained use this as an easy entrance and exit to a safe place. However, it's a risky endeavor, as other demons can follow her. They can also use this Exploit to move items from one location to another, or force humans into different places.

Use of Two Places at Once requires the demon to visit both places in the course of a full day. Each place should be similar in size and no bigger than a small house.

Example Prerequisites: Last Place You Look, Remote Link-Up

Dice Pool: Presence + Science + Primum

Action: Instant

Cost: 3 Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The locations do not entangle, however the demon finds herself in both at once and cannot leave for a scene.

Failure: The locations do not entangle.

Success: The locations entangle for the remainder of the scene. Humans with 3 or fewer dots in Wits understand one of the two locations, but still affect and are affected by both. This is disorienting and levies a -5 to all rolls requiring awareness and concentration, taking the form of terrible confusion and headaches. If a human leaves the entangled space, she leaves out of whichever location she was originally from. If the demon wishes, those within can be forced out the other location.

Unchained are not thus affected, as they can mentally collocate. A demon in an affected area can leave through either location. Other supernatural creatures and humans with four or more dots of Wits are slightly disoriented, and take all actions at -3.

Exceptional Success: The locations entangle for as much as a day, or until the demon ends the Exploit.

ULTIMATUM

With this terrifying Exploit, the demon tasks a person with a single, reasonable action. The victim knows the task and knows the consequences may be existential. If he chooses to violate the commandment, he ceases to be human; he becomes a material of the demon's choosing. Classically, this changes a victim into a pillar of salt or something equally biblical.

Ultimatum turns the victim into any mineral. He could become salt, gold, limestone, or whatever else the demon wishes. The demon also chooses whether the victim becomes a rough shape, or a statue of his former self.

The commandment must be reasonable. A regular person should be able to understand and accomplish the thing. Typ-

ically, Ultimatum is something simple, but the demon might very well trick the victim into succumbing, likely as a message to those that would defy her wishes.

This Exploit only works on a human target; a single target can only be subject to one Ultimatum at a time.

Example Prerequisites: Strength Through Adversity, Tools Into Toys

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Science + Primum vs. Resolve

Action: Instant and contested

Cost: 2 Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The commandment does not take. The would-be victim is aware of what happened and gains a helpful Condition reflecting their reaction to the demon. Common Conditions include Inspired or Informed.

Failure: The commandment does not take.

Success: The commandment takes. It may or may not be a permanent command or prohibition, at the demon's behest. If the human violates the commandment, he becomes the mineral the demon defined. For example, the demon may say, "Leave this place and do not look back." If the subject refuses to leave or looks back, she may become a pile of gold.

Exceptional Success: No additional effect.

URBAN LEGEND

The nature of truth is subjective. Unchained understand this more than anyone, as they define truth and honesty anew with everything they do and say. This Exploit lets the demon influence reality through a spread story. She tells the story to humans, then they spread the story, the listeners spread it further. Once it's reached a certain point, the story becomes real. "Tell" is figurative. She could leave notes in bedrooms, tell stories, or post urban legends on the Internet.

The story generates characters, villains, heroes, victims, whatever is necessary to flesh out the tale. However, the story is never exactly what the demon described. Details change as the story moves to new listeners. The basic premise remains the same, but bits and pieces shift and mutate as the community begins to own the story.

Each roll requires a week of storytelling. Each success reflects one third party to which the story spreads. Once the story has reached 16 listeners, the story becomes real. Added characters are fiction made flesh, much in the way a Cover comes into existence, but these characters are flimsy like façades (p. 35).

Example Prerequisites: Everybody Knows, Social Engineering

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Expression + Primum

Action: Extended (one roll/week, 16 successes required)

Cost: 1 Aether and a compromise per roll

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The story takes shape in a way the demon did not intend. She gains the Hunted Condition based on a bastardized version of her tale.

Failure: No successes are added to the total. The character can quit or the player can accept a Condition and continue the attempt (as described on p. 313 of *Demon: The Descent*).

Success: Successes are added to the total. More listeners hear the story. When the total is reached, the legend becomes real. The principle actors in the Urban Legend come to life, but their existence is predicated on their roles in the story. If the demon were to tell a story similar to the old yarn about "kidney thieves," then a small group of people would indeed start drugging tourists and harvesting their kidneys, but they only exist within the context of taking those actions. Once the legend has been entered into a community's imagination, a demon can assume one the role of any of the characters in the legend as a façade Cover. Doing so can potentially give a demon a variety of potential façades to use, but she needs to take care to leave the story intact. In the kidney thieves story, for instance, the demon might take on the role of the beautiful woman who seduces the tourist. Since the story falls apart without her as bait, though, once the demon uses that role as a façade, the legend dies out. For any successful use of Urban Legend, assume the demon has potential façades equal to twice her Primum.

Exceptional Success: The player may choose one of the options for exceptional successes on extended actions presented on p. 313 of *Demon*. Alternately, the story embeds in the minds of a wide swath of the population, thus strengthening its validity. One façade taken from the Urban Legend can survive two failed compromises, instead of just one (this only applies to one of the roles from the legend, not all of them).

VISIONS OF HEAVEN AND HELL

Not all demons resent their depiction in mortal literature and media. Some turn it to their advantage, using humans' fears of death and eternal torment to manipulate them. Others demons take advantage of the reputations angels have among mortals, appearing in cloaks of glory to fill observers with wonder and awe. This Exploit causes a vivid mass hallucination that affects everyone within 100 feet who can see the demon. The demon chooses either Heaven or Hell when he activates this Exploit. If the Unchained is in her demonic form or assumes it during the moment of revelation, all observers recognize him as the focus of the effect – God's messenger if it is a vision of Heaven or one of Lucifer's representatives on Earth if it is a vision of Hell.

This Exploit has no effect on demons, angels, and spirits, although ghosts are vulnerable to it.

Example Prerequisites: Recurring Hallucinations, Sum of All Fears

Dice Pool: Presence + Intimidation + Primum vs. Resolve + Supernatural Tolerance

CHAPTER THREE: RECYCLED MATERIALS



Action: Instant

Cost: 2 Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Exploit fails, but the attempt attracts the God-Machine's attention. The demon loses a dot of Cover automatically and gains the Hunted Condition. No compromise roll is necessary for this Exploit.

Failure: The demon fails to call up visions of everlasting paradise or eternal damnation in the minds of observers.

Success: Victims who fail to resist the Exploit share in the vision until the end of the scene:

- **Heaven:** Until the end of the scene, each victim witnesses a glorious manifestation of deific might. Light shines down from the heavens and choirs of angels sing. These hallucinations color the events of the current scene, transforming them into revelatory visions. Mundane combat becomes an epic battle between good and evil, for example. This overt display of divine power makes sleep impossible and heightens the victims' alertness (granting a bonus on Perception checks equal to the demon's Primum). It might also be a breaking point, especially for targets who reasonably believe themselves condemned for their sins or crimes — a road to Damascus moment, of sorts.

If the outcast is in his demonic form, affected observers are more likely to lend credence to anything he says. The demon receives a bonus to Presence rolls equal to his Primum rating against these victims while the vision lasts, and they gain the Swooning Condition with regards to the his orders and instructions.

- **Hell:** Until the end of the scene, each victim finds herself plunged into a vision of the worst Hell on Earth she can imagine. Fiery cracks open in the ground and brimstone smoke fills the air, while devils gibber and taunt those gathered. Shadows of each victim's most painful and guilty memories play out before her eyes, forcing her to face everything she hates about herself and confront every secret shame or guilt that plagues her. These hallucinations color the events of the scene, transforming them into nightmarish or apocalyptic happenings. Ordinary humans suffer an immediate breaking point with a penalty equal to the demon's Primum, as do many supernatural beings.

If the outcast is in his demon form, affected observers are more likely to cower in fear or flee. The demon receives a bonus to Intimidation rolls equal to his Primum rating against these victims while the vision lasts, and any successful use of Hard Leverage by the Unchained removes one additional Door.

Exceptional Success: The Exploit succeeds as above. In addition, it inspires more intense and long-lasting emotions:

- **Heaven:** Any victim who obeys the demon's instructions regains a point of Willpower (once per scene). Additionally, any action she takes in service to the demon achieves an exceptional success on three successes instead of five.

- Hell:** Any victim who succeeds on the breaking point roll suffers the Broken, Fugue, or Madness Condition (or a similarly crippling Condition approved by the Storyteller) instead of Guilty, Shaken, or Spooked Condition. Even those who achieve an exceptional success on the breaking point gain the Guilty, Shaken, or Spooked Condition. A victim who fails on the breaking point roll also gains the Swooning Condition with regards to the demon's orders and instructions until she resolves the Condition.

WALLS OF JERICHO

It's been said that the best defense is a good offense. The best offense, however, is an assault against a defenseless enemy. Walls of Jericho overwhelms enemy forces, removing their ability to defend themselves. Soldiers stand still. Their armor rots. Walls crumble instead of stopping bullets. Anything that would prevent the assault from rending flesh ceases to function.

Ultimately, Walls of Jericho heightens the entropy for the opposing force. Anything and everything that can break down their integrity does so.

Example Prerequisites: Anarchism, Turn Blade

Dice Pool: Strength + Intimidation + Primum

Action: Instant

Cost: 3 Aether

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Exploit does not take. Additionally, the demon loses access to benefits from her Defense, from armor, and from cover for a number of turns equal to her Primum.

Failure: The Exploit does not take.

Success: The Exploit affects every member of an enemy force currently acting in direct opposition to the demon. This does not affect people who are not physically present, even if they are working against the demon in some indirect manner. Every member of the opposing force loses access to their Defense, cannot benefit from armor, and cannot benefit from cover for a single turn.

Exceptional Success: The loss lasts for a number of turns equal to the demon's Primum.

ALTERNATE PREREQUISITES

If a player can come up with a convincing explanation for why an Embed is a reasonable prerequisite for an Exploit she wishes to purchase for her character, the Storyteller should allow it. That said, here is a list of new Embeds that an outcast might logically bend into the Exploits described in **Demon: The Descent**.

Addictive Presence: Clothes Make the Man, Loose Lips

Affliction: Breakdown, Mistaken Identity

Allies Into Gold: Knock-Off, The Voting Dead

Animate: Open Sesame, Wave Function Collapse

Behind the Curtain: Deep Cover, Imagine

Break to Heal: Rhetoric, Play Possum

Deep Pockets: Data Retrieval, Knock-Off

Demon House: Fire Drill, Going Native

Disintegrate: Data Wipe, Soup Up

Echoing Death: Like the Movies, Ripple

Ephemeral Cover: Clothes Make the Man, Deep Cover

Everybody Hates Him: Apple of Discord, You Can Tell Me

Extispicy: Data Retrieval, Fractal Reality

Force Relationship: Associate and Integrate, Call Out

Four Minutes Ago: Rhetoric, Trivia

Frozen in Time: Data Retrieval, The Look

Halo: Imagine, Persistent Legend

Hellfire: Like the Movies, Victory at Any Price

Hellhounds: Functional Identity, Soup Up

Incendiary: Fire Drill, The Look

Inflict Stigmata: The Only Word That Matters, Strength Through Adversity

Living Shadow: Going Native, Wave Function Collapse

Merge: Mistaken Identity, Remote Link-Up

Murder by Improbability: Ripple, Victory at Any Price

Play on Words: Social Engineering, You Can Tell Me

Possession: Remote Link-Up, Sum of All Fears

Rain of Blood: Fractal Reality, Like the Movies

Raise the Dead: Play Possum, The Voting Dead

Raze Infrastructure: Data Wipe, Imagine

Reality Enforcement: Trip, Wave Function Collapse

Riot: Anarchism, Apple of Discord

Rip the Gates: Open Sesame, Password Entropy

Sermon: Loose Lips, Vox

Solitary Confinement: Sum of All Fears, Wasted Time

Stalking Horse: Mistaken Identity, Persistent Legend

Stimulus/Response: Breakdown, Social Engineering

Summon: The Only Word That Matters, Strength Through Adversity

Swarm: Anarchism, Functional Identity

Swift Resolution: Password Entropy, Wasted Time

The Word: Call Out, Trivia

DEMONIC FORM ABILITIES

As creations of the God-Machine, the Unchained know they were built or grown with a purpose, even if it is a purpose they ultimately rejected or never fully understood. The God-Machine cannot mass produce angels. Each one's creation requires an especially complex occult matrix that often cannot be duplicated, and so each angel's true form is unique.

DESIGNING YOUR FORM

To many players, a demon's true form is the integral defining factor that makes an Unchained a "demon." The demonic form is definitely a unique entity in the World of Darkness; it often doesn't fit the pop cultural perception of what a demon looks like. In designing your character's demonic form, you're essentially creating a monster that may not exist in traditional mythology. This can be a bit daunting. Before looking into how to design your form, though, let's unpack the types of form powers.

Modifications change functions. Fingers become claws. Eyes become long-range night vision lenses. They shift the traditional use for a body part into something slightly different. When designing Modifications, favor forms that exaggerate current human capabilities instead of completely changing them whole cloth. Modifications are the most common type of form power.

Technologies add functions. They take a body part and add a whole new capability to it. A normal human could not fire rivets from her arm. That's not even an exaggeration of something a human could do. Thus, it's a Technology.

Propulsions help the demon move or otherwise navigate the environment. Anything that facilitates mobility, such as teleporting, flying, or likewise, is a Propulsion.

Processes redefine the demonic form. They move beyond simple modifications and technologies in that they engage the whole of the body (not just a limb or single element). These are often massive, terrifying things that, if revealed, would be impossible to pass off as naturally occurring. For example, Dataform (see below) allows the demon to temporarily become digital. It does allow her to travel around the world rapidly, so it could be seen as a Propulsion. But it changes enough about what it means to be that particular demon that it makes more sense as a Process.

A demon is a piecemeal conglomeration of industrial bits, wired together into a strange and frightening whole. On the surface, there's no rhyme or reason to these pieces, but creating one helps in developing your demon.

We'll address two basic approaches to demonic form design. You can determine the story then fit form powers to it, or you can pick and choose form powers and follow up by defining how the story fits your choices.

STORY FIRST

Ask yourself, "What did the God-Machine create my angel to do?" With the God-Machine, form always follows function. It has a purpose, a need, and defines an angel by its proposed solution.

Sometimes, this takes a bit of creativity. Usually when you come up with a function, the first few form powers come easily. But then you think you have everything you need. "I already have an arc welder. I was made to weld. What else could I want?" Maybe the character needs sheet metal flesh for heat resistance. Maybe heat-sensitive vision, so she can see even when the light is overbearing. Maybe one hand is a claw capable of holding welded metals.

Typically, this method of design means your demon is outstanding at one particular task, but may falter in others. Then again, if you use some lateral thinking to fill spots, you could end up with a strangely diverse functionality.

Example: This angel was a workhorse. A Psychopomp, literally made to carry bits and pieces of Infrastructure from one place to another. She'd carry iron, steel, and copper from a demolished skyscraper to a modern artist's metal shop.

Considering the raw materials she carried, she needed Armored Plates. They would protect her from the sharp and rusty edges. Her Huge Size allowed her to heft things larger than a normal body would support. Her Inhuman Strength gave her the raw power to lift. She also possesses Electrical Resistance, since the building still has many open, live wires. Environmental Resistance allows her to face the caustic chemicals left behind from the demolition process. Long Limbs give her rapid movement from one place to another. Lastly, Cavernous Maw lets her eat through concrete in order to access the precious metals she needs.

STYLE FIRST

Alternatively, you can just pick and choose things that look, sound, or function in cool ways together. Do you want your demon to have plastic fins? Great. Take them. Flaming chain tentacle? Awesome. Choose what looks right, or what accomplishes whatever task you want your demon to excel at,

purpose be damned. But then, find some common threads. Challenge yourself to come up with a purpose that would engage all those parts, or if not one purpose, a series of purposes. Remember, a job is only rarely a single task. In some cases, trying to retrofit the job to the demonic form comes up with a more interesting, complex role.

Example: Looking over the form abilities, a few stand out as particularly interesting. For Modifications, Blade Hand, EMP Field, and Fast Attack sound cool. In Technologies, Electric Jolt and Essence Drain sound interesting. For a Propulsion, Plasma Drive feels right. Aegis Protocol sounds exciting.

Looking over it, there seems to be a bit of an energy theme. EMP, Electric Jolt, and maybe Essence Drain fit in with that. So, we extend that from the Plasma Drive. The Plasma Drive cracks outside the skin, pulling energy toward it, and arcing energy outward from it. The Blade Hand, in this case, looks like an industrial power plug, to fit in with the running theme. The Aegis Protocol gets a slight modification to fit and reflects a hard shell that extends out when the demon needs the boost. It glows bright enough to blind onlookers, which gives the penalties to hit the demon in a fight.

As you'll notice, this demon has somewhat more versatile Form Abilities and took a little creativity to rope into a general theme.

EVOLUTION OF THE DEMONIC FORM

An outcast's demonic form at the moment of her Fall is little different from the true form she possessed as an angel. The demonic form can change and evolve over time as the demon integrates more fully with the world (increasing her Primum rating). Some among the Unchained have a somewhat mystical view on what this physical transformation means — that it reflects what the demon has become or even his ultimate destiny on the path to Hell. Many, however, treat it as no more remarkable than a human dressing in the latest fashion or taking steps to lose some weight. This latter attitude is often a coping mechanism used by outcasts to obscure the fact that the gradual transformation of their demonic form is at times a horrific and painful experience.

A new demon often clings to his first Cover, the one he wore when he defied the God-Machine and Fell. The last human shape given to the outcast by his creator before rebellion ended his service forever gains a certain sentimental value to the demon. This attachment is usually more intense among Integrators, but even the most militant Saboteur does not casually cast her first Cover aside. Despite the risk of discovery Inquisitors fear using the first Cover represents, most still keep it in reserve. Demons who have burned away a dozen or more Covers over a lifetime spent fleeing the God-Machine's servants may cluck their tongues at these "first fleshers," but most still remember how difficult it was not to treat that Cover of their final missions as something essential to their identity.

The demonic form holds a similar mystique to newly Fallen Unchained, but whereas the outcast has only spent a few

weeks or years in her first flesh, her demonic form has been virtually unchanged for decades if not centuries. Even though it is a pale shadow of her angelic glory, it is still an angel's shape. With each increase in Primum, the outcast's demonic form — the truest shape of her identity as a physical body, since Covers are ultimately masks — shifts. This can erode the demon's sense of identity as something other than a collection of thoughts and memories disconnected from any physical shell. Intellectually, the Unchained often embrace their existence as memetic constructs rather than as beings of flesh and spirit, but not many believe this on a deep psychological level. This is the main reason the evolution of the demonic form so often becomes an object of mystical fascination for the Unchained, just as the quest for Hell springs into existence in part to fill the void left when they rebelled and so became creatures of purpose who had abandoned that purpose.

Physically, the transformations associated with a rising Primum rating range from merely disconcerting to truly agonizing. Those who experience this evolution while concealed by Cover do not know these changes have happened until they take demonic form. Outcasts who evolve while unmasked may find parts of their bodies atrophy or fall off, while new appendages spring forth. The sudden change in the demonic form may manifest with intense pain (the Storyteller should choose an appropriate Condition or assign damage), or the outcast might find himself unable to physically "forget" the lost ability, experiencing the sort of "ghost sensations" commonly associated with amputees. Even if a demon's player chooses not to change the abilities granted by her character's form when her Primum rating increases, she should feel free to make cosmetic alterations that reflect this evolution. The demon is less of what the God-Machine intended her to be, and while some demons might outwardly rejoice at this turning away from their creator's designs, the changes represent a kind of body horror even stigmatics (who are likewise physically marked by their experiences) cannot fully comprehend.

MODIFICATIONS

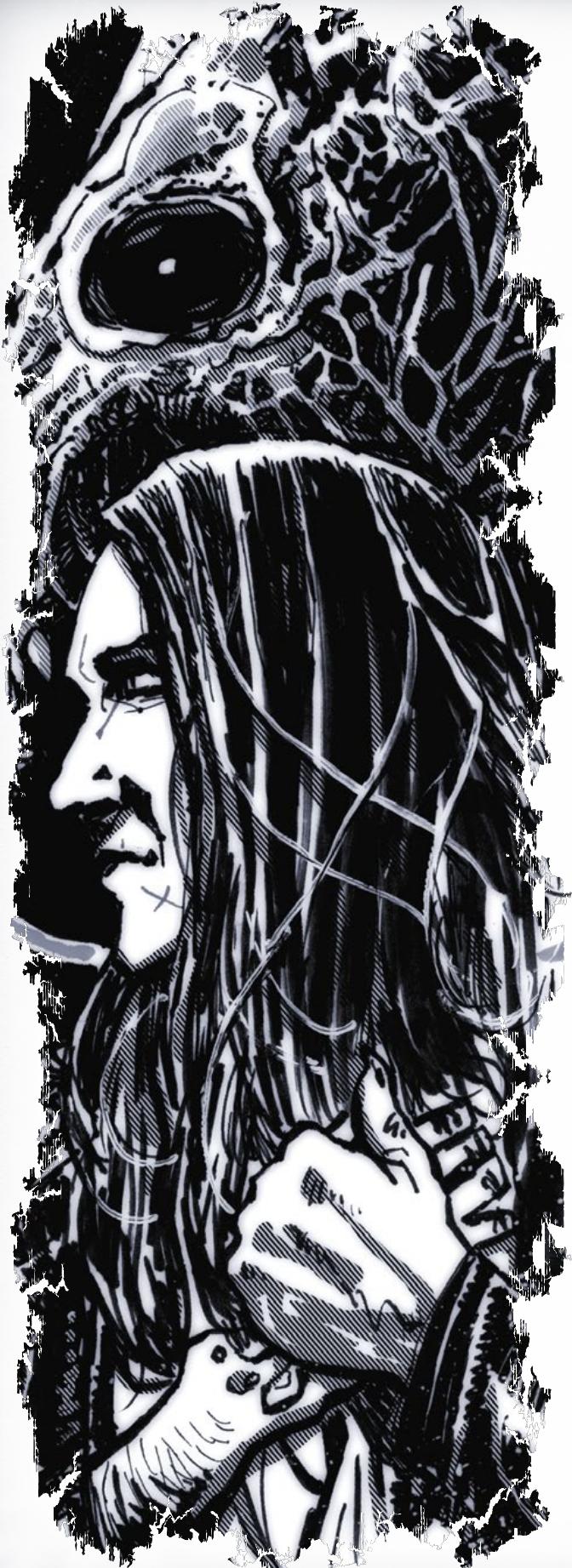
ADVANCED OPTICS

The God-Machine's largest projects require minute attention to detail. The forms of the angels it deploys on such missions often possess exceptional visual acuity. They can see faraway objects or minuscule details as if their eyes were telescopes or microscopes.

Appearance: When the demon takes her demonic form, her eyes retract into their sockets and glass lenses slide into place. As the demon changes modes or magnification, these lenses twist and shift to reveal new lenses better-suited to the task.

Systems: If the demon spends a turn focusing on a small or distant object as an instant action, she receives a +3 equipment bonus to rolls that benefit from magnification (usually Investigation, Larceny, or Science). However, this intense fo-

CHAPTER THREE: RECYCLED MATERIALS



cus comes at the expense of myopia, afflicting the demon with the Blind Condition for anything not currently in her sights. This demon can resolve this Condition as a reflexive action by returning her vision to normal.

COMPONENT INDICATORS

Usually someone would have to observe the item, run tests, and compare results to judge the component elements of a substance,. This Modification makes the demon sensitive to various criteria in substances, and makes her able to discern details.

Appearance: At least one appendage must feature the Component Indicators, but as much as the entirety of the demon's flesh may be covered. Indicator flesh is a medical, pale blue rubber covered with tiny pores and bumps in a Gaussian array. It's slightly pliable to the touch, like snakeskin.

Systems: The demon must touch the subject to be assessed. Her skin conducts a comprehensive chemical test battery within seconds. She can identify component molecules and in turn component elements. She can identify DNA strands. She can identify trace elements left behind from a cleansing, or microscopic bits of organic matter. Most importantly, if she touches two things simultaneously, she can pinpoint the similarities between the two. No roll is required, but the character must touch the subject for a full minute for analysis. The Storyteller may require that more in-depth analysis requires longer contact. Interpretation of the data might require an Intelligence + Science roll.

DETACHABLE LIMBS

When the God-Machine deploys angels to hazardous areas where accidents can easily cripple them, It often sends servants that can shed a mangled leg or a severed arm and grow a new one to replace it. Demons with this ability can survive being torn limb-from-limb and can even quickly and painlessly dismember themselves. They can also reattach severed limbs with equal ease or, in a pinch, regenerate a lost limb in a matter of seconds.

Appearance: The demon's joints are enlarged with visible gaps between the bones in each finger, wrist, elbow, shoulder, etc. When a limb or digit is pulled out of its socket, a black liquid that resembles crude oil pours out instead of blood.

Systems: The demon can detach a limb at any joint, or his head from his torso, as an instant action. He retains control of any detached limbs, so hands locked in a chokehold around a victim's neck continue to strangle, for example. Most ordinary humans who witness the demon as he dismantles himself or who see the demon's limbs acting independently of him suffer a breaking point. Reattaching a severed limb requires an instant action.

The player can also spend 1 Aether on his turn to allow the demon to instantly regenerate a detached limb as a reflexive action, with his torso counting as two limbs. A detached limb

immediately withers and dies as soon as the demon replaces it, so if he regenerates his left arm, for example, his previously detached left arm stops functioning within a few seconds. The demon cannot replace a missing or damaged head, although he can use this ability to replace the rest of his body from his severed head, given sufficient Aether.

LIGHTING

The demon has halogen, LED, or other lighting adoring his body.

Appearance: Most typically, this Modification comes in the form of forehead lamps or other functional tools to enhance visibility. Sometimes demons have flashbulbs in their fingertips, exposed plasma-fired hearts, or other strange examples of light sources.

Systems: When active, the light eliminates any relevant penalties from darkness. As an instant action, the light can target a subject sensitive to light (including most creatures with vision). This can blind the subject (causing the Blindness Tilt), unless he makes a Wits + Composure roll, penalized by the demon's Primum.

LIMB RETRACTOR

This Modification allows the demon to pull her limbs and head into her body, in the way a turtle can.

Appearance: The body becomes slightly larger when a limb is inside it. The missing limb looks like a lump of inverted flesh, like a navel.

Systems: Reflexively, the demon can draw legs, arms, or her head into her abdomen. She loses access to those parts, but they are protected from outside harm. She can also pull inside anything that she could palm in her hand. She can leave up to 2 Size worth of items within her body. This renders the objects undetectable by simple observation (though a metal object would still alert a metal detector).

LOW DENSITY

Angels designed for missions in deserts, in mountains, or near lakes or oceans are often capable of traveling over shifting sands, drifting snow, or water as if they were paved roads. Demons with this ability use it to evade pursuit or track quarry across difficult terrain.

Appearance: The demon's feet look like the roots of trees or the legs of a spider, designed as they are to distribute his weight evenly over a wide area.

Systems: The demon can walk on sand, snow, or liquids without difficulty. The Flooded and Ice Tilts do not inconvenience him unless he is in a vehicle. Extremely agitated waters such as an ocean in a storm, whitewater rapids, or the storm surge of a hurricane may still require Dexterity + Athletics checks to remain above water, at the Storyteller's discretion.

NAUSEATING MUSK

Guardian angels placed in charge of bands of mechanical or undead soldiers of the God-Machine sometimes possess chemical weapons. These can cripple living opponents without harming their minions or the delicate Infrastructure they protect. Demons with this ability can produce a powerful and unpleasant odor that nauseates nearby humans.

Appearance: Drops of perspiration the color of blood speckle the demon's skin. Humans within 10 yards can smell the rotten garbage odor even when the demon isn't actively producing musk.

Systems: The demon can generate musk as an action, producing a foul odor that imposes the Sick Tilt on all creatures within 10 yards except those with no sense of smell. This sickness is usually moderate, but victims with especially keen senses of smell may instead suffer the grave effect. The penalty imposed by the Tilt diminishes if the target is able to get beyond the range of the musk's odor. Strong winds can reduce the range and potency of this ability at the Storyteller's discretion. For each full turn of fresh air the victim receives, decrease the penalty of this Tilt by two.

Example: John has spent four turns within the musk, and the Sick Tilt is imposing a -4 penalty to all his actions. He moves out of the range of the demon's ability for a turn. At the beginning of his next turn, the penalty imposed by the Sick Tilt is -2. If he spends a second turn in fresh air the Sick Tilt penalty drops to 0, removing the Tilt.

OLFACTORY ENHANCEMENTS

Some hunter angels track their prey by scent, and certain angelic guardians use scent to gauge people's intentions toward their charges. A demon with this ability can penetrate disguises, track prey, and identify the hidden emotions of mortals. Given enough time, she is able to paint a three-dimensional picture of her target's movements and emotional states. It also allows her to detect airborne hazards like poison gases or dangerous fumes before they are concentrated enough to do her harm. Finally, she can choose to shut off her sense of smell to avoid undesirable odors, whether it is a nauseating stench or pheromones that manipulate behavior.

Appearance: The demon has no nose. Instead, a wire mesh covers her nasal passage. Tiny lights flicker from behind this screen in response to odors.

Systems: The demon receives a +3 bonus to Wits checks that benefit from her sharp sense of smell (typically Investigation, but also for Empathy rolls when attempting to contest Subterfuge). She can identify and track prey by scent even if many other odors are present, allowing her to recognize the presence of a single target in a crowded room, so "red herrings" do not inconvenience her. However, water and strong air currents can obliterate a scent trail. Tracking by scent requires an extended Wits + Survival roll (one roll per minute, number of successes determined by the Storyteller by how old the trail is, how strong the odor was to start, and other conflicting scents).

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RADIO SUITE

Radio Suite gives the Unchained a full collection of radio receiving and broadcasting equipment installed throughout her flesh.

Appearance: The device itself can be as small as a square inch or as large as an early 20th century military radio communications console. It may be installed anywhere on the demon's body. The antenna is integrated into the demon's skin, pushing up like veins.

Systems: The demon can "tune in" and hear any radio broadcasts in the area with perfect clarity. She can also interrupt any frequency, and broadcast over it. She can speak on the frequency or broadcast anything she hears over the signal.

RESISTORS

The demon's form is wrapped with hundreds of glass and ceramic resistors. They shift and move in order to engage whatever harm threatens the demon's body.

Appearance: The resistors twist around the body, connected by copper wiring. They constantly swirl across the flesh. Any time the demon is threatened, the resistors will consolidate as close to the threat as they can. When the demon takes harm, they pop and shatter.

Systems: Ignore the first source of physical damage the demon suffers. When this happens, the resistors shatter, and do not regenerate until the demon completely replenishes her Health.

STEEL FRAME

Angels tasked with hunting down targets the God-Machine has marked for elimination have a well-deserved reputation for relentlessness, in part because they can continue to function when any creature of mere bone and sinew would be lying shattered on the ground. Demons with this ability have skeletons made of durable materials that make it difficult for enemies to disable them.

Appearance: Steel rivets stick out of the demon's skin as her metallic frame pokes through the surface. These gleaming nodules ring her skull, cap her knees and elbows, and dot her knuckles and ankles.

Systems: The demon's bones cannot be broken except by forces that can bend steel (effectively Durability 3, Size 0-2, Structure 3-5). She ignores effects that apply the Arm Wrack or Leg Wrack Tilts and does not suffer wound penalties. Additionally, the rivets on her knuckles function as brass knuckles, allowing her to deal lethal damage with her unarmed attacks as a weapon with a damage rating of 0L (no Initiative modifier).

UNYIELDING VICE

The demon's hand is installed with a pneumatic pump that makes his grip unbreakable.

Appearance: The pneumatic device has hoses, pumps, and pistons all along the hand and arm. A demon may have one or both hands installed with the Unyielding Vice (player's choice at character creation).

Systems: The demon's grip is nearly unbreakable. She can hold on to anything that does not destroy her hand. For example, she could not palm lava or superheated plasma. Additionally, she gains five dice in any grapple maneuvers (see **Demon: the Descent**, p. 322).

TECHNOLOGIES

ABRUPTION JETS

This Technology gives the demon the ability to stop immediately and completely. It forces him to halt in place and temporarily become unmoving. It grounds her electromagnetically to the Earth's fields.

Appearance: Abrupt Jets are small vents all over the demon's body that glow blue when activated.

Systems: The demon activates Abrupt Jets reflexively with a point of Aether, and stops moving completely. It doesn't matter if he's in a vehicle, being held, or otherwise in any form of motion. He stops moving and is completely unharmed by the rapid change in momentum. If he's in a vehicle, the vehicle takes damage as if it were involved in a crash. If he was falling, he stops. An attacker trying to bring him to the ground fails outright.

ADHESIVE

Some angels assigned the task of building or repairing Infrastructure generate their own mortars and sealants. Demons with this ability secrete adhesives of various viscosities and strengths – from a substance no more impressive than elementary school glue to waterproof sealants to masonry grade mortars to epoxies that harden in seconds and last decades.

Appearance: Narrow plastic or steel tubes extend half an inch from each of the demon's fingers.

Systems: The demon exudes an adhesive or sealant with the desired properties from any or all her fingers. If used as a tool for a relevant task, this adhesive grants a +3 bonus. In a grapple, this substance can serve as equipment when restraining a target, in which case the Durability of the bonds cannot exceed the demon's Primum. The demon can also use the adhesive to aid his climbing efforts, granting a +3 equipment bonus to these tasks.

The demon can choose to shed any adhesive attached to his skin as a reflexive action – whether or not it is one he created. He can, for example, glue himself to a ceiling and then instantly release the bond to drop down on a target walking past below. Finally, the player can spend 1 Aether for the demon to disintegrate adhesives, sealants, and mortars within an

area up to one yard across as an instant action, but he must touch at least the outer edge of the affected area. For example, if the demon touches the mortar between two bricks in a wall, she can choose to disintegrate the mortar binding together all the bricks within up to a one yard radius of the point she touched.

COLLAPSIBLE

Matter is almost entirely empty space. Some angels have the capacity to reduce the gaps within her body. A demon with this ability can shrink parts of her body while maintaining her mass.

Appearance: Parts of the demon's body seem to flicker in and out of existence rapidly. The overall effect is like a TV tuned to static or like a strange screensaver that progressively distorts or erases her body, only to have each area return to normal as the phenomenon moves to another part.

System: The demon may shrink to as little as Size 1 as an instant action, allowing him to get into tight spaces or hide in unlikely places. This affords a +3 bonus to actions that would benefit from the decreased Size (such as hiding). The player may spend 1 Aether for the demon to effect an even more dramatic change in stature, collapsing down to as little as nine inches in height. The demon can return to his normal size (or any size between his current and normal size) as an instant action. These changes in Size do not affect the demon's Health or Attributes.

LASER CUTTER

The demon's body features a laser cutting tool.

Appearance: This Technology typically exists as part of a limb, but can be attached to any part. It's a small, heavily wired box that makes a whirring sound when active. The laser itself is invisible to the naked eye by default, but some demons have red, green, or other colored lasers. A common variant has the cutter utilize water instead of light.

Systems: The demon can activate the device at any time. The device ignores up to five points of Durability or armor. It causes three levels of Structure or Health damage per turn of use. When used on inanimate objects, it requires a Dexterity + Crafts roll. Against moving targets it requires a Dexterity + Firearms attack roll. Defense does not apply unless the victim could use their Defense against firearms for whatever reason. However, it has a very short range and loses one point of damage per five feet from the demon.

MANTLE OF FIRE

Some angels manifest as pillars of smoke or fire to deliver messages, lead mortal followers, or simply burn down a building the God-Machine needs to have eliminated. A demon with this ability retains her humanoid shape but remains perfectly capable of burning down a house or filling a room with smoke.

Appearance: Flames flicker around the top of the demon's head instead of hair, and lines of fire rise up from her shoulders and arms.

System: While the demon and her immediate possessions aren't affected by the flames pouring from her, anything else that comes into contact with them is. Anyone engaged in a grapple with the demon suffers two lethal damage per turn (as fire as large and hot as a torch). The demon's fires can also ignite other objects or provide illumination equal to a torch.

As a reflexive action the demon can suppress her mantle, reducing it to a purely visual effect. In this state it does not ignite materials and doesn't generate enough heat to cause injury. It still sheds about as much light as a torch. The outcast can restore the mantle to its full strength as a reflexive action.

The player may spend 1 Aether as a reflexive action for the demon to intensify the mantle for one turn and achieve one of three effects:

- **Create Smoke:** The demon fills the area within up to 30 yards of her with thick smoke. Rolls to see things more than arm's length away within the smoke suffer a -1 penalty. Each additional ten yards inflicts an additional -1 penalty (cumulative) on all visual Perception rolls. This penalty also applies to ranged attack rolls.
- **Fire Aura:** The demon's radiates a halo of fire that surrounds his body to a distance of one foot. The heat these flames produce is more intense than the ordinary mantle — equal to that of a Bunsen burner. Those engaged in a grapple with the demon suffer four lethal damage per turn.
- **Pyrotechnic Explosion:** The demon's fiery mantle explodes in a noisy burst of pyrotechnics. The demon can shape the details of this effect. This can range from a soft pop and a single ball of white fire used as a signal flare to a loud boom and a burst of colored fire that showers everything within three yards with flames, and anything in between. If used offensively, anyone caught in the blast suffers two lethal damage automatically unless they have cover (treat as an explosion).

SAVANT CORE

A Savant Core is a computer processing unit embedded within the demon's body, a CPU that has an outstanding amount of ability with one specific Skill.

Appearance: The core can look like any type of computer, from a classic tape-fed unit to a modern earpiece with a holographic monitor projected over the demon's eyes.

Systems: The Savant Core has five dots in a Skill of your choosing. Choose it when you take this Technology. The demon has access to that Skill for a scene, if he's willing to take an instant action to access the databanks first.

The Skill can be one the demon possesses, but it doesn't add to the demon's ability; it replaces it. So if the demon has Brawl 3, the Savant Core lets the demon access Brawl 5 when active.

CHAPTER THREE: RECYCLED MATERIALS

SHELDDED COMPARTMENT

It serves the God-Machine's interests to keep certain objects hidden from the world until it is time to reveal them. It might be the powerful artifact waiting for the right wielder, the cursed relic whose emanations would disrupt a project, or simply a pistol kept hidden from metal detectors and pat-downs long enough for the angel to reach his assassination target.

Appearance: The demon appears to have a small safe door embedded in his chest. The combination dial at the center has a hundred arcane symbols where the numbers would be, and the demon's pulsing veins crisscross the exterior of the door.

Systems: The demon has a small (1 cubic foot) pocket dimension hidden in his body that he can open or close as an instant action. Objects placed inside cease to exist so long as the door to the compartment remains closed. Neither mundane searches and scanners nor supernatural senses and powers can detect or manipulate the contents of the pocket dimension. Objects within the compartment still age and gradually lose energy as if in a much larger space, so a cell phone left on inside for a week has a dead battery when it is removed, for example and a grenade with the pin pulled explodes harmlessly, leaving a pile of shrapnel.

Despite the apparent combination lock, the compartment door will not open for anyone other than the demon unless he is rendered unconscious. If this happens, opening it requires an extended Wits + Larceny action with successes equal to the demon's Strength + Primum. Each roll requires one minute.

PROPELLSIONS

AQUATIC

Humans know little about the bottom of the ocean, but the God-Machine has servants there. A demon with this ability does not need oxygen and can survive depths that would crush modern submarines. Additionally, once she has completely submerged herself in water, she can become a part of the liquid that surrounds her, traveling through it and any pipes or channels open to it without creating so much as ripple.

Appearance: The demon has flippers for feet and her body is slightly stretched to make it more graceful underwater. A membrane covers her eyes, nose, and ears when her face comes into contact with water.

Systems: The demon is capable of swimming and diving with a species factor of 10 to her Speed. Although she has a higher tolerance for cold water than most humans, she will need additional equipment or abilities to endure extremely cold water for significant lengths of time. Cloudy or dark water can obscure her vision underwater.

If the demon is entirely submerged, the player may spend one point of Aether as a reflexive action for the demon to transform into the water that surrounds her. The demon can

only do so if she is in her full demonic form. It does not function in a partial transformation. While in liquid form, the outcast is immune to all physical attacks, which merely pass through her watery body. Most supernatural attacks that do not require a physical means of delivery can still target the demon if the attacker has some means of perceiving the Unchained's actual location within the water. Sufficient heat or cold can temporarily neutralize the demon by vaporizing or freezing her liquid body; although this prevents her from returning to her humanoid form until she condenses or melts, it doesn't inflict any lasting damage. The demon's body is physically indistinguishable from the water in which she hides, rendering her undetectable except by supernatural means. She can, however, move against the current of running water as easily as swimming or flow up drain pipes in this state.

While she remains in liquid form, the demon cannot make physical attacks or take any action that requires a body — including many demon form abilities. She may still use Embeds, Exploits, and form abilities that don't require a physical component, however. The outcast can spread herself thin in this form but cannot "divide herself" without additional powers. A bathtub spigot or the steady trickle of a faucet might allow her to flow into a bathroom, for example, but a dripping faucet or a showerhead set to massage (one with short bursts of water instead of unbroken streams) would not. Nor can the demon be involuntarily chopped up in this way. If only a portion of the demon's liquid body enters a space before the flow of water is cut off, her entire body exists on whichever side of the obstruction contains enough water to encompass her (the demon's choice if this is true of both sides). In the event that neither side has enough water to conceal the demon's liquid body, she suffers one point of lethal damage unless she leaves her demon form entirely.

The demon can leave her liquid form with the expenditure of one point of Aether. If she currently exists within a volume of water large enough to accommodate her normal demonic form (a swimming pool or very full bath, for example), she can return to the flesh of that form normally as a reflexive action. If the volume of water in the area is at least equal to that of her demon form but she could not submerge herself in it (a shallow stream or a large puddle, for example), she can leave the liquid form as an instant action. If the demon's has somehow become trapped in a body of water that is too small to accommodate her demon form (such as if a clever enemy carefully bailed out the bathtub where she was hiding until it was too shallow for her to reform in easily), the demon has two choices: She can return to demonic form as an instant action but suffers one lethal damage, or she can return to one of her Covers as an instant action (costing the usual 1 Aether) to avoid the damage.

BURROWING

Many of the God-Machine's gears and much of Its Infrastructure lurks below the Earth's surface. Angels expand their creator's subterranean domain or plumb the earth for undiscovered lodes of rare materials it needs for its projects. De-

mons with this ability can move through snow, sand, gravel, or loose earth as easily as walking or running overland. They can also burrow through harder surfaces at a slower pace.

Appearance: The demon's hands and feet become a mass of whirling drills. When not in use, these drill bits fold back along her forearms and calves, allowing her to use her hands and feet normally, although they remain obvious.

Systems: The demon can burrow through loose material at her normal Speed. She can move through Durability 1 materials (wood, clay, etc.) at half her Speed and through Durability 2 materials (stone, cement, etc.) at one quarter her Speed (rounded down in both cases). Movement through Durability 3 materials (steel, iron, etc.) requires the demon to expend 1 Aether per minute and progresses at an effective Speed of 1. Used as a weapon, it is equivalent to a chainsaw (p. 329 of *Demon: The Descent*).

TREAD

Unchained with this Propulsion bear treads like large-scale construction equipment or a military tank. This offers a constant, unimpeded movement over even the most hostile environments.

Appearance: The demon's legs are replaced with a modular cluster of wheels, surrounded by tread. She can manipulate and adapt the wheels to form different shapes and tackle different obstacles. The treads are no louder than walking, but have a distinct, constant sound that differs greatly from footsteps.

Systems: The demon suffers no environmental penalties from ground-based obstacles. She simply moves over them without impediment. She's also not slowed by carrying any amount of weight she can lift. She moves her full Speed as long as she's within her normal carrying capacity. Treads are markedly heavy, and she can attack as if she were a crashing vehicle (see *Demon: The Descent*, p. 335). However, the demon uses Athletics instead of Drive to strike, and her treads offer 2 points of Handling.

For example, a character has Dexterity 3, Athletics 3, and Speed 10. The player rolls 8 dice to crash into an opponent (Dexterity 3 + Athletics 3 + Handling 2). Subtract the victim's Defense. If the player scores 3 successes, the attack causes 9 bashing damage (5 for Size, 3 for Successes, 1 for Speed). Like any other crash, this causes the Knockdown Tilt. If the demon crashes into a vehicle, halve any damage she should take to her Structure (round up) and apply it to her Health.

URBAN FLUIDITY

The demon has an affinity for manmade creations and can travel unimpeded to any she can see.

Appearance: The demon moves rapidly to any single object she can see and clings to it. She moves in the straightest path possible at a nearly imperceptible blur. She strikes the nearest surface and stands against it, regardless of the angle she approaches.

Systems: Urban Fluidity replaces normal movement and Speed rules when used. It can be used once per turn in place

of a character's standard movement. The demon moves rapidly to any single, man-made object she can see, and clings to it as if she were standing flat on it, regardless of direction or gravity. She can stand on an object from any direction, so long as it could support her weight. She moves in the most direct way possible and cannot take any actions along the way.

PROCESSES

AMORPHOUS

The God-Machine favors specialized angelic forms, but It appears to recognize that some projects require an angel be versatile above all other design requirements. Demons with this ability can modify their demonic forms on the fly to address specific problems.

Appearance: The demon's skin has a plastic appearance or resembles soft putty that has been pressed into its current shape by hurried, careless fingers.

System: The demon can only use this ability if he is in his full demonic form. It does not function in a partial transformation. The player can spend one point of Aether for the demon to replace any of his Modifications with another Modification or a Technology with another Technology. He can instead spend two points of Aether to replace a Propulsion with another Propulsion. Processes cannot be swapped by this ability. Any replacement requires an instant action. The demon can replace any number of Modifications, Technologies, or Propulsions for which he has the Aether, but each swap requires a separate action and Aether expenditure. Finally, the demon cannot swap a replacement ability for another replacement ability.

All replacement abilities remain in effect until the demon leaves his demonic form. He may also choose to revert some or all these temporary abilities to those of her normal demonic form for one point of Aether and an instant action.

For example, Mr. Shade has Armored Plates as one of his demonic form's Modifications. For one point of Aether and an action, he can replace it with Electrical Sight. If he later wishes to gain Inhuman Intelligence, he cannot replace Electrical Sight with Inhuman Intelligence. Instead, he must choose another of his demonic form's Modifications to alter or return Electrical Sight to Armored Plates and then transform Armored Plates into Inhuman Intelligence – costing two Aether and two actions (one to return abilities to those of the normal demonic form and one to replace the Modification again).

DATAFORM

The Unchained with this Process can temporarily cease material existence. She becomes purely an expression of digital composition for a few valuable seconds.

Appearance: The demon's form is covered with metal gates, capacitors, and microprocessors. They burrow out of

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her flesh like silicon moles or skin tags. When the demon becomes data, there's a brief blue flash of numbers and letters where she stood, then she ceases to exist in any visible way.

Systems: This Process costs one point of Aether per turn. Dataform is activated as an instant action. If the demon becomes data without a method of transmission, she stays exactly where she was, until she reforms. If she's touching something that can transmit data, such as an Ethernet cable or a Bluetooth adapter, she can travel at the speed of data to any other accessible node. In effect, this offers instantaneous transportation. Practically, she can travel anywhere on the same continent in one turn, across an ocean in another turn, or elsewhere at Storyteller discretion. She can reform at any terminal point she wishes. However, she is only aware of her location by way of the data she intercepts. She obtains IP addresses and other data identifiers, but she does not know her location geographically without interpreting that information. Interpreting such information requires a reflexive Wits + Computer roll, with a -2 penalty due to the rapidity of the data flow.

ELIMINATOR CANNON

Some angels rain fire and sulfur down upon the cities of man while others leave behind lumps of plastic explosive, but the effect is much the same. Demons with this ability can produce both timed and triggered explosives.

Appearance: One entire arm transforms into a grenade launcher or mortar and cannot be used to manipulate items.

Systems: The demon can generate and fire a concussion or fragmentation grenade as an action (p. 179 of *World of Darkness*). These projectiles use her Dexterity + Firearms and have a range of 75/150/300, a blast area of 3, and a damage of 3 (lethal or bashing damage as determined by the demon).

The player can instead spend one point of Aether for the demon to generate a timed or triggered explosive with a blast area of 4 and a damage of 3 + the demon's Primum rating. In both cases this resembles a brick of dynamite or plastique (p. 179 of the *World of Darkness Rulebook*). If it is a timed explosive, the demon must determine when it will detonate at the time she generates it. If it is a triggered explosive, the demon may set it off at any time (player spends one point Aether) as a reflexive action. There is no range limit to these triggered explosives, provided the demon is on the same plane of existence (a demon couldn't use the Rip the Gates Exploit to flee to the Underworld and then set off a bomb). The total number of undetonated explosives the demon can maintain at any time cannot exceed twice her Primum. If she creates a new explosive when she has reached this maximum, one of the current explosives (chosen randomly) disintegrates.

NANOBOT COMPOSITION

Billions of nanobots comprise the demon's form. By default, she'll always return to her original state. However, in the moment, she can shift and change parts, eliminating and dividing limbs, dispersing or condensing parts.

Appearance: Once active, a chosen body part breaks down into a cloud of microscopic machines. To the untrained eye, it becomes a faint haze. The individual nanobots are tiny robots that look like technological amoeba, with simple microprocessors and attaching limbs. As the demon chooses to reform the nanobots, she may choose whatever shape she wishes with the same rough size as the original limb.

Systems: The demon can create objects and simple machines from her body. She cannot change the total Size of her form, but she can shift it into different configurations. She still suffers and heals damage normally. However, with a point of Aether she can reflexively make a part of her body fade into a cloud of nanobots, ignoring a single attack or direct source of harm. A dispersed body part can only be hurt by sources that hurt large areas, such as fires.

NEW MERITS

These additional Merits supplement those in *Demon: The Descent* in order to offer some additional options for your Unchained character. Some might be suitable for other types of character, at Storyteller discretion.

ADVANCE FORM (•)

Effect: Your character has fewer of the lesser form benefits, but more of the greater advantages. When taking this Merit, sacrifice one Modification or Technology and take an additional Propulsion or Process in its place.

EFFICIENT DEALER (••)

Prerequisites: Appropriate Specialty (Law in Academics, Long Con in Subterfuge, etc.)

Effect: Using clever terminology and logic loops, your character makes more efficient pacts than others. When designing a pact (see *Demon: The Descent*, p. 189), ignore one level of asset on the demon's side. So, if the demon has +4 in assets, and the subject has +2, there's only a difference of one asset with this Merit in effect.

ELECTROMAGNETIC LINGUISTICS (••)

Prerequisite: Computers •

Effect: You are more in tune with the "machine" portion of the God-Machine than most. In addition to all native human languages, you can decipher machine code, programming languages, and even electromagnetic signals. This can range from reading a piece of computer code and instinctively understanding what the program is intended to do to "hearing" text messages as they zip through the air. Wireless broadcasts can be plucked from the air, but information sent via landline requires you to physically plug a cable into your body. (This doesn't inflict any damage, but it's disconcerting and counts as a compromise if you're under Cover.) Encrypted data isn't automatically deciphered, but you can try to hack it just like if you had the data on a computer.

In especially signal-dense areas, like major first-world cities where lots of people have smartphones and wi-fi networks and such, the Storyteller might call for a Wits + Composure roll to isolate a particular transmission, much like trying to listen to a single conversation in a crowded room.

HIGH TOLERANCE (• OR ••)

Effect: The demon either has a mutable sense of self-image, or has not yet decided on her ultimate form. She's surprisingly tolerant of grafts, and can attach a gadget containing a new form ability to her body without suffering any form of rejection. The demon can graft one gadget containing a form ability to his demonic form without losing access to his other form abilities. The one-dot version of this Merit allows her to graft a gadget containing a Modification or Technology to her demonic form without losing a form ability. The two-dot version instead allows grafting a Propulsion or Process.

LIVING THE LIE (•)

Prerequisites: Primum ••+

Effect: When you acquire a new Cover, choose a Virtue and Vice for that identity. While you're using that Cover, you can regain Willpower by channeling either your own Virtue and Vice or the Cover's.

MONKEYWRENCHER (••)

Prerequisites: Primum ••

Effect: Your character has a strong affinity for the nature of her Embeds. Because of this, your character can negate Embeds that match her Incarnation, or her Cipher. When another demon uses an Embed that fits either your character's Incarnation or a known Key, she can reflexively attempt to counter it by temporarily negating the logistical loophole in reality that allows the Embed to engage. She can also attempt to Monkeywrench any time an angel activates a Numen. Spend an Aether and roll Resolve + Primum. Successes subtract from the user's activation roll.

Drawback: Use of Monkeywrencher is always a compromise. The first time in a scene, the compromise is made at +1. Each time thereafter, it's made at a cumulative -1.

RESONANCE AWARE (• TO ••••)

Prerequisites: Wits •••

Effect: Your character's Primum is deeply connected to its surroundings. When opening her senses to aetheric resonance (see *Demon: The Descent*, p. 184), add your dots in Resonance Aware to Primum for determining the range of her senses.

RESONANCE SENSITIVE (•)

Prerequisites: Wits ••••

Effect: Your character is particularly attuned to aetheric resonance. When opening her senses to the Aether (see *De-*

mon: The Descent, p. 184), you do not need to spend a point of Aether to activate the ability. Effectively, her senses are open whenever you choose. The Storyteller should alert you any time there is nearby resonance.

Additionally, this Merit allows your character to identify demons on sight without spending Aether.

SUBSUMED GADGET (••)

Prerequisites: Primum •••

Effect: With this Merit, your character has integrated a gadget into her demonic form. She can heal the gadget as if it were part of her form. She can activate the gadget even when her demonic form is not currently exposed; she simply accesses the quantum state that keeps her demonic form. She can access it at any time by concentrating.

Drawback: Since the gadget is part of her body, your character cannot remove it, offer use to another, or keep it hidden when the demonic form is exposed.

SYMPATHETIC STIGMATIC (••)

Prerequisites: True Friend

Effect: Your character is tied inexorably to a stigmatic. He understands your demon better than anyone else. He feels what your demon feels. Without academically understanding, he empathizes with your demon's struggle. If he's present when your character makes headway toward finding a Key (see Finding the Keys in *Demon: The Descent*, p. 157), add +2 to the roll. If she activates a Key in the stigmatic's presence, the resulting Interlock benefits from the 9-again quality on all rolls.

The stigmatic does not bear any obvious stigmata. Rather, any time your demon suffers injury, so does the stigmatic.

Drawback: This level of affinity can be dangerous. Most demons never let anyone in to the degree of a Sympathetic Stigmatic. Your demon cannot help it.

Note: This is a companion Merit to Sympathetic Demon (see below). If a player's character has Sympathetic Stigmatic reflecting a Storyteller character, that character possesses the companion version automatically.

TATTOOED GADGET (••)

Effect: Your character has learned how to use her flesh as hardware for Embedded gadgets. Your character can install an Embed into a gadget, using a part of her own body for the gadget hardware instead of an appropriate item, creating a mark that looks much like a tattoo instead of a piece of mechanical hardware. Using the skin does not incur any penalties or bonuses to the gadget creation process. All tattooed gadgets must have an activation roll, but do not need any triggers for activation and always activate as a reflexive action. A tattooed gadget cannot be lost, stolen, destroyed, or overclocked. If the demon chooses to break his connection to the gadget, it simply fades from his body.



STIGMATIC MERITS

These Merits can help flesh out a stigmatic character. These could apply to Storyteller or player-controlled characters.

POTENT BLOOD (•)

Effect: Your character's stigmata is a more traditional definition of the word — blood wells to her skin and seeps out. However, the blood flows with Aether. Every other day, your stigmatic generates a point of Aether and simultaneously takes a lethal point of damage reflecting the blood loss. By consuming some of the blood, a demon can ingest and intake the Aether. Any sorcerer or mortal using a Supernatural Merit can anoint herself in the blood to gain a +2 bonus to any relevant supernatural action. This bonus expends the Aether in the blood. This advantage includes any Supernatural Merits your character uses, if she so adorns herself with the blood. A vampire consuming this blood gains the Merit: Unseen Sense — God Machine for a number of nights equal to the damage inflicted on the stigmatic.

Drawback: The blood is exotic. If word of its properties becomes known, the stigmatic probably doesn't have long to live.

SLEEVE INTEGRATOR (• TO ••••)

Prerequisites: Integrity ••••+

Effect: Your character can act as a temporary Cover for a demon due to her affinity with Aether. In exchange, she can access some of the demon's tricks of the trade. By spending a Willpower point, your character opens herself up to merging with the Unchained. A demon can become one with her, taking her on as a new Cover for a day with Cover dots equal to her Integrity. She ceases to be, outside existence as the Cover, which the demon controls.

After a day (or less, if the demon withdraws early), your character gains access to one Embed per dot in Sleeve Integrator. The demon needs to know all of the Embeds that the stigmatic wishes to access. She keeps these Embeds until the next time she allows a demon to take her on as Cover.

Drawback: During the time possessed, the demon has full control of her life. If the demon puts her into a hard position, this could prove complicated. If the demon goes loud, the stigmatic is annihilated, just as a normal Cover would be.

SYMPATHETIC DEMON (••)

Effect: Your character is tied inexorably to a demon. Without academically understanding, she empathizes with the stigmatic's struggle. Once per chapter, you may declare that the demon coincidentally is on the scene when most convenient.

Drawback: Any time the demon suffers injury, so does your character.

Note: This is a companion Merit to Sympathetic Stigmatic (see above). If a player's character has one reflecting a Storyteller character, that character possesses the companion version automatically.

INTEGRITY AND BREAKING POINTS

The following systems are adapted and reprinted from the **God-Machine Chronicle**. They are included here to facilitate play of stigmatic and human characters in a **Demon** chronicle.

INTEGRITY

The Morality system described in the **World of Darkness Rulebook** provides a workable system for measuring the effects of characters' behavior upon their psyches, but it has a few problems. Most of those problems stem from terminology. The system doesn't measure morality so much as behavior, and the consequences (increased willingness to transgress the "hierarchy of sins" and, potentially, derangements) are more akin to post-traumatic stress disorder than the actual effects of the crimes on the list.

The Morality system is designed to evoke the Gothic/Victorian ethos in which a person's sanity was thought to be a function of their morality. It was also designed to be mutable enough to change and provoke a moral or spiritual framework for the various supernatural beings. When a mortal becomes a vampire, therefore, "Morality" becomes "Humanity" and measures how much of the Man has fallen to the ravenous Beast. If a mortal undergoes the First Change and becomes a werewolf, the trait changes to "Harmony" and reflects whether the character is living with a lycanthrope's spiritual duty. A human being stolen by the Fae tracks Clarity, measuring how well he can trust his own senses and to what extent he has become like the Gentry, and so on. In this respect, the Morality system works quite well. Unfortunately, in emulating the Victorian ethos, we wind up implying that one can commit murder and become schizophrenic. This isn't the case. The system suffers from inconsistent and inappropriate terminology and from trying to signify too much within the game.

In addition, when considering a game like **Demon: The Descent**, in which human characters are likely to have had some exposure to the supernatural in the form of the God-Machine (or the Fallen former servants thereof), the Morality system is less useful. It makes no attempt at discussing what happens to a person's psyche when he encounters something as infinitely terrifying as the God-Machine.

To revise it, though, we need to consider what a Morality system should mean to a World of Darkness game. The underlying thematic push here is that what a person does has an effect on their mental state, which is probably fair. However, better representations for that effect than derangements are possible, especially with the rules revisions in this book. And besides, Morality has never really measured Morality — it

measures functionality within society. It measures how well a character copes with what she has seen or done.

With all of that in mind, the following rules replace the Morality and degeneration rules found in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**. They do not apply to demon characters (demons track Cover instead), but stigmatic characters do have Integrity ratings and breaking points.

BREAKING POINTS

A character stands to lose Integrity when she experiences a *breaking point*. The notion of breaking points replaces the notion of "sins" and therefore removes the need for a "hierarchy of sins." If the action would cause a character psychological stress, it's worth considering whether the action constitutes a breaking point. Note, too, that the character may experience breaking points that do not stem from his own actions. Witnessing the gruesome realities of the World of Darkness, supernatural or otherwise, can do it.

When a character performs certain actions or endures certain experiences, he might reach a breaking point. A breaking point simply means that what a character has done or seen has outstripped his ability to rationalize or handle it.

A breaking point can fall into one of the following categories:

- The character performs an action that either violates his personal moral code *or* that is considered unacceptable in society.
- The character witnesses something traumatic, terrifying, or that rattles his understanding of the world.
- The character is the victim of a supernatural attack, whether physical, emotional, or mental.

Breaking points are somewhat subjective, obviously. A homicide detective with 30 years of experience in seeing dead bodies and hearing confessions of killers has a somewhat higher tolerance for human depravity than a sheltered 20-something in a middle-class liberal arts college. During character creation, it is advisable for the Storyteller to come up with several hypothetical situations, so that the player can determine if, in her judgment, those situations would be breaking points.

Note that a breaking point is not necessarily something that the character considers wrong. A character might kill someone in a clear-cut, unambiguous case of self-defense, but the experience is probably still a breaking point, even if the player (and the character!) feels the act was entirely justified. Actions take a toll on the psyche, regardless of whether the actions were righteous.

During character creation, the player should answer the following five questions. The questions are similar to the compromise questions for demon characters, found on p. 113 of **Demon: The Descent**). Each question provides a breaking point for the character. If, during the character creation process, additional breaking points become apparent to the

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player, add them to the list. There's no limit to how many breaking points a character can have. The list isn't a strict list anyway; the Storyteller can stipulate that a given occurrence is a breaking point regardless of whether or not it appears on the players' list. However, the better-defined your character's outlook is, the better your Storyteller's understanding will be of what constitutes a breaking point for that character.

- *What is the worst thing your character has ever done?* This doesn't have to be anything dastardly. If the worst thing your character ever did was steal money from his mother's purse and lie to cover it up, that's fine. What's important here is to consider something that your character did that made him hate himself. The superlative "worst" is something that the character would apply. Choose a breaking point based on the answer to this question.
- *What is the worst thing your character can imagine himself doing?* We imagine ourselves in various scenarios to test our own self-image against a hypothetical situation. When children do it, it's called imaginative play, but it fills the same niche. What can you can character reasonably see himself doing, but still know that it would be wrong? Can your character imagine killing someone in self-defense? Torturing someone for information? How about robbing a store with a gun?
- *What is the worst thing your character can imagine someone else doing?* Of course, we all know that people are capable of some hideous atrocities. What tops your character's list? Serial murder? Rape? Torture? Spree killing? If your character is extremely sheltered or misanthropic, he might have a skewed view here; he might hang on to some lofty, cerebral notion of "dishonor" or "betrayal" as the nadir of human behavior.
- *What has the character forgotten?* In the World of Darkness, it's next to impossible to grow up without any exposure to the supernatural. Decide what your character saw and forgot. Did she see a vampire take the form of mist and vanish? A man turn into a wolf? Maybe she caught a glimpse of the God-Machine through a door that should never have been propped open? Describe this scene in as much detail as you can. This is a breaking point that has already occurred, but it helps set a benchmark for what your character would have to see in order to experience one now.

Stigmatic characters should replace this question with: *How much does the character remember?* Since all stigmatics have been touched by the God-Machine in some way, it's worthwhile to consider whether or not the character remembers anything specific about how that contact happened. If the answer is "nothing," that's fine, but it does mean that when supernatural events start to surround that character, she's assured of some breaking points.

- *What is the most traumatic thing that has ever happened to the character?* No one goes through life with no trauma. Your character might have been mugged, beaten as a child, in a serious car accident, been kidnapped by a parent during a di-

vorce, survived a life-threatening disease, attempted suicide, been attacked by a supernatural (or natural!) creature, or any number of other traumatic experiences. Again, the goal here isn't to make a traumatized character. It's to set a bar.

EXAMPLES

Below are three examples of defining breaking points for starting characters:

Matt's **Demon** chronicle has expanded and the Unchained characters have formed an Agency that manipulates human and stigmatic characters into performing supporting roles without their knowledge. His players have decided they would like to play some of these dupes, and then design their demons' operation around what happened during the "supporting cast" game. The three of them make characters for this story. Two players, Hal and Beth, make human characters, while Alice makes a stigmatic.

- Hal's character, Ryan Berenczek, is a former bouncer, fired after he got too rough with a patron. Hal sets about answering the questions to build Ryan's breaking points.

What is the worst thing Ryan has ever done? Hal is tempted to use the incident at the bar to answer this question, but he figures beating a guy up in a bar fight isn't the worst thing Ryan has ever done. He decides that Ryan hit someone with his car one rainy night. He saw the guy fly over his windshield and land in the street. Ryan doesn't know if the guy is OK or not and has never attempted to find out. Hal talks with the Storyteller over how to phrase this as a breaking point, and they eventually decide on "causing injury or death through carelessness." Note that this isn't to say that deliberately hurting someone *wouldn't* be a breaking point to Ryan, simply that doing so carelessly definitely is.

What is the worst thing Ryan can imagine himself doing? Ryan is accustomed to violence. He can see himself killing someone in a fight. He knows how, and he thinks about it sometimes, but the thought scares him. "Killing deliberately" is the breaking point, here.

What is the worst thing Ryan can imagine someone else doing? Working as a bouncer, Ryan heard stories about people drugging drinks, but he never actually witnessed it. The thought of slipping someone a roofie makes Ryan livid. It just seems cowardly and sneaky and *wrong*. Hal phrases this as "drugging someone for purposes of rape."

What has Ryan forgotten? Matt has asked the players to come up with answers to this question that call back to the **Demon** chronicle's events. Hal smirks, remembering when one of the characters used the Animate Exploit on the statue of a lion outside a church. He decides that Ryan was getting off a bus, drunk, when that lion returned to its post. "Witnessing the city move" is the breaking point.

What is the most traumatic thing that ever happened to Ryan? Hal decides that Ryan has always had money problems, and a few months ago, he got hooked up with a crew that was going to rob an armored car. The barfight that cost Ryan his job

happened the night before the planned heist, and Ryan didn't show up — he was in the hospital, under police questioning. Every person on the heist was killed. Hal considers "participating in a felony" as a breaking point, but decides that's going to come up too often. He chooses "picking up a gun" instead.

- Beth, making a character for the same chronicle, wants to be someone with a background in espionage, but she doesn't want to make a slick young super-spy. She decides that her character is elderly and worked counter-intelligence during the Korean War. She names her character Earl Givler.

What is the worst thing Earl has ever done? Earl has shot other soldiers in the line of duty, but that was a long time ago; Beth reasons that time and perspective have dulled the impact of that violence. She decides that Earl lost his temper with his son when the boy was five and smacked him across the face. The force of the blow ruptured his eardrum, and while the damage healed, Earl never quite got over it. "Harming a child" is the breaking point.

What is the worst thing Earl could imagine himself doing? The recent torture scandals in the US government brought back some unpleasant memories for Earl. He never actually tortured anyone, but there was talk it was happening, and he believes, in his private moments of reflection, that he would have done it if it was necessary. Beth writes down "inflicting torture" as a breaking point.

What is the worst thing Earl can imagine someone else doing? Earl has seen some pretty horrible things in his life, but his uncle was a World War II vet and brought home stories of concentration camps and death trains. Beth asks if "mass murder" is too extreme of a breaking point. Matt allows it, though he makes it clear that *witnessing* such a crime would be the breaking point, not committing it.

What has Earl forgotten? Since Matt has requested that this refer back to the previous events of the **Demon** chronicle, Beth decides that Earl lives in an apartment building that overlooks an alleyway. Hal's demon character invoked a soul pact and took someone's life as a Cover in that alley, and Earl was looking out the window. All he saw was a biomechanical monster touch a person on the shoulder, and that person evaporated into black ash. Earl assumes he dreamed the whole thing. "Seeing a person destroyed" is the breaking point (and Matt makes a note that "destroyed" is different than "killed").

What is the most traumatic thing Earl has ever experienced? Earl witnessed an execution in the war. It was an enemy soldier who killed one of Earl's compatriots after being captured. Earl saw the man forced down to his knees and shot. Although Earl has shot people in combat, seeing someone die helpless, even someone who deserved it (as Earl still believes the man did), haunted him for a long time. Beth takes "killing a helpless person" as the breaking point.

- Alice wants to play a stigmatic and asks if she can take any supernatural Merits. Matt agrees to let her take Omen Sensitivity, and Alice names her psychic character Starla Moon (it's a stage name; Starla is a performer).

"MY CHARACTER KILLS PEOPLE ALL THE TIME"

Is it possible for a character to reach a point where killing another human being is *not* a breaking point? Players might make the argument for soldiers, policemen, gang members or even stigmatics to be exempt from suffering breaking points from taking a life, up to a point. For mortal, non-supernatural characters, our recommendation is that if a character kills a person, it's *always* a breaking point, even if the player gets a positive modifier to the roll.

Note that we said "mortal, non-supernatural" character. Vampires, werewolves and other shadow-folk aren't fully human and don't play by the same rules. What about stigmatic characters, then? Stigmatics are human, but are touched by the God-Machine. Killing another person should still probably be a breaking point for a stigmatic, provided that the stigmatic is aware of what she is doing.

What is the worst thing Starla has ever done? Alice wants Starla's life to be largely free of violence but to have a lot of supernatural weirdness. She decides that Starla has had prophetic visions all her life; in high school, she saw an omen that indicated that several of the football players were going to die at a railroad crossing. She didn't say anything, and sure enough, the next weekend three of her classmates died when one of them tried to race a train. Starla has never forgiven herself. Alice takes "withholding life-or-death information from a vision" as a breaking point.

What is the worst thing Starla can imagine herself doing? The players know from a previous incident in the chronicle that a particular building downtown is Elimination Infrastructure. Alice asks Matt if Starla can know about the gears in the basement of the building and their effect on anyone who steps off the bottom step (in short, anyone who does so is immediately sucked into the workings and destroyed). Matt agrees, and Starla notes "take someone to the basement" as a breaking point.

What is the worst thing Starla can imagine someone else doing? Starla is a transgender woman. While she has been fortunate enough to avoid any violent confrontations due to this, she is well aware of what other transgender people have gone through. Alice checks with the other players to see if sexual violence is a topic that they would prefer to avoid. The con-

CHAPTER THREE: RECYCLED MATERIALS

sensus at the table is that it's OK if such topics are hinted at, but no one wants to actually see a sexual assault scene played out in game. Alice gives Starla "violent sexual assault" as a breaking point.

How much does Starla remember? Starla has had prescient visions all her life, but she wasn't born stigmatic. Alice considers whether the God-Machine was present in Starla's life before she discovered the Infrastructure in the basement, but decides that It wasn't. Starla saw a vision of the gears as she was about to step off the bottom step (she doesn't even remember why she went down those stairs), and hasn't been able to forget them since. Alice puzzles over the breaking point here, but eventually decides on "witnessing the overt manifestation of the God-Machine." That's going to come up, of course, but Alice is looking forward to it.

What is the most traumatic thing that ever happened to Starla? Starla has never actually seen anyone get sucked into the gears in the basement, but she's had visions of it happening and knows she's going to witness it eventually. Matt asks if those visions are really the most traumatic thing that Starla's ever experienced, and Alice decides that when Starla went back up the stairs, a security guard with two smoky-glass eyes told her, "it's not time for you to be here yet." Then he pointed to another door, and Starla saw herself, leaving the building. Alice writes down "time fluctuations" as a breaking point. Since one of the demon characters knows the Four Minutes Ago Exploit, this has some dramatic potential.

DETERMINING A BREAKING POINT

If the player has completed the five questions listed a few page ago, the Storyteller should have at least a baseline for determining breaking points for the character. Even so, the player is welcome to decide that any event during a game is a breaking point and the Storyteller is likewise within her rights to make that choice for any character.

If a player feels that a given event should *not* count as a breaking point, he is free to argue the matter with the Storyteller. If it's important to the player, it's best to let the matter go — the player has a better sense of his character than anyone else. Obviously, the Storyteller shouldn't let this guideline allow for abuse, but that's where the player-guided definitions of breaking points come in.

Example: Earl, Ryan and Starla (the characters from the previous examples) are all recruited by the demon characters and asked to interrogate a young businessman (why this is important and why the demons can't do it themselves are points the troupe will figure out later). They find the businessman in a bar. Starla distracts him, Ryan acts as lookout, and Earl slips a pill into the man's drink.

This could, theoretically, be a breaking point for any of the characters. They are drugging another person for purposes of making him pliable to questioning — they don't intend to hurt him, but this is certainly a violation of the man's rights. In particular, it hews uncomfortably close to one of Ryan's breaking points. Matt asks the players if they think this act counts as a breaking point.

Beth answers no; Earl doesn't see this as a problem. Of course, if the man won't talk and Earl is forced to resort to more unpleasant methods, *that* will be a breaking point, but Beth would rather play that scene out if it happens.

Hal says that this is a breaking point for Ryan; Ryan feels extremely uncomfortable with the whole scenario. Given that the end goal for the drugging isn't assault, but simple questioning, Hal asks for a modifier on the breaking point roll. Matt agrees, and Hal makes the roll with a +1 modifier.

Alice also feels this is a breaking point for Starla. Starla has never done anything like this before, and it makes her queasy. Her Vice is Impressionable, and this act is in line with her Vice (she's just going along with it because Earl was insistent). Alice therefore rolls at a -1.

SYSTEM

When a character experiences a breaking point, the player rolls Resolve + Composure with a modifier based on the character's Integrity rating:

Integrity	Modifier
8-10	+2
7-6	+1
5-4	0
3-2	-1
1	-2

The Storyteller can also impose modifiers based on how heinous the breaking point is, relative to the character's experience. The chart below gives some suggestions, but again, the Storyteller and the player are encouraged to develop the character's moral framework and life experience to the point that modifiers can be customized. Modifiers are cumulative, but the total modifier from circumstances should not exceed +/-5 dice.

Breaking Point	Modifier
Character is protecting himself	+1
Character is acting in accordance with his Virtue	+1
Character is protecting a loved one	+2
Character is acting in accordance with his Vice	-1
Witnessing the supernatural (non-violent)	-1
Witnessing the supernatural (violent)	-2
Witnessing an accidental death	-2
Witnessing a murder	-3
Committing premeditated murder	-5

Breaking Point	Modifier
Killing in self-defense	-4
Killing by accident (car wreck, e.g.)	-4
Causing visible serious injury to a person	-2
Torture	-3
Enduring physical torture	-2
Enduring mental/emotional supernatural attack	-2
Enduring physical supernatural attack	-2
Witnessing a supernatural occurrence	-1 to -5, depending on severity

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character's worldview has been damaged, perhaps beyond repair. The character suffers from traumatic stress. Lose a dot of Integrity and choose from the following Conditions (or create a new one with Storyteller approval): Broken, Fugue, or Madness. Also, take a Beat.

Failure: The character's worldview has been shaken and he probably questions his sense of self, his ability to relate to people, his own moral worth, or his sanity. Lose a dot of Integrity and choose one of the following Conditions (or create a new one with Storyteller approval): Guilty, Shaken, or Spooked.

Success: The character has come through the breaking point intact. He might feel guilty or upset about what happened, but he can cope. Choose one of the following Conditions (or create a new one with Storyteller approval): Guilty, Shaken, or Spooked.

Exceptional Success: The character somehow manages not only to survive the breaking point, but to find meaning in it, to reaffirm his own self-worth, or to pass through fire and become tempered by it. The character takes a Beat and regains a point of Willpower.





Inventory of the back room of a bookshop owned by subject D-15, operating under the name "Mr. Black."

Item: Five wasps, apparently made of clockwork and glass. Their venom is highly psychoactive, and would lead to aberrant displays of violent behavior in human beings. They have no obvious power source or means of reloading their venom. All five were found hidden in a pizza box, apparently to deter intruders.

Item: A piece of bone reinforced with titanium, wrapped in a thick layer of transparent perspex, apparently removed from a rogue of some variety. Investiture of Essence causes the item to grow to approximately one meter across, such that it can be used as a basic shield.

Item: A five-centimeter square circuit board, wired with several components and a mounting point for a microchip but no power source. Six one-meter leads extend from a serial bus, ending in two-centimeter spikes fitted with delicate electrical pickups.

Item: Sixty microchips, color-coded in twenty-four different varieties. Each contains onboard storage that records a combination of factual information, subconscious data, instinct, and muscle memory. They are designed to fit the mounting point on the circuit board above.

Item: A Blackberry mobile device from 2005. Model unknown due to heavy physical modifications to add an extra circuit board and onboard storage. Device is still capable of internet connection, but also features a "metacognition" application and a ribbon cable ending in a spiked plate designed to fit the soft palate of an adult human.

Item: A Kord Dynamics personal audio recorder. The microcassette door is sealed shut with electrical tape. It can record constantly for six hours. A small switch underneath the casing generates a localized field of conversational chaff — only people within five feet of the device can hear and understand one another. Outside of that distance, any noise is drowned out by the sounds of a popular sports bar.

Item: A money-clip holding five one-hundred dollar bills that cannot be removed. The clip bears signs of tampering and a faintly shining circuit pattern. Humans who clearly see the clip and money become willing to kill to possess it.

Item: A hardback book 316 pages long. The covers are over-designed and feature three different locks. The text is cut together from various claims about deconstructionism and situationism. Reading the book for more than fifteen minutes suspends the reader somewhere outside of reality; opening the book again releases the reader.

Item: A golden sculpture of an apple, engraved with the word "καλλιόπη". Its very presence reacts with the presence of Infrastructure and has a highly detrimental effect on our operatives. Removed to storage; further study deemed too dangerous.

Item: A crude surgical support for the arms and chest of an adult human. Rigid lengths of black iron provide a frame for hydraulic linkages and lengths of cable covered in black oil, set behind toughened glass. A human strapped in to this support becomes noticeably stronger.

Initial recommendation is to hold "Mr. Black" in containment for further questioning. If he created these items or knows how they were created, we should persuade him to pass on that knowledge.

chapter four: GADGETS

"What did you expect, an exploding pen?"

- Q, *Skyfall*

Demons can export aspects of their power into objects to create gadgets, tools that allow limited access to Embeds and Exploits. This chapter expands the options available, including systems for creating gadgets, allowing other people and supernatural beings to use them, using gadgets for Pact fulfillment, and reverse-engineering gadgets to learn new Embeds and Exploits. It also includes plenty of example gadgets.

A DEMON'S PERSPECTIVE ON GADGETS

Every demon has the capability to create gadgets, though it is not an innate piece of knowledge. A demon goes through a learning process to create useful items, a process mostly made up of trial and error. Installing an effect into a gadget is the same as training reality to move in a different way. Reality is resistant to change and pushing a mundane object into a new supernatural purpose is not easy. Demons often find help through seeking advice from more experienced Unchained. The Unchained talk about and trade gadgets enough to spark an interest in newer demons, who then begin experimenting or asking for assistance.

For demons, making gadgets is often a point of personal pride. Not only are the resultant items useful, but creating them allows demons to undermine the God-Machine in a way. The demon is taking what he knows of the God-Machine's secrets, bending them to his own will, and making that will manifest. Not all demons agree that gadget creation is a deliberate slight to the God-Machine, though most can understand the logic.

A few of the Unchained believe that creating a gadget is a risk not worth taking. To make a gadget, the demon must inexorably bind an object of reality to a subroutine of the God-Machine. Doing so can be viewed as forcing the God-Machine's influence into reality and making it stronger, or if not making it stronger then certainly drawing Its attention. Paranoid Inquisitors find that inviting the God-Machine's attention overshadows the usefulness of a gadget. These demons refuse to make or use gadgets and are suspicious of Unchained who do so in their presence. Many more demons feel the risk of exposure is well worth the reward for having a gadget in hand.

Most Unchained, though, actively create gadgets and seek to trade them with their fellows.

EMBEDDED GADGETS

Installing Embeds into a gadget is not a complex procedure. Though the installation does take time and effort, the nature of Embeds makes the process relatively simple. For this reason, most of the Unchained learn to install Embeds before anything else. Usually the process is described to a new demon, as the theory behind the process easy enough for any Unchained to understand.

In order to create an Embedded gadget, the demon must take what he knows and remembers about the secret backdoors through reality and guide the item he wishes to Install through one of those supernatural pathways. Once the object is in position, the demon locks it into place, forcing the supernatural into the natural world and part of reality. This process is strenuous, regardless of the simplicity of the task. The demon first changes the nature of the item by forcing Aether into it. The Aether degrades the core of reality holding the item together, making it malleable to the demon's will. This process changes the metaphysical form of the object, creating a vessel primed to house the Embed effect. If the object is not normally powered for operation, the exchange of Aether is painful for the demon, as he pushes energy through a source that is not receptive to it. Using knock-off hardware makes this part of the process easier. Knock-offs are completely electrical in nature and are already somewhat consistent to the nature of the God-Machine, allowing the demon to forego having to degrade the reality around it.

Once the item is primed, the demon concentrates on the specific effect he wants to Install in the object. He pushes the item towards that effect as he simultaneously pulls the effect into reality. Alignment of the two dictates the exact effect the demon can Embed in the gadget. This is also when a demon can experiment with the Embed's effects to create a near-field gadget (p. 149). As the demon analyzes the Embed, he can attempt to twist its purpose as he pulls it towards the object.

The Unchained warn that this is the most important part of the process, requiring the most time and concentration to

achieve. Some say it is the reason only a limited aspect of an Embed can be Installed into a gadget at a time. The demon must hold the object and the supernatural effect in balance as he attempts to bind the specific effect to the object and lock them together creating the subsequent gadget, exchanging Aether back and forth with the item to create the precise alignment desired. This energy exchange resonates noticeably to any nearby Unchained. It also creates visual effects, such as energy arcs or power flickers. The longer it takes the demon to create the gadget, the more intense these disturbances become.

EXPLOITED GADGETS

Installing Exploits into gadgets is far more taxing and complicated. Though the basic installation process is similar, the metaphysical push and pull is completely different. The Unchained rarely offer to show this process, as it can be dangerous if it takes too long. A simple description is often enough to start an enterprising demon on the right path for experimentation and eventual success.

Instead of priming the object with Aether, the demon simply pulls forth the Exploit and pushes it onto the object until it bends under his will. Creating near-field effects for Exploited gadgets requires more raw power and creativity than for Embedded gadgets, as the demon must wrench the Exploit into reality several times as he attempts to find the exact effect he wants.

During the process, the demon uses the Exploit to completely change the nature of the item so as to create a shell for the Exploited effect. Of course, this burns out the object and it ceases to function in its normal capacity, with the Exploit effect being the only thing it is capable of producing. The demon pours Aether into the object, which warps its essence and metaphysical reality as it becomes a receptacle for the Exploit effect. The outside appearance of the object warps to take on aspects of the Exploit, making it clearly a supernatural thing. Not only does Exploiting a gadget take longer, but it creates an even greater aetheric resonance than Embedding a gadget does. The longer a demon takes to Exploit a gadget, the more likely he is to cause power outages across entire city blocks and create freak electrical storms in the area. This kind of power exchange could draw notice from the God-Machine if it takes too long.

FORM GADGETS

Few Unchained partake in creating form gadgets, as they are both painful and labor intensive to make. The process has parallels to Exploiting a gadget, but instead an Exploit, the demon takes a piece of his own demonic form and welds it into a physical object. Most Unchained do not talk about this process and only teach it if given a good enough incentive. Some demons who have seen form gadgets get the idea and attempt the process without instruction, resulting in an exhausting and painful experience with little to show for the effort.

The fundamental theory is simple enough. A demon must extract his demonic form ability to install into the gadget. To

do so, the demon manifests the form ability either as a partial transformation or by changing to his full demonic form. He must then extract his form ability from his body and reassemble it as part of the object. Depending on the type of form ability, the removal process can be quite painful. Technologies and Propulsions tend to be less painful, as they only require removal of a single subunit from the demon's form, while Modifications and Processes require removal of entire body systems, which is time consuming and excruciating. For this reason, demons almost never witness a form gadget Installation other than their own.

After removing the form ability, the demon begins a welding process using Aether and whatever tools he deems necessary to attach his form ability to the object. The demon must invest much more effort into the process than other types of installations, willing his demonic form ability to remain separate within the material world and not to return to his body. Some demons cannot find the will to go through with the process after they begin. The strain and pain of such an installation can break down the resolve of some of the strongest demons. Of course, stopping halfway through the process or not completing the installation is a dangerous proposition. Formed gadgets have been known to explode with terrible effects when abandoned by an exhausted demon.

Just as with Embedding or Exploiting a gadget, this process resonates with Aether and causes all sorts of electrical effects. Even just a short time installing a form gadget can lead to brownouts across several city blocks, and arcs of electricity can be seen from at least a mile away.

ONE-SHOTS

Creating one-shots, or one-use gadgets, is in essence the same as creating any other Embedded or Exploited gadget. The process is similar, but the results are slightly different. Instead of spending the effort to make one gadget well, a demon spends the same amount of effort to make many gadgets that are more limited in scope. Some of the Unchained claim that one-shots originated from failed experiments with making more powerful gadgets.

While the demon must invest his Aether into each gadget being created, he doesn't have to concentrate on each one the same way he would with a fully Embedded or Exploited gadget. Instead, the demon concentrates on the group, as one entity as he goes through the motions of his installation procedure. For one-shots with Embedded effects, he simply tries to align the objects for effect, not necessarily duration or durability. The same goes for Exploited gadgets as he pushes the Exploit at all the objects at the same time. The Unchained isn't concerned with precision so much as with efficiency.

Usually, this type of installation creates a storm of energy as Aether is poured into all the objects at once. This kind of exchange is arduous; the Unchained performing the installation is often mentally and physically taxed after creating a group of one-shots.

CHAPTER FOUR: GADGETS

LAMBDAS

Few Unchained understand the process of creating lambdas. Many have tried, but few have succeeded, and those who have guard their gadgets with covetous paranoia. A demon seeking information on lambda creation must be very careful about how he goes about asking questions.

The process is fundamentally the same as Embedding or Exploiting a gadget, though it takes more time and requires doing the installation of several powers at once. Just the deconstruction alone is dangerous. Most demons who have reverse engineered a gadget know that the normal outcome for pulling the Embeds and Exploits out of a gadget is its destruction. Yet, to create a lambda, a demon must pull apart gadgets and reassemble them into one complete whole. The act of disassembling the gadgets is slow and exacting. Though dangerous, it is by far the easiest part of the process.

Once the gadgets are disassembled to their barest parts and metaphysical components, the demon must act quickly. He has already created a wasteland of Aether, and the resonance from the process is bound to bring curious Unchained (or angels) to the area. To reassemble the parts and install the effects into one shell, the demon must channel Aether into the item as with normal Embedded or Exploited gadgets. From there, the creation works exactly the same as with Embedded or Exploited gadgets, only he must do the process for both effects at the same time, blending the effects into a new one while holding all aspects in balance.

The whole process is exhausting. It takes hours to complete and if the demon makes a mistake on any part of the process, he is likely to end up with an explosion and the attention of the God-Machine directed his way. For this reason, few demons even attempt the process, though the results are usually impressive.

COMPLICATIONS OF GADGET CREATION

Even if a demon fails to install his effect, an object that has been treated to such an extreme reality bending exercise is changed forever into a supernatural object. Unsuccessful attempts at creating a gadget yields an object with an effect for a short amount of time. Once the power fades, the items still register with aetheric resonance and are harder to destroy than normal mundane objects. Unsuccessful Exploited items are filled with the Aether poured into them, and are volatile and unstable. The Aether bleeds quickly, at a rate of one per hour, and often attracts attention. Once the object is completely drained of Aether, it becomes the same as any other unsuccessfully made gadget.

Once created, a gadget is bound to reality, and in some ways to the demon who created it. The demon has invested his own Aether into the creation of the item, and some of his own connection to reality goes into holding it together. Gad-

get creation does not affect Cover in any way, instead a demon offers up bits of his Primum as his own ties to reality to bind the gadget together, or in the case of form gadgets, his own demonic form. Creating too many gadgets can be demanding on the demon, however, and causes him to suffer strange supernatural fatigues. Each time a demon attempts to create a gadget after the first within the same 24 hour time period, he gains a transient glitch.

This limitation is only in relation to gadget creation; reverse engineering and examining unknown gadgets do not fatigue the demon in the same way. Creating knock-offs and one-shots is less draining on the demon. He can create knock-offs as often as he chooses to, as long as the Storyteller allows it. One-shots are a little more stressful, and the demon needs to rest at least half a day between one-shot creations.

Demons have a connection to any gadget they have created, a thin tenuous thread of aetheric energy that binds them together. A demon always knows if a gadget he created is still functioning, even if he doesn't have possession of it. This does not give the demon knowledge of where the gadget is, just that it has not been destroyed. If a gadget is stolen or lost, the demon can attempt to sever the connection between him and the item. A successful Stamina + Resolve roll allows the demon to destroy the connection he has to the gadget, but all that does is prevent anyone from tracking the gadget back to him. Gadgets survive the death of their creator, even if the connection between gadget and demon is still intact.

TRADING GADGETS

A demon can only create a gadget with an Embed or Exploit she is familiar with, yet she is capable of using any gadget if she knows the right trigger and parameters. Often, demons in a ring Install gadgets with functional effects to pass around to their friends. Some make one-shots to pass out for a specific mission. Trading and gaining new gadgets only requires one demon to share with another the specifics for using the device.

The connection between a gadget and its creator makes the Unchained wary about what gadgets she gives and to whom. Despite this, demons have many reasons to trade gadgets outside their rings, using gadgets as part of an elaborate barter system. Some offer gadgets to garner goodwill with other demons, trading one gadget for another as a sign of trust. Some demons accept lesser and medial pact documents as fair trade for gadgets. Sometimes, though, these arrangements work more like loans than as actual payments, with the pact document serving as collateral for the eventual return of the gadget.

Gadget trading has many levels. Most commonly, Unchained exchange one-shots for money and supplies. Since these gadgets are only good for one use, the Unchained have become accustomed to using them as a form of currency. Embedded and Exploited gadgets are more coveted and can be used in trade for other gadgets, pieces of Cover from other of the Unchained, and even pact documents. Many demons trade Embedded and Exploited gadgets to other demons

during short term working arrangements. These function both to assist their new business partner and as a sign of trust during the dealings.

The Unchained find near-field gadgets fascinating and are excellent bargaining tools. Sometimes these experimental gadgets can be worth more than a normal Embedded or Exploited gadget due to their unique functions. Also, a demon is less likely to attempt to reverse engineer their newly gained near-field gadget, giving the original owner the chance of trading for its return in the future.

Rarely will a demon trade away a form gadget, for in doing so he gives away access to that form ability. Sometimes the Unchained trade form gadgets on a one for one basis to temporarily change their demonic form, either for functionality or to change the appearance as a way to throw off angels who may be stalking them. The Burned are often willing or at least desperate enough to trade form gadgets for a new Cover, with the hopes of one day recovering the lost form ability.

BLACK MARKET EXCHANGE

As with all forms of trade and economy, some of the Unchained engage in a black market exchange of stolen or recovered gadgets. Gadgets from this seedier underside come with a high price tag, but are often worth the risk. The black market is where demons can find near-field gadgets, form gadgets, and occasionally lambdas for sale. Sometimes, suppliers have dangerous gadgets made with the intention to cripple and hurt other demons. Usually black market peddlers are looking for Cover or bits of Cover in exchange for gadgets, but soul pact documents work just as well. Some organizations only accept services for goods, asking the purchaser to perform dangerous tasks in exchange for highly sought-after gadgets. All such transactions are final, and demons must take great care in working out exact contracts for gadgets on a black market.

Stolen gadgets are risky — the creator can, after all, attempt to track it down. Some unscrupulous demons think the best way to steal a gadget from another demon is to kill her for it. Most of the Unchained would rather just not ask where the gadgets are coming from, though knowing if the gadget is going to fall apart within a few days is vital information. Sometimes, scam artists attempt to imitate a black market in order to sell knock-off gadgets at exorbitant prices, hoping the purchaser isn't paying too much attention to details. If the local market is organized, these activities are not tolerated for very long. Organized markets take great pride in their product and reputation.

Usually, black markets are run by rings of demons driven by secret motivations. For these demons, the end result justifies their actions. Often motivations are tied to Agendas, using the enticement of hard-to-find gadgets as a way to manipulate others into following the ring's own Agenda. These organizations can be local in scope, or more widespread. Well-known black market rings tend to stay away from each other, recognizing that competition isn't usually helpful.

THE RITORNELLO RING

The Ritornello Ring formed quickly over two decades ago and has been a well-known and influential ring ever since. The founding members are Tempters with a firm belief that enough demons seeking out Hell together will have an easier time finding it.

The methods of the ring started out innocent enough. Any time they heard about some kind of strange or unique magical item they would seek it out and obtain it. Soon they gathered an impressive collection of Linchpins, gadgets, and assorted magical items. None seemed to really move them forward on their goal, and some of the members grew discouraged at what seemed like a hopelessly endless task with so few to work on it. Their leader, Raphael Dicks, came up with the idea of entreating other demons to help with their search. Simply asking for assistance rarely worked, unless the demons they were talking to happened to also be Tempters, so Raphael quickly settled on offering some of the power and items the ring had amassed over the years as rewards for searchers.

Raphael is a cunning and shrewd demon. No seeking is ever completed by just one demon, for fear that if someone finds Hell before him, she will not return. The Ritornello Ring has quite a few rare gadgets in their possession and word of the ring's transactions spread. Demons from all over come to broker deals for rare and interesting gadgets, only to find the price is rarely what they would have expected. A demon may be asked to go out and tail some other demon for a few weeks, or to kill a human and bring back a lesser gadget from his possessions in exchanged for a more prized gadget. The Ritornello have no limits to what they will do in their search for Hell, and even task demons to kill other demons paying for the deed with especially rare gadgets.

The first few deals opened a floodgate; soon the Ritornello Ring had more demons seeking Hell for them than they could easily manage, so they started taking on new members. The organization's reach and influence has spread so much that they have even drawn the notice of the God-Machine, and some angels know the organization by name. Raphael loves the attention and welcomes angels to seek out his ring, hoping to take one down and extract information from it.

Rumors of the ring are everywhere, but most come with a cautionary tale. While doing business with them may seem worthwhile, demons are asked to perform all sorts of tasks in return for a gadget, information being the least. If a demon has a particularly interesting gadget or feels they have a lead on Hell, the Ritornello will surely learn about it.

THE AUGMENTED FOURTH RING

The Augmented Fourth Ring is a small group of Saboteurs who trade rare gadgets for a variety of mundane things, not the least of which are future favors. The organization sprang up in the past few years and word of them has spread quickly. Their members are Thugs to the core. They do not hide their intention of eventually bringing about the destruction of the

CHAPTER FOUR: GADGETS

God-Machine, and everyone they deal with is very aware that all deals are made to further the cause.

Tiffany Lloyd, a demon with little patience for stupid people, leads the Augmented Fourth. Tiffany's driving goal is to build a demon army strong enough to take down the God-Machine in one huge assault. Tiffany's vision started when the ring suborned a large Infrastructure filled with gadgets. After investigation, they found that all of the gadget effects were detrimental to demons in some way. The Augmented Fourth determined angels had been storing them there for an eventual assault on nearby demons. At first, Tiffany couldn't see a reason to keep the gadgets around, and was going to consign them all to destruction. Of course, destroying so many gadgets at once would draw the attention of angels who were certainly already looking for the ring after it suborned the Infrastructure.

Tiffany reached out to one of her Tempter friends, Ramona Smith, for ideas on what to do with them. Ramona saw an immediate use for the gadgets: sell them to other demons. Though Tiffany felt this was counter-intuitive for dealing with the God-Machine, Ramona explained that she could use the gadgets to gain goodwill and friendship from some of the nastiest demons around. Having those kinds of allies would certainly be worth it in the fight against the God-Machine. This prospect cinched the idea for Tiffany, giving her hope she could destroy the God-Machine and find Hell within her lifetime.

The Augmented Fourth began brokering deals for the gadgets with other demons, demanding agreements to not use the effects on other demons unless absolutely necessary. All the Augmented Fourth asked for in return was the promise of eventual help when the time came to attack the God-Machine. Ramona counseled Tiffany against such idealistic bargains, but she favored trust and loyalty over profits. When repeat customers came about, Ramona put a stop to goodwill alone. The Augmented Fourth needed a way to secure trust in their customers as much as giving out goodwill, so they started a conversion campaign. Buyers needed to prove they were willing to fight by going out and attacking the God-Machine in some way. As long as the buyer brought back proof of destroyed Infrastructure, a dead angel, or a disrupted agent network, they could have whatever gadget they wanted.

When the stock of gadgets ran low, the Augmented Fourth began buying rare and exotic gadgets from other dealers, brokering deals for their own buyers as an intermediary. Most of their transactions at present are as a third party between loyal customers and gadget sellers, doing whatever they must to gain the loyalty of both parties. The Augmented Fourth has created a web of buyers and sellers, all of whom the ring can count on to be at the front lines when they make the call to fight. Are they right?

THE VESNA SVYASHCHENNAYA RING

The Vesna Svyashchennaya Ring was once a high producing and powerful ring of Integrators and Destroyers who collected rare gadgets and sold them for reasonable prices. Very little is known about the structure and organization of the ring, as they

have been completely disbanded; any who are still alive are deep in hiding. Stories of their leadership and members are often told among rings. In some of these stories, they were led by a psychotic Integrator who believed collecting and tagging gadgets would get him in good with the God-Machine. In others, the ring was run into the ground by a group of Destroyers who picked a fight with something bigger than they could handle.

The story of the Vesna Svyashchennaya is more a cautionary tale of what not to do than anything else. The reason the stories are so disjointed and varied is because all of them have seeds of truth. The normal operating standards of the Vesna Svyashchennaya was to find and procure rare and hard-to-produce gadgets. Sometimes they would find a demon's bolthole or someone with an especially useful or interesting gadget and steal it, often leaving the demon for dead in the process. Many of the members took to making gadgets themselves, attempting harder and riskier installations each time. One of the members was actually chained to a workspace and forced to produce gadgets as often as he could, with the other demons in the ring charged with keeping him safe. Several members were addicted to the feeling of making gadgets and would spend every waking moment in their workspace. All had an unnatural obsession with the gadgets they dealt in.

Their practices were risky and they were constantly on the run from angels and angry Unchained. Such a fast and loose operation was bound to crumble under its own weight. Someone – the exact person is vague, but everyone agrees she was high up in the organization – was jealous of a new gadget a member had just made. She decided to steal his latest products and kill him. Some say he had just finished making a second-order lambda, others claim he had made a complete set of form gadgets from his own form.

The operation was a nominal success; the items were stolen, but the demon got away. He came back looking for her, though, and when he showed up, so did dozens of angels and many more God-Machine cultists who had been tailing him.

The Vesna Svyashchennaya fought long and hard, but in the end they couldn't handle the onslaught. If there were any survivors, they went underground and haven't been heard from since. It is rumored that those who survived were some of the most ingenious gadget crafters ever, who used their creations to escape before being destroyed with the rest of the ring. The claim is that these Unchained can be found in some of the most unlikely places, but the gadgets they have for sale are unlike any others.

HUMANS WITH GADGETS

Demons often equip cultists or allies with gadgets. As long as the person is capable of performing the trigger, he can use the gadget. If a normal person uses any gadget, he has a chance of the supernatural nature of the object turning him into a stigmatic. Each time a human uses a gadget the player must make a Stamina + Composure roll with a cumulative -1 for each time he has used a gadget previously and failed this roll, -2 if using an Exploited gadget. If the roll fails, he moves a step towards becoming a stigmatic. Four failed rolls in a row

result in the human becoming a stigmatic. Any successful rolls after using a gadget reset the stigmatic timer and the cumulative penalty. Some demons find this risk acceptable, even a bonus as having a loyal stigmatic agent can prove useful.

When a human uses a one-shot, he does not accrue the cumulative penalty on a failed roll to his check to become a stigmatic. Lambdas are rare, and as such, demons rarely if ever hand them out to humans. If a normal human uses a lambda, he immediately becomes a stigmatic.

Sometimes, demons find it necessary to give a follower or cultist a form gadget. This practice is very rare, because the risk is often not worth the benefit. If a human uses a form gadget, he has the chance of the demonic nature of the gadget burning out his soul and leaving an empty shell behind. When a human uses a form gadget, the player must make a Stamina roll with a cumulative -1 for each time he has done so previously. On a dramatic failure, his soul is burned away (see Soul Loss, p. 311 of *Demon: The Descent*).

GADGETS AS PACT FULFILLMENT

Most Unchained view gadgets as valuable tools, sometimes loaning them to loyal cultists or stigmatics for occasional use. Very few will give a gadget to a human permanently, but occasionally gadgets are given in exchange for pacts. A demon may use gadgets as a way to fulfill her part of a pact. Often demons use one-shots as a fulfillment for small short-term lesser pacts with a human to get him interested in more binding contracts. Some demons may introduce a human to gadget use and attempt to barter with them for more prized benefits, such as a soul pact. Those who do this like to use knock-offs, as they are easier to make than normal gadgets.

Many demons feel the benefits of most pacts are not worth handing over a gadget. Some use them solely for soul pacts, knowing that if she eventually has to take over the person's life for her Cover, she can retrieve her gadget. Only desperate demons use form gadgets for pacts, knowing the risk using a form gadget poses to the human user.

A gadget as fulfillment is simple. The demon gives the mortal the gadget and explains to him how to use it. An Embedded, Exploited or form gadget counts as a major benefit and adds 3 points to the mortal's side of the pact equation. One-shots count as a lesser benefit and add 1 point to the mortal's side of the pact equation. Knock-offs present risks to the human, as they require direct interface to use. Knock-offs only count as a medial benefit and add 2 points to the mortal's side of the pact equation. The supernatural contract does not protect the mortal from the risks of becoming a stigmatic as a result of using the gadget.

FINDING AND USING UNKNOWN GADGETS

Not all gadgets a demon may possess are made from scratch or traded with another demon. Popular belief holds that the only way to create a gadget is by a demon's force of will, but stories per-

sist of gadgets found after searching through suborned Infrastructure. Most demons suppose the gadget is a remnant of a poor Unchained who lost his fight against the God-Machine, the item the only testament to the fallen demon's final resting place. Gadgets have been found in old boltholes belonging to long dead demons, and these would be no different. Yet, the number of unexplained gadgets found in Infrastructure indicates a different reason.

When certain objects are within the confines of Infrastructure but are not inherently a part of it, they can be mutated by the God-Machine's influence over time. Only Embedded gadgets are ever created in this way. Just like a demon installing an Embed, the proximity to the God-Machine causes the item to take on some properties of a nearby supernatural subroutine. The process happens over long periods of time and is quite random. Not all Infrastructures are guaranteed to produce a gadget, no matter how long they have been around.

When a demon finds a gadget, whether it once belonged to a demon or was inadvertently created by proximity to Infrastructure, she does not know how to trigger and use the gadget, nor what its effect may be. The demon must study the gadget in detail to determine its properties. Unfortunately, simple research does the demon very little good other than determining if the gadget is Embedded, Exploited, or form. To discover its effects, triggers, and other specifics, the demon must invest herself into the gadget and trace the supernatural elements back to their source. Due to the nature of the creation of gadgets, this is easier for Embedded gadgets than Exploited or form gadgets.

The demon must hack into the metaphysical software of the object to understand how and why it works. While holding the object, the demon spends one Aether to hack the gadget, revealing its secrets. Unlike Installation, the demon is not exerting her will over the reality of the item. Instead she is studying the elements of the object and reading its underlying processes. The player makes a roll using a pool of Wits + Investigation + Primum (-2 if the object is Exploited or form) as an extended action to investigate the gadget. Each roll takes an hour of uninterrupted time with each success yielding bits of information. If the gadget was created with a near-field effect, the Unchained requires an additional success to learn any of the information on the chart.

Success- Information about the Gadgets

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | The Embed, Exploit, or form ability used to make the gadget and the effect of the gadget when used. |
| 2 | The roll required to activate the gadget, if any |
| 3 | Any other triggers needed to use the gadget |
| 4 | Any parameter limitations on the gadget, if the gadget is a one-shot |
| 5 | If the gadget has any current drawbacks from overclocking |
| 6 | The identity of the Unchained who created the gadget |

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Once a demon has investigated the gadget, further investigation on her part yields no further results. A demon may attempt to use a gadget without knowing the trigger as long as she knows its effect by forcing the item with Aether. While a demon can get the gadget to function this way, it only works once and the item is destroyed in the process. Of course, destroying an Exploited gadget by forcing it carries the same explosive and reality bending effects as normal.

REVERSE ENGINEERING GADGETS

The Unchained remember bits and pieces of their time with the God-Machine. Often, they can recall subroutines and passcodes to learn Embeds and use that foundation to eventually learn Exploits. Yet, recollection of certain patterns and programs does not always come easily to demons; investigating gadgets can help spark those memories. After investigating a gadget, the demon can use the knowledge she has gained from it to learn the power used to make it. The Unchained refer to the procedure as reverse engineering, unmaking gadgets to remember the protocols of the God-Machine for their own uses.

To learn Embeds from a gadget, the demon must Uninstall the Embedded effect, destroying the object in the process. Demons can learn Embeds from Exploited gadgets as well. When the demon unbinds the Exploited effect from the object, she gains a base understanding of what it takes to make the Exploit happen. She can learn any or all of the Embeds required for learning the Exploit, subject to Storyteller approval. If the demon already knows any of the prerequisite Embeds for the Exploit, she can instead learn the Exploit from the gadget.

To unmake the gadget, the demon must physically disassemble the physical components. The player makes an extended roll using Intelligence + Academics + Primum. The number of successes required is equal to the gadget's Structure; each roll takes thirty minutes. If the gadget has a near-field effect, each roll suffers a -2 penalty and the player can only apply half the character's Primum rating, rounded down. If the gadget is a one-shot or a knock-off, each roll suffers a -2 penalty. Once the process has begun, the object will be unmade, regardless of the demon's success in learning the Embed. This process is much like Installing Embeds into a gadget in reverse. The demon must unbind the Embedded effect from the object, analyzing the subroutine outside the bounds of reality to understand how it works and allowing her to recall it in the future. Lambdas can be reverse engineered to learn all powers used to make them, but with the effort required to remake them, most demons find this wasteful.

Reverse engineering a form gadget is a little different. Instead of remembering her time with the God-Machine, form gadgets give the Unchained inspiration to refine their own demonic form. This is different from grafting a form gadget into her demonic form, as the item is destroyed and the form ability is installed as a permanent part of the demon's form. As long as the demon knows which form ability was used to create the gadget, she can reverse engineer it. The demon must Uninstall the form ability from the object, and then Install

it into her demonic form. Just as with grafting, she cannot install a new ability without first making space for it. During the Installation process but before adding the new form ability, the demon must remove a corresponding form ability type from her demonic form. The removed form ability cannot be stored or placed into a gadget, as the mental capacity for handling so many installations at once is beyond even the most skilled of the Unchained.

A demon with the High Tolerance Merit (p. 129) can actually Install an extra form ability permanently into her demonic form. This practice is painful for the Unchained and requires the expenditure of one Aether and one Willpower point to succeed. The player rolls Intelligence + Medicine + Primum as an extended action, with each roll taking an hour. The number of successes required is dependent on the type of form ability being reverse engineered.

Type of Form Ability	Successes Required
Modification	4
Technology	5
Propulsion	6
Process	8

Failure to reverse engineer any type of gadget successfully can be dangerous. As the process destroys the gadget in question, failures can be explosive. Exploited gadgets destroyed this way erupt with latent aetheric energy (see *Demon: The Descent*, p. 189). Gadgets installed with near-field effects often discharge the Embed or Exploit used to create them, targeting the demon attempting the reverse engineering or the area she is in. One-shots with Exploited effects do not cause as disastrous effects, but do release aetheric energies that might draw the attention of agents of the God-Machine at the Storyteller's discretion.

While engaged in reverse engineering the demon radiates with a mild aetheric resonance, though most procedures do not require the expenditure of Aether. Just as with creating a gadget, the energy fluctuation causes visual effects as well, often these are more intense during the uninstalling process than they ever are during installation. Storytellers may decide to roll for angelic detection (p. 155) for reverse engineered gadgets using the same rules as gadget creation.

GADGET CREATION

The process of Installation touches an inanimate object with the power of the God-Machine. Mundane items come away changed by that power, and it doesn't just affect the item – it destroys the original shell, replacing it with an apparently identical copy. This copy is a pointer to the subroutine of reality that the demon Installed into the gadget; it functions like it did before, but it has a greater level of meaning ascribed to it.

Each section below includes some optional additional systems to use when creating gadgets. All of these rules expand on the sys-

tems in **Demon: The Descent** rather than replacing them, so feel free to use some, all, or none depending on the tone of the game.

THE EFFECT

Embeds and Exploits are subroutines in the underlying code of the universe. While demons can learn how to call those routines in a number of ways depending on the situation, gadgets don't have that luxury. Each one has a single defined effect – a single set of parameters to the subroutine. Once Installed, that effect can't change.

When designing the effect of a gadget, look at the Embed or Exploit that the character wants to use. Try to identify some of the power's parameters – the parts of the effect that change based on circumstance or choice – and pick a specific value for each one. Some have a "default" value – everyone in a crowd, or everyone who witnesses an event. It's up to the demon if he wants to limit those factors. Adding extra limits like this can sometimes boost the gadget's other capabilities, but it's not a strictly mechanistic tradeoff. As befits their station, Exploits have fewer parameters to alter; often, the act of Installing them only requires the demon to specify a single facet of the power.

EXAMPLES

Bystander Effect: This Embed affects crowds of people when the character makes an attack. The most common parameter is a type of attack, and a demon can lock that down by building it in to the hardware – a knife or a silenced pistol would limit the Embed to attacks made with that particular weapon. The other parameter to consider is the type of crowd – does it just work on commuters, mobs of football fans, or drunks after a bar closes?

Download Knowledge: The most natural parameter of this Embed is the Skill (or Skills) that the character gains. Again, it's common for the chosen hardware to somehow relate to that Skill. Beyond that, though, does the character who uses the gadget add the gained dots to his existing Skills, or overwrite them? The former's more useful for the Unchained himself, while the latter would be potentially more useful to someone other than the gadget's creator.

Homogenous Memory: This Embed makes everyone who saw an event believe and report a plausible alternative explanation that the demon invents. As such, it's got three parameters to consider. First, the demon defines the kind of event that she wants the gadget to affect, like "a flying demon throws someone from a rooftop." Next, she specifies the cover story: "The falling person tripped and fell." Depending on the hardware of the gadget, she might be able to use it to specify the cover story at the time, or a single cover story might be built in to the gadget itself – more useful for a one-shot, as repeated use might break Cover.

Everybody Knows: The demon needs to set what rumor the gadget inflicts when describing the effect, and it'll inflict

the same rumor on everyone the gadget is used on. She's also got to consider who will believe the rumor, limiting the effect's targets – does it only affect the victim's family, his co-workers, or his friends? The appropriate Condition inflicted by the Embed only applies among members of the group, and the victim need only isolate himself from that group to shed the Condition.

Behind the Curtain: The demon needs to set at least one of this Exploit's end-points to a piece of Infrastructure that she knows. Either the gadget always brings her to the same piece of Infrastructure, or can only send her from the one point. Some demons go further, binding both pieces of Infrastructure into a single gadget – creating a useful bridge between two places that might be thousands of miles apart. A gadget that's open-ended can only link to the same kind of Infrastructure – when traveling to a piece of Concealment Infrastructure, she needs to set off from a similar piece of Concealment Infrastructure.

Raze Infrastructure: When Installing this Exploit into a gadget, most demons configure it to affect a specific kind of Infrastructure. As such, the gadget can destroy any piece of Infrastructure of that kind, though it still brings the attention of the God-Machine. Alternatively, the demon might choose to have it only affect a single piece of Infrastructure. The main use of this is to start razing an Infrastructure without any intention of destroying it, in order to create an angel trap (**Demon: The Descent**, p. 173).

DESIGNING EFFECTS

Unlike the Installed Embed or Exploit, a gadget's effect does one thing and one thing only. It's up to the player and Storyteller to define what that is based on the mechanics of the Embed or Exploit where appropriate. Make a note of whether it uses a contested or resisted roll; often a gadget will use a similar type of action even if the dice pools involved are different.

If an effect seems too broad – if it replicates too much of what the Embed or Exploit already does – the Storyteller can make suggestions for how to make it more appropriate. Alternatively, she can suggest that the player consider adding a general parameter, as long as it provides a significant limit on how often the gadget is useful.

Once the player and Storyteller have agreed on the basic nature of an effect, they should work out the dice pool and action required. Outside of exceptional cases, gadgets activate with instant or extended actions. While this can be based on the action required for the Embed or Exploit it can also come from the hardware – Installing an Embed or Exploit into a piano might make the resultant effect an extended action. Only a handful of gadgets are activated with reflexive actions; their effects only make sense if they take place outside of the normal turn order in combat. A gadget that allows the user to react to a single attack should probably be reflexive; one that affects every attack should likely require an instant action in order to take effect.

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Generally, the more time the gadget takes to activate a gadget, the more powerful or useful it can be. A reflexive gadget has a small effect, but can activate at any time and doesn't cost the character her chance to do anything else, while an instant action requires her to spend time fiddling with the gadget — that restriction means that the effect should be roughly equivalent to something else she could spend a turn doing.

Next, look at the effect's dice pool. If the Attribute and Skill listed for the effect both make sense for the hardware chosen, then use the same traits. More often, one of the two doesn't seem to really apply to the physical form of the gadget. If the effect is linked to that purpose — a knife Installed with Hush or Bystander Effect, for example — it makes more sense to use the normal dice pool for the chosen hardware. On the other hand, if activating the gadget doesn't bear much resemblance to using the hardware normally — for example, if it looks like mechanical jewelry and has a spoken trigger — then look again at the Embed's dice pool and work out if it matches what the user would do to activate the gadget.

Don't feel constrained by the normal restrictions of which Attributes to use with Embeds and Exploits. A gun with Incendiary Installed would use Dexterity + Firearms; just because Exploits normally require Power Attributes doesn't change how the hardware works. If all else fails, determine what kind of dice pool the gadget's hardware would normally apply a bonus to, and try to reconcile the two.

When deciding whether a gadget uses a contested or resisted action, refer to "Rule of Thumb: Resistance" on p. 202 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**. In short, a contested action works when the effect is all or nothing, while a resisted action works when the number of successes rolled affects the outcome (above and beyond exceptional successes). Normally, a gadget uses the same type of resistance as the parent Embed or Exploit, but the specific nature of the effect (especially near-field effects, below) might call for a different resistance method. Remember that contested rolls add the victim's Supernatural Tolerance trait to the resistance. Also keep in mind the advice in "Resisting Embeds" (**Demon: The Descent** p. 124) with regards to any resistance. While it's useful to define the resistance trait, the gadget might not need it.

Example: Victoria is creating a gadget for her Unchained character. She wants a way to escalate a normal fight, so looks at the No Quarter Embed. She decides that the gadget takes the form of a red bandana with a small circuit pattern drawn on it. Anyone seeing it goes for blood per the Embed. Danny, her Storyteller asks about limitations, and Victoria decides that the user is drawn into the fight from holding the bandana and can't turn the effect off until the fight is over. Manipulation looks fine, but Danny suggests replacing Brawl with Larceny to better reflect waving the cloth at people; Victoria agrees. They both agree that as an all-or-nothing gadget, having the roll contested by Resolve + Supernatural Tolerance makes sense.

A gadget designed for use in combat is a slightly different case, whether it's a sword-cane or a heavy wrench. Rather than having one roll to make contact with the victim and another

to activate the gadget, the gadget's activation roll is whatever would be appropriate for using the gadget as a weapon. This roll works like a normal attack when it comes to Defense, dodging, and using Styles. If the gadget's effect triggers on a damaging hit, like the aforementioned knife Installed with Hush or Bystander Effect, it deals damage like a normal attack. Otherwise, the attack roll only activates the gadget; the demon doesn't get to hurt a foe and activate an unrelated supernatural power all at once. Remember that unless the demon activates the gadget's trigger, she can use the hardware normally — a gun Installed with Incendiary can fire bullets normally instead of projecting unearthly flames.

Being able to freely choose the hardware for an Exploited gadget without needing to make it symbolic of the Installed effect does give players a chance to get a bit more creative when coming up with the dice pool used to activate the gadget. Installing a set of brass knuckles with Inflict Stigmata means the demon can use Strength + Brawl to awaken a normal person to the workings of the God-Machine, while Installing Raise Dead into a piece of software (see below) would allow her to use Intelligence + Computer in place of Presence + Medicine. As a Storyteller, don't worry about it. Players want their characters to have a chance to show off, and if that means making a gadget that plays to their strong dice pools, that's fine. When creating an Exploited gadget, note that demons don't add their Primum to the activation roll.

ROLL RESULTS

With a rough idea of what the gadget should do and what dice pool is appropriate, it's time to define the concrete effects of the gadget — what actually happens when the dice hit the table. When designing a gadget, it always helps to have an idea of what the gadget does on a dramatic failure and an exceptional success. This doesn't just help when the dice turn up unexpected results. Tricks like overclocking (p. 157) can turn a normal roll into an exceptional result.

Dramatic failures are rare, the result of either a chance die or a player turning a failure dramatic in order to take a Beat. A dramatic failure might lead to the gadget backfiring — having what would happen to the intended victim instead happen to the user — or it might impose a Condition or cause damage.

Judge the Condition applied according to the power of the gadget. Flagged is easier to deal with than Surveilled, which is in turn easier to deal with than Hunted, so save Hunted for impressive gadgets. Blown would apply to an Embedded gadget rather than to the user. Shaken is a good fallback for something that goes wrong without being disastrous. Consider creating a new Condition to cover the effects of the failure ("Creating New Conditions," **Demon: The Descent** p. 311). Perhaps all gadgets give a Feedback Condition on a dramatic failure? Work with the Storyteller to come up with something that feels right.

If a dramatic failure inflicts damage, it should deal no more than three points of lethal damage, and that only for im-

IN CASE IT NEEDS SAID

While this section provides a lot of advice on creating gadgets, the player and Storyteller need to work together to come up with a gadget that will give the player what he wants without creating a device that destroys the tone of the game for the other players.

If you're unsure of what's too much for a gadget, ask the rest of your troupe what they think. They might be fine with it, or they may have ideas you wish you'd thought of. They're the ones who will be affected by the presence of the gadget in the game, after all.

pressive and dangerous gadgets. As a rule, Embedded gadgets deal bashing damage while Exploited gadgets and lambdas (p. 161) deal lethal. One point of damage is often enough, though combat-focused gadgets may be more painful.

Finally, the gadget may backfire in an unexpected way. Either it works as normal, with the user taking the place of the victim — Hesitation is a good example of this — or it works just like a success, but with the Storyteller passing on false or misleading information in place of the truth. A great example of the latter is the form ability Aura Sight.

Failure is possibly the easiest roll result to specify. Nothing happens. At least, the user's hoped-for effect doesn't happen. The gadget might do nothing, it might fizz and spark, or it might spring to life but do something that doesn't help — or hinder — the user.

Success is what the demon expects to happen when she uses the gadget. When creating a gadget, look at the Embed or Exploit being Installed and compare it with what the gadget does on a success; if the gadget does the same as the parent effect it needs to be narrowed down. Gadgets can be very powerful, but they're fixed uses of a specific Embed or Exploit, so they give up some degree of flexibility. If a successful activation roll does one thing that falls under the remit of the Installed Embed or Exploit, it's pitched at the right level.

Also, consider what the gadget affects. Does it work on one person — a way to limit an Embed that normally affects a large group of people? Does the effect scale according to how many successes the player rolled? If so, check that the dice pool subtracts a resistance trait.

While the player's first order of business when designing a gadget's effect should be the Installed Embed or Exploit, it's often not enough. Especially in the case of near-field effects (below), the gadget's related to the Embed in concept but not in execution. Gadgets that affect more than one person

should do less on a success than gadgets that affect just one target — applying a penalty to just Perception and Initiative rather than to all Mental rolls. Likewise, if the user can choose which individual out of a group that the gadget affects, the gadget should do still less.

If the gadget's success applies a bonus or penalty, or something else requiring hard numbers, use either the number of successes rolled or the creating demon's Primum. A modifier set to the demon's Primum doesn't change once she has created the gadget, and reflects an intrinsic part of its power. A modifier determined by the successes rolled instead indicates that what matters is skill at using the gadget, rather than the inherent power of the gadget. Outside of contexts where the hardware suggests using successes, such as weapons, or where the Installed Embed or Exploit uses the number of rolled successes, default to the creator's Primum.

Exceptional Success most often adds a rider to the success condition. For gadgets, as for Exploits, it normally increases the level of finesse the user has when wielding the effects — picking specific targets out of a crowd or controlling precisely how mad a victim gets. Sometimes it adds a secondary mechanical effect that enhances the first, especially in the case of gadgets that don't vary by the number of successes rolled.

GENERAL PARAMETERS

Some parameters can apply to any number of Embeds and Exploits — limiting the subjects on whom the Unchained can use the gadget, or requiring external conditions like "only in the light of the full moon," or "only inside a condemned building," or "only for one minute after use." Setting these parameters can loosen some of the more rigid requirements for creating a gadget out of an Embed or Exploit, which in turn makes the device more useful in the long run.

General parameters concern the state of the world when the gadget's used; they're something that the Unchained consider when designing a gadget's effect. That makes them distinct from any limitations introduced through the gadget's form.

A general parameter usually relates to a specific environmental condition: "at night," "in moonlight," "during a thunderstorm." The God-Machine's code doesn't interact with space and time in the same way as other denizens of the World of Darkness. As a result, demons can't set a general parameter based on solely human information. A demon can set a gadget to activate between the hours of 4PM and 10PM but not "at mealtimes," because different people have a different interpretation of mealtimes. Likewise, she could set the parameter of "in the village of St. Mary Meade" because most villages keep the same name for hundreds of years, but not "in the house of Mrs. Hathaway" because Mrs. Hathaway will live in more than one house during her life and the God-Machine's nonlinear view of time means its code cannot differentiate. Most of the Unchained see this limitation as a good reason not to set such narrow parameters in the first place.

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Demons mostly use general parameters in two ways. The first is simple: limiting the intended effect beyond specifying the Embed or Exploit's parameters makes it easier for the demon to Install that effect. The second use is as a workaround for the Unchained's limited understanding of the God-Machine's processes – specifying general parameters can sometimes grant a gadget's Installed effect more flexibility than it otherwise should have.

A player who wants a broader application of the gadget's source Embed can take a general parameter that affects each use of the gadget – e.g., a time limit significantly shorter than that of the Embed itself – if the Storyteller agrees. A player can attach a similar general parameter to an effect that the Storyteller is already happy with in order to gain a +1 bonus to the Installation dice pool.

A gadget with an environmental restriction isn't any easier to construct, but it does make it easier to activate, as it's tied to the environment. The demon gains an extra die on the activation roll. Attempting to reverse-engineer the gadget also requires that the demon be in the environment, or he suffers a -3 penalty to all related rolls.

UNCONVENTIONAL HARDWARE

Hardware is one of the largest variables in gadget creation, the quality of which can lead to fast and easy assembly or lengthy and complicated construction. Anything can be hardware for a gadget with enough time and creative energy, as long as it is mundane. Certain objects touched by a demon's power or that of the God-Machine are useful as hardware, such as items found within suborned Infrastructure and pact documents.

Pieces of Suborned Infrastructure

Demons who have the Suborned Infrastructure Merit (see *Demon: The Descent*, p. 121) can turn objects found within the Infrastructure into gadgets. Because the Infrastructure was already once a part of the God-Machine, using it to create gadgets is easier than with normal hardware. The demon can tap into the subroutines and remembered processes that much more easily, with a powerful gadget as a result. Using bits of suborned Infrastructure as hardware can be dangerous, as the gadget must inherently be created within the Infrastructure. Angels are more likely to be watching the area and notice the creation. Along with the normal dangers of creating a gadget within Infrastructure (p. 157), all rolls for angels to notice the gadget creation gain a bonus equal to the dots in the Merit the Unchained possesses.

All gadget creation rolls gain a bonus equal to the number of dots the character has in Suborned Infrastructure. An Embedded gadget gains a stockpile of Aether equal to the dots the character has in the Merit, though it looks strange and bizarre as with Exploited or form gadgets. When a demon uses any gadget made with suborned Infrastructure, it is always over-

clocked (p. 157) unless it is a form or one-shot gadget. When it is activated, immediately choose one upgrade and one drawback without spending Aether. The Unchained cannot move the drawback effect to a new piece of hardware, as nothing is similar enough to the original, even other objects found within Infrastructure. She can attempt to fix the gadget, but must do so in her suborned Infrastructure to make sure she has ample parts and tools to do the job. Doing so attracts angelic notice as though she were creating a new gadget.

Due to the connection to the God-Machine that the suborned Infrastructure confers to the hardware of the gadget, hacking into the subroutines used to create it is easier than normal. The player gains a +2 bonus to all rolls to investigate or reverse engineer the gadget. Lambda creation is also easier for the same reason, allowing a +2 bonus to all rolls to create a lambda using a gadget created with suborned Infrastructure. If the demon took the time to precisely engineer the gadget, these rolls also benefit from the 8-again quality.

PACT DOCUMENTS

Unchained who have made pacts (see *Demon: The Descent* p. 189) can use their contracts as hardware for gadget creation. Because pact documents are already invested with the demon's Willpower, they are easier to make into gadgets than other types of mundane hardware. All rolls to create gadgets using pact documents gain a +1 bonus.

When a demon installs an Embed into a gadget using a pact document as the hardware, it becomes the medium in which the contract is written; the benefits of the pact are installed along with the effect. After the gadget is created, a demon must have it on his person to gain access to the Cover, cult, or soul benefits normally bestowed by the contract. Additionally, whenever anyone uses the gadget, he gains the benefits of the human's side of the contract, a Skill or asset, for the next 24 hours. The human normally benefitting from the pact loses access to his benefits during that time. The time period is usually so short that the human doesn't notice, but if he does, he might come looking for answers from the demon. A wise Unchained makes sure to include appropriate clauses in her contracts to prevent any accidental breaches. This effect is especially useful for Unchained who give gadgets to cultists. Some demons even use them to fulfill other pact obligations. This type of gadget gains an additional 2 points to the demon's side of the pact equation, on top of the normal points for the gadget itself.

Pact documents turned into gadgets are inconspicuous, often looking like whatever medium the contract was originally recorded on. No matter what kind of effect is installed into the gadget, the changes to the document are all within the wording and language of the document, not to the medium itself. For example, a contract written in English may change to a Runic language and appear to be written in blood, but the paper it is written on remains unchanged.

The downside to using pact documents is that the resulting gadgets are unstable, causing problems if they are used too

often. Every fourth time the gadget is used, pick a drawback as though the gadget was overclocked. If a demon overclocks the gadget, pick two drawbacks instead of one. She cannot transfer the installed effect into another piece of hardware to remove the drawbacks without destroying any benefits the original contract conferred to the gadget. In this case, a new document would serve as the hardware, and its benefits would be applied to the gadget instead.

Installing effects into pact documents irreparably changes them. If the gadget is ever destroyed, the pact is invalidated and all benefits are immediately lost. Installing Exploits or form abilities destroys the essence of the original document, nullifying the pact in the process. Attempting to make a pact document into a one-shot requires breaking the document down into smaller parts, which destroys the contract completely and makes the benefits unable to be installed into the resultant gadgets. In any of these cases, the gadgets are still created, but they do not gain any of the pact benefits. For most of the Unchained, the loss of Cover or cultists is not worth using contracts in this way, but some desperate demons use them anyway, as the very act of using the pact document makes the creation process easier. Reverse engineering the gadget immediately destroys the contract, causing all benefits to be lost. Some demons have attempted to use gadgets made with pact documents to create lambdas to various effect, though few have reported positive results.

ONE-SHOTS

Some general parameters affect how the gadget works as a gadget, rather than as a specific implementation of the Embed or Exploit involved. Some demons use them to boost the Installed effect, trading off flexibility for a greater degree of effectiveness – though they rarely achieve such a tradeoff without a cost. Others create limited-use gadgets called one-shots.

One-shots consume their hardware when activated; often, that's part of how the hardware is used. An Embed like Download Knowledge might come in the form of pills or microSD cards that the demon swallows to activate, while a gadget arrow loaded with Rain of Blood consumes itself when it reaches the apex of its flight.

While one-shots are a little easier to produce than normal gadgets, they're naturally limited. Why carry a handful of one-shots that can turn dogs into Hellhounds – perhaps in the form of microchips that the Unchained must push into the animal's skin – rather than a smoking collar that can turn any dog into a Hellhound while the animal wears it? First, if the demon doesn't expect to use the gadget more than a handful of times, it's easier for her to construct a one-shot. Second, she might have acquired the one-shots from another demon who didn't want her reverse-engineering the Exploit. Finally, using a one-shot consumes it – in the case of an Exploited one-shot, once someone uses it, the gadget can't be detected by aetheric resonance. One-shots are thus the gadgets of choice for many demons who don't want to leave more of a trace than absolutely necessary.

Demons create one-shots like any other gadget. As long as the chosen hardware has Structure less than the demon's Intelligence + Crafts, she doesn't need to spend Aether to prime the hardware. She can also create up to her Primum in one-shots at once, but each one beyond the first requires her to spend of a point of Aether. While a demon can speed up production of one-shots by defining his effect beforehand, each one is a separate gadget and thus requires an investment of time and effort to create – though not to the same degree as a normal gadget.

Due to their fragile and temporary nature, a demon can't reverse-engineer a one-shot gadget to learn the Embed or Exploit behind its creation, or to create a lambda. When a one-shot is used, it consumes the hardware as part of its activation, destroying any physical evidence of the gadget's existence.

Example: Ms. Ochre Fell when she realized she didn't want to kill any more. Ever since then, she's wanted to keep her friends safe. After some time experimenting, she has unlocked the Just Bruised Embed. She wants to use it to keep safe a pair of stigmatics she's grown quite fond of. As she has Primum 3, she can Install the Embed in a pair of one-shot gadgets, using matching cigarette cases as hardware. Each one can reflexively reduce the damage of a single gunshot wound to a single point of bashing damage by attracting the bullet to the case. Creating two gadgets only requires her to spend a single point of Aether.

NEAR-FIELD EFFECTS

Often, a demon creates a gadget because none of the Embeds or Exploits she knows of will do exactly what she wants. As long as she can find hardware that synergizes with her intended effect, she can experiment a little with some undocumented features of the God-Machine's code, making a gadget with a near-field effect.

A near-field effect is any effect that the player and Storyteller agrees makes sense for the chosen Embed, but isn't something that she can normally accomplish with it. Occam's Razor could make people believe a simpler explanation for a mundane event, meaning that the gadget deflects suspicion from complex Rube Goldberg schemes that don't risk compromising the demon's Cover. Earworm could Embed instructions to make sure that the target doesn't forget them. Shatter can tell the demon where an object's weak points are and how best to reinforce the item.

It's hard to tell where to draw the line between a more limited use of an Embed and a near-field effect. A personal alarm loaded with Strike First might simply make the user immune to surprise in combat – as that's a small part of Strike First's normal use, it's simply a limited gadget. Generally, if the gadget's effects feel like they should be covered by an Embed, but the Embed doesn't specifically include them, it's a near-field effect.

Demons create near-field effects much like any other gadgets; their main game effect is to allow gadgets to do things that make sense for an Installed Embed or Exploit that don't make as much sense to do in person.

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Example: Mark's read the Fungible Knowledge Embed a couple of times, and it's struck him that it would be very useful for a demon to edit what she knows. While demons don't ever give away obvious signs of lying, his character has encountered other supernatural creatures who can pull the secrets straight out of her head. He suggests that rather than swapping two Skills, she can alter how much she remembers of certain events. The gadget would reduce any attempt to read her mind about a specified event to a chance die, but would force her to check for compromise. His Storyteller agrees that this seems within the capabilities of Fungible Knowledge.

HARDWARE AND INSTALLATION

Selecting the hardware is perhaps the most difficult choice when creating a gadget. Installing an Embed in a gadget is often more useful than Installing an Exploit, as the resultant device looks no different to how it did before — a camera can still take pictures, or a cigarette lighter still produces fire on demand. On the other hand, it has to have a certain resonance with the gadget's effect — a hip-flask might render the victim's tools useless were he to drink from it, but it's not going to make anyone burst into flames.

A piece of hardware that would normally give an equipment bonus to a roll only does so when not using the Installed Embed in the item. It's still present when not using the Embed; a camera Embedded with Trick of the Light applies its equipment bonus when taking photographs, but not when activating the Embed.

Exploits go even further than Embedded gadgets. Not only can a demon Install an Exploit in almost any object, the process of Installation changes the hardware in unpredictable ways. A rifle might end up as a silver cylinder studded with gem-like controls, while a wristwatch becomes a glowing baroque bracelet. The Unchained find it very difficult to pass an Exploited gadget off as anything but a movie prop or a piece of abstract art — when it's in use, even those explanations ring hollow.

Some forms of hardware don't match the simple divide of sympathetic items or bizarre devices touched by the God-Machine. Some demons create gadgets out of smashed cellphones and components from Radio Shack, while others go down the path of self-modification, implanting technology into their bodies.

SYMPATHETIC RESONANCE

Embedded gadgets require hardware that relates to the effect that the demon wants to produce, a property that the Unchained call sympathetic resonance. In order to Install an Embed into a gadget, the hardware has to possess sympathetic resonance for that effect — not necessarily for the Embed in question. One demon might have her chosen hardware in mind when designing effects, tweaking the subroutine's parameters until they match the device she has in mind. An-

AVAILABILITY AND PROCUREMENT

The dot cost of a piece of equipment reflects directly on the Resources cost if your character wishes to purchase it (or the components, for some things). It also reflects the level of Allies or other Social Merit required in order to find the item and the Skill level required to procure it with a single dice roll. For example, if a Party Invitation has Cost •••, a character with Larceny •• should not be able to find and steal the item without a roll, but a character with Politics ••• might be able to get one by virtue of saying the right words to the right organization. If your character wishes to obtain higher Availability items with their Skills, it requires a deeper effort.

More information on this subject can be found in the **God-Machine Chronicle Rules Revisions**, p. 232.

other crafts his effect with a strong idea of what he wants the gadget to do, only choosing the appropriate hardware when he knows what the effect will be.

Neither approach is better than the other. The metaphysical engineering that results in a gadget does allow for a certain degree of flexibility — a gadget's hardware needs a level of sympathetic resonance, but it doesn't have to be custom-built to hold the Installed effect. Some demons find that they can Install Embeds in hardware that resonates with the Embed's original function, rather than the specific case they've created as part of the effect — especially useful for demons who engineer a near-field effect. A few go so far as to seek out hardware that's custom-made for the effect they want to Install. The level of elegance and expertise in the hardware doesn't matter, but how apt it is for the gadget's effect can make the Installation process much faster.

While the process of Exploiting hardware explicitly doesn't require any level of sympathetic resonance, some among the Unchained find it oddly satisfying to build an Exploited gadget into an item that resonates with its purpose. The process of Installing an Exploit changes the hardware, warping it into an often-bizarre reflection of what it once was, but the underlying nature of the device remains the same. If that underlying form has a level of sympathetic resonance with the demon's chosen effect, she can find that she has an easier time Installing the Exploit to begin with.

A demon can find or build a particularly specialist piece of hardware for a given effect. In either case, specialist hardware

has Cost •••, or Cost •••• for Exploited gadgets. The demon can create the hardware with an Intelligence + Crafts roll, assuming she has enough dots in Crafts; otherwise she can beg, borrow, or steal appropriate hardware using other Skills and Social Merits as normal.

When the player and Storyteller have agreed on the effect, the player can suggest a particularly apt piece of hardware, one that matches the gadget's intended purpose. To qualify for this bonus, the basic function of the hardware needs to do a lesser version of what the effect would do anyway. In the example of a camera Installed with Trick of the Light (**Demon: The Descent**, p. 154), a burst from a powerful flashlight or strobe would fit the chosen effect even better than the flashgun on a camera. Similarly, a demon Installing Authority would have an easier time doing so using a police badge as the hardware, even if the badge didn't belong to her Cover. In general, if the hardware could be used to perform a mundane version of the effect Embedded in the gadget, it can qualify for this bonus – as long as the Storyteller agrees. All rolls made as part of the Installation action gain the 8-again quality.

When a demon chooses her hardware, she might want something that's rather more surprising than normal. To that end, she can Install a gadget's effect into hardware that has a somewhat looser symbolic resonance. With some more work than normal, the demon can Install an Embed into a piece of hardware that has little – if any – sympathetic resonance with the effect she's Installing. This method does have one catch: the hardware has to have sympathetic resonance with the Embed she's Installing. This kind of Installation is often used to make trick gadgets: devices that look like they would have one supernatural purpose when they actually do something completely different. She might Install Lucky Break into a pair of dice, not with an effect that manipulates the chance of rolling a given number, but one that uses the dice to stop someone leaving an area. Throwing the dice at her target's feet causes him to slip, trip, or even more improbable things to happen to prevent him from leaving. When Installing such a gadget, increase the number of successes needed by three and add three dice to any roll to see if the God-Machine is aware of the Installation (**"Angelic Notice,"** p. 155).

When a demon Installs an Exploit into a gadget, the energies of the God-Machine change it into something far stranger than it once was. Some of the Unchained think that the eventual forms of Exploited gadgets reflect those items as an expression of the God-Machine Itself – if human inventions are shaped after shadows cast on the wall of Plato's cave, Embedded gadgets are the objects that cast those shadows. Others wonder if the process of forcing Aether through the subroutines of Embeds somehow leaks into the substance of the hardware, making it reflect what the Installed effect would really look like to a creature that perceives Embeds and Exploits as physical items.

The Unchained don't have to Install Exploits into hardware with any sympathetic resonance. Whatever item they use to contain the gadget's power warps and shifts, its new form

allowing it to embody the power running through it. A chair that allows anyone sitting in it to see – and strike – ghosts, a painting that causes anyone who looks at it to burst into flames, a rug that ties the room together so well everyone who steps on it treats the owner as a friend. That said, even an Exploit can benefit from a level of symbolic resonance. As long as the hardware is resonant with the effect rather than the broader Exploit involved, subtract the demon's Primum from the number of successes needed. If she goes out of her way to build a particularly resonant piece of hardware, each roll only takes half an hour rather than a full hour.

TRIGGERS

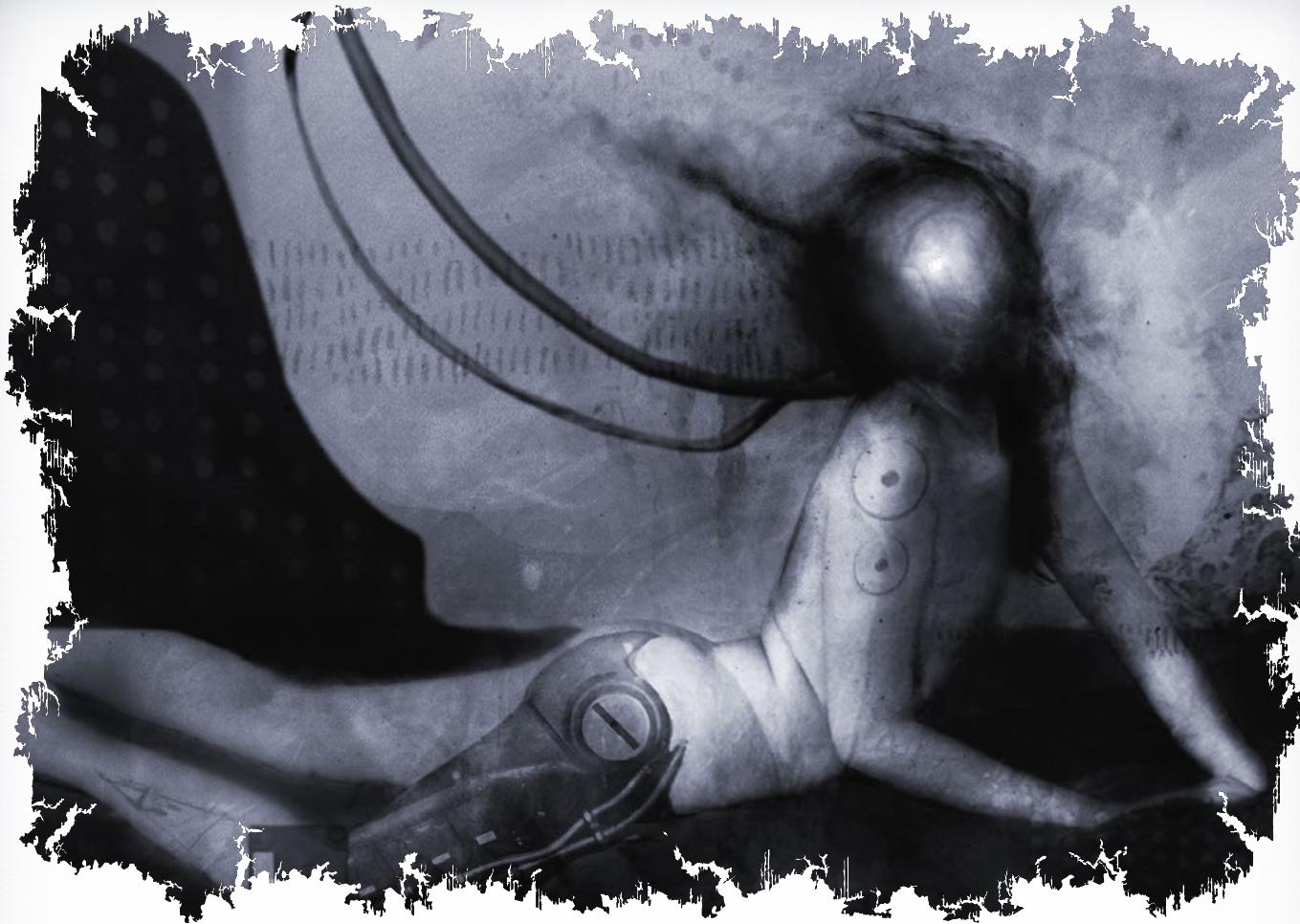
A gadget's trigger depends entirely on the demon who creates it. It can be a spoken word or phrase, a gesture, or a mechanical part of the gadget. No matter how a user activates a gadget, it normally requires an instant action. Only a few gadgets require reflexive actions and those devices usually trade speed of activation for effectiveness even compared to gadgets with similar effects. As with other aspects of gadget creation, the player and Storyteller should work together to determine a trigger that makes sense.

Whether Installed with an Embed or an Exploit, each gadget has some sort of trigger that activates it. In the case of Embeds, the trigger is usually different from any normal means of using the device. An Embedded pistol that activates when the user pulls the trigger makes it almost impossible to shoot the gun without activating the gadget. Some demons prefer physical triggers such as buttons, switches, or fingerprint scanners. Others prefer specific gestures or movements, spoken words, or similar triggers that have no apparent connection to the device. The former is often easier to safeguard against accidental use, while the latter makes it harder for someone who steals the gadget to work out how to activate it.

Some demons have experimented with triggers, limiting a gadget to only activating at night, or in a certain physical location. This has the same effect as applying a general parameter to the effect – the demon's manipulating the same parameters, just through selecting the hardware.

Particularly paranoid Unchained use their natural understanding of all human languages to create a secure spoken trigger – a trigger word in Lushootseed or Sámi makes it much harder for anyone else to activate the gadget. While that's useful for gadgets the demon might use for himself or share with his ring, it does mean that stigmatics or other allies can't just pick up and use the device in an emergency. Using a rarely-spoken language gets around one of a gadget's natural limitations – a gadget can't scan a user's DNA, analyze voice patterns, or check whose heart it is held over unless that's explicitly part of the hardware.

Gadgets with a spoken trigger only work when a user repeats the original phrase in the correct language. A speaker has to know the language in question – requiring the Language Merit if it's not her native language. Simply parroting



the sounds without knowing the meaning of the word isn't enough. The user has to speak the trigger clearly, and loud enough for the gadget to "hear" it. Anyone with the Merit: Eidetic Memory (including other demons) remembers the trigger even in stressful conditions. Other characters who get their hands on the gadget probably remember the trigger; if they only heard the trigger when in the middle of combat or another stressful situation, they may need to make a reflexive Intelligence + Composure roll to remember the trigger word at the Storyteller's discretion. If a demon gets her hands on a gadget with an unknown spoken trigger, she can discover it by investigating the gadget's aetheric signature (p. 144).

Anyone who picks up a gadget with a mechanical trigger can work out how to use it in a couple of seconds. Even the best-hidden trigger is easy enough to use and find, and Exploited gadgets are no harder to puzzle out than those with Embeds Installed. Some Exploited gadgets might not be easy to use simply because they rely on supernatural perceptions — using a switchblade razor to cut ghosts is of little use if the person holding it can't see ghosts.

As with spoken triggers, it's almost impossible to work out how to activate a gadget with a gestural trigger without some kind of supernatural means of examining the gadget — normally only a concern for demons who get their hands on a gadget without the original maker's knowing. Any demon can

discover a gestural trigger by investigating the gadget's aetheric signature.

KNOCK-OFFS

A few of Embedded gadgets use hardware that seems strange or downright bizarre. A circuit board that allows the user to download Skills, as long as she jacks electrodes into her arm, or a smartphone app that adjusts the user's knowledge when plugged in to her body through an expansion card. These gadgets don't have any other purpose beyond their Installed Embed and look downright weird to use. On the other hand, these knock-offs are easier to make than normal gadgets. Such simple forms can only contain Embeds. The raw power of an Exploit would render any such bespoke hardware useless.

Knock-offs look weird, but they aren't obviously supernatural. Most knock-off hardware is either constructed whole cloth from breadboard circuit boards and soldered components, or by cracking open a normal electronic device and adding new components. A knock-off typically needs to have some kind of physical interface to its target. For computers or electronics, this is most likely a USB lead or serial bus that terminates in a series of spikes and probes. To interface with a human body (or the Unchained's Cover), it usually needs to break

the skin in a location with plenty of nerve endings. Some demons prefer the inside of the wrist, despite the problems of piercing so close to many major blood vessels. Others insert electrodes around their spines, citing faster bandwidth as an excuse for tampering with an area that might leave them paralyzed. While using a knock-off in a stressful situation — when angels are closing in, or when the police start shooting — can hurt, all the stories of serious injury from using a knock-off are second-hand at best. So far, nobody's witnessed someone killing himself with a knock-off.

Using one of these strange gadgets might call for a compromise roll if a human is watching and the demon is overt about plugging a circuit board into her arm. Even then, the roll is made at a +1 modifier. A stigmatic or other character using a knock-off gains the Flagged Condition if a normal human sees her using it. Depending on the circumstances, using or witnessing the use of a knock-off might be a breaking point (see p. 131). In exchange for this risk, the demon has an easier time making the gadget — her dice pool for the extended action required to Install the effect gains 8-again and each roll takes ten minutes rather than fifteen.

Knock-offs containing one-shot effects don't require the demon to spend extra Aether to create multiple copies. She can make a number of one-shots equal to her Primum without Aether. She can then spend a single point of Aether to double the number of one-shots she can create. One-shot knock-offs need some sort of interface between the demon and the one-shot — a circuit board that can take loose computer chips or memory cards, or an improvised syringe that can take vials of strange chemical compounds — this is a by-product of creating the gadget and doesn't need any extra rolls.

If a knock-off's activation roll is a dramatic failure, the demon takes a point of lethal damage from arcing electricity, sudden fires, or misplaced electrodes in addition to the normal dramatic failure effect.

Example: Mr. Green wants to allow a stigmatic ally to share his talent for gaining new skills. To that end, he puts together a gadget to allow his ally to access Downloadable Knowledge. He doesn't have much time or many resources, and he wants to be able to change what skills the gadget can impart. He decides on a knock-off — a series of one-shots each containing different skills in the form of computer chips. Each chip connects to a circuit board taken from an old laptop that terminates in a spiked plate that the user presses into the inside of her elbow. Each chip replaces the user's rating in a single Skill with three dots (Mr. Green's Primum) — even if she would normally have more. While he can only Install one Skill into a handful of chips at a time, they're quick to make and he can load up any Skill he has at least three dots in.

SOFTWARE

Some of the Unchained have tried to make gadgets out of software, binding the mysterious subroutines of the God-Machine to artifacts made from object-oriented code and GUI toolkits. As with many of the less common kinds of gadget, only a few demons have experimented with software gadgets

— the Aether and force of will required to Install a gadget risks drawing the God-Machine's attention, so experimenting is a very dangerous job. Demons are nothing if not dedicated to their craft, however, and a few of the Unchained continue to push the envelope, trying to get every edge they can against the engine of reality.

Software gadgets aren't the same as gadgets that rely on computers or computer components for their hardware. Installing a Skill into a computer chip using Download Knowledge doesn't make the Embed into software — the process of Installation replaces the chip with a perfect facsimile that represents part of the God-Machine's code. Trying to read or program the chip won't affect the abilities loaded into it, and copying the programming to another chip of the same kind won't transfer the Installed effect. Software gadgets instead exist as programs and executable code; a demon can transfer them to a flash drive or store them on a cloud service. That allows a demon to effectively turn any tablet, laptop, or smartphone into a gadget.

Software gadgets do have limitations. The effect is bound into a single instance of the code — she needs to Install the effect into the code when it's on the device she wants to use. Most software gadgets live in wikis, as web applications, or on USB sticks to be as portable as possible. A few demons have made gadgets out of smartphone apps, but at that point it's often easier to Install the effect into the smartphone itself.

Software gadgets come in two broad kinds. The first resides on a flash drive or other portable storage device. Useful when infiltrating secure facilities, these gadgets don't require that the computer used to run them has an internet connection — though it does require a computer, tablet, or smartphone that can connect to the storage device to run in the first place. The second kind of software gadget, web services, can run on any device with a browser including smartphones, tablets, and internet-connected refrigerators, but they do require an internet connection. The inherent spark of the God-Machine's power means that a software gadget on a flash drive will run on any operating system as a standalone program, while a web service runs in even old browsers that don't understand Javascript or HTML5.

Demons can only Install Embeds in software; mundane programming languages are a pale echo of reality's underlying methods. As such, software has a degree of sympathy with the Unchained's subtler powers. Exploits warp the very fabric of whatever they are Installed into, leaving the program useless. The trigger for the software is usually a menu option or a series of key-presses, like "XYZZY," when the otherwise-innocent program is running. The program itself has to be symbolic of the effect used. An architecture or CAD program would work for a gadget that identifies the best spot in a building for an ambush or the weakest point of an object, while image analysis software could be the hardware for a gadget that shows what a crime scene looked like an hour ago.

From a demon's perspective, a software gadget can be a very useful tool to have around — while not typically useful in combat, having an extra trick to call on when infiltrating

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an office or even surfing the web in a coffee shop can prove invaluable. When she doesn't need the gadget, she just closes the program or navigates to a different web page and leaves no trace of her metaphysical meddling.

When it comes to designing a software gadget, a player shouldn't feel that she has to make the dice pool out of an Attribute + Computer. She should instead select a Skill that's in line with the gadget's effect. After all, mundane research is a function of Academics even if the character in question is doing all his research online. On the other hand, if she'd rather use an Attribute + Computer dice pool, that's also fine.

Installing the Embed into a software device is an extended action of Intelligence + Computer + Primum. Each roll takes fifteen minutes. The player needs to accumulate 8 successes, 12 if the gadget is to be a web service. If she succeeds, she then spends a point of Aether — rather than spending Aether at the beginning of the process — and a dot of Willpower. Software gadgets are otherwise mechanically the same as standard gadgets, assuming that the character has access to a device to run them on.

Example: *Janel's making a software gadget that will allow her character to steal someone's online identity, using the Embed: Identity Theft. She wants to be able to use her target's money and connections through the internet without it being traced back to her, effectively gaining access to his Social Merits for the rest of the scene, though her character can only use them online. She can email or Skype her victim's Contacts but can't meet them in person, and can buy things online but can't get cash out of an ATM. Her Storyteller suggests that the victim can't get online while Janel's character is using his identity, rather than sleeping or wandering in a daze.*

She decides on a dice pool of Manipulation + Computer. She suggests that a dramatic failure might draw police attention to her attempt, while an exceptional success would let her hang on to the victim's Social Merits for a full day. Her Storyteller disagrees — mundane authorities don't pose significant problems for the Unchained, and on an exceptional success the user gains nearly the full benefit of the Embed. He suggests instead that a dramatic failure reduces the user's next Computer roll to a chance die, and that for an exceptional success she can keep one Social Merit for the rest of the day.

PRECISION ENGINEERING

Not all gadgets are made equally well. While some demons must rely on whatever materials come to hand, others have access to a wide range of raw materials, and enough time and security to focus on getting the job done right. By using his time wisely and investing a gadget with controlled bursts of Aether, a demon can construct an elegant and precise gadget that's easier to use than the devices constructed by other Unchained.

A precision-engineered gadget isn't for everyone. It can take days to make, during which the demon has to focus on the effort of construction. He has to bleed far more Aether than normal into the device, making it far more likely that

both angels and other demons will come after him. If anything goes wrong in construction, he either has to source new raw materials or give up, leaving behind a construction site that glows like a beacon to those who can detect Aether. But if he succeeds, the reward is worth it.

One thing a precision-engineered gadget doesn't require is any special hardware. For a precision Embed, the hardware needs to resonate with the gadget's desired effect, but that's all — it doesn't have to be a high-end piece of electronic or mechanical engineering. Compared to the strange technologies of the God-Machine, the bleeding edge of human microelectronics and the cheapest fake watch sold on the streets of Mumbai are no different. As with other Exploited gadgets, a precision device doesn't need to bear any relation to its supernatural purpose, though if the original hardware does, it makes the task of Installing the exploit somewhat easier.

The process of transforming a mundane device into a precision-engineered gadget improves the base hardware as well. A camera takes clearer pictures and captures the light just so, a gun doesn't recoil as much so shots hit closer to vital organs, and a computer responds faster and with better search results than before. During Installation, the demon also makes a number of alterations to the underlying subroutines that make the device much more effective when activated.

The player and Storyteller should work out the device's effect as normal (see "Designing Effects," p. 145), as well as the hardware and triggers. To Install a precision engineered gadget, the demon's player makes an extended roll of the lower of Intelligence or Dexterity + Crafts + Primum. The demon must spend a point of Aether per roll. Each roll takes 24 hours and he needs successes equal to the hardware's Structure. If the demon fails the action and takes a Condition, he also has to source new hardware, adding a day to the time taken for creation. When creating an Exploited gadget, each roll takes two days, and the extended action requires successes equal to twice the hardware's Structure. If using the rules for Angelic Notice (p. 155), a precision-engineered gadget applies half the demon's Primum (rounding up) as a penalty to the Storyteller's dice pool.

Precision engineering comes with a number of benefits. The hardware's easier to use as a normal piece of equipment — any actions that involve using the hardware for its intended purpose gain the 8-again quality. In addition to the gadget's normal effects, when he Installs it the demon selects one upgrade to Installed effects as though he were overclocking the gadget (though without having to take a drawback). On activation, the gadget always benefits from that upgrade.

A demon cannot precision engineer a set of one-shots, a software gadget, or a knock-off. She can precision engineer an implanted gadget; doing so does not allow her to choose an upgrade. Instead, she does not suffer the Implanted Condition. When deconstructing a precision-engineered gadget, any rolls gain the 8-again quality whether to learn the Installed Embed or Exploit, or to use its components in a lambda.

IMPLANTED (PERSISTENT)

Your character has a piece of weird technology stuck into his flesh. His body might be infected and rotting around it, or the skin and bone might flow naturally around metal and plastic. The weird juxtaposition goes far beyond a normal human with a prosthetic or a reconstructed limb – humans who see the implant know that something is wrong and their awareness calls out to the God-Machine. You can keep it hidden, but for how long?

The first time a character with this Condition shows her implant in any scene, her player must make an immediate roll for compromise with a -2 modifier. Social actions with anyone who has seen the implant are reduced to a chance die for a week afterwards.

Resolution: Remove the implant from your body. Replace this Condition with a similar one reflecting the results of having the implant – along the lines of Disfigured, Mute, or Missing Hand, or create your own with Storyteller approval.

Beat: You make a compromise roll because someone saw your implant.

IMPLANTS

Some demons, especially those who get desperate or possess Covers with physical disabilities or that tie them in to the extreme body-modification scene, might try implanting gadgets into their own flesh. On the face of it, this is pretty crazy. After all, how will a demon maintain Cover with a microchip jammed into her left temple and a cellphone camera in place of her left eye? Most demons have no easy answer.

Implanted gadgets are a massive risk to Cover. Simply Installing them weakens the demon's Cover even if she hides them well, and every single use causes a compromise. For the mad and the desperate, implants are one way to get access to a limited form of powerful Exploits and reserves of Aether without taking the time to deconstruct a gadget to learn its secrets.

Implanted gadgets always contain Exploits. They're the desperate Unchained's answer to knock-off Embedded gadgets. Each one requires the demon to give up part of her Cover's physical body. It might be as simple as a disfiguring surface implant, like the raised bumps of implanted copper wires forming bizarre circuits under the skin of her arms, or microchips sticking into her flesh. It might take the form of a basic prosthetic, like a CCD-based eye, a microphone in place

of an ear, or a set of mechanical rods forming a simple gripping hand. Particularly driven demons might even mutilate large parts of their Cover's body to implant a gadget.

Demons who have implanted gadgets can do their best to keep them hidden, most of the time. If they slip and people see what they have become, however, then they've got major questions to answer. Worse, in order to use the Installed Exploit, the demon has to reveal his implant.

Constructing an implanted gadget is much the same as for any other gadget. Decide upon the effect, and the form of the hardware. The effect activates as a reflexive action (one of the benefits to implants). The extended roll to construct the device requires 10 successes regardless of the Structure of the device – it needs to interface with the demon directly through the mask of her Cover. Implanted gadgets always act as stockpiles of Aether, and can hold 20 points of Aether at any one time.

Once she's created the implant, the demon has to make it part of her Cover's body. In most cases, the pain involved means she can't do it alone. The person performing the procedure makes an extended roll of Intelligence + Medicine; each roll suffers a penalty as though he were making a called shot to that body part (*Demon: The Descent*, p. 323). He needs 10 successes and each roll takes an hour. The demon suffers one point of lethal damage per roll, and one extra point upon completing the implantation.

On a successful implantation, the demon loses any Conditions or Tilts relating to physical disabilities that the implant fixes. She also loses two dots of Cover from *all* of her available Covers, not just the one she's implanting, and gains the Implanted Condition.

The demon has to reveal the gadget to use its effect, but that's all. She doesn't have to push a button; it happens as a reflexive action on her turn. The player has to roll for compromise when using the gadget (per the Implanted Condition).

The demon can also spend any Aether in the implant's stockpile as if it were her own, but she can still only draw as much Aether as her Primum lets her spend in a turn.

ANGELIC NOTICE

The arcs of lightning, the flares of Aether, and the crackle of electric discharge accompanies the manufacture of even the smallest gadget. The act registers on a demon's aetheric resonance, showing up to other Unchained and angels both. While the God-Machine's enforcers might not notice a single gadget's creation, the buildup of aetheric radiation when a demon creates more than one gadget in the same place means it's a matter of when an angel will register the Unchained's workshop, rather than if.

A demon can take steps to mitigate exposure. By never using the same place twice, she can limit the buildup of Aether in the world's substrate – though it has to be a totally different place. Using a mobile workspace like a shipping container or large van still contaminates the area with aetheric radiation. If

CHAPTER FOUR: GADGETS

she has a dedicated workshop, she can control the amount of aetheric bleed by shielding the area: creating a cage of wiring, circuitry, and electromagnets that work as a form of supernatural Faraday cage. Each Unchained remembers different schematics for this shielding, leading to a broad range of designs — some of which work perfectly, though many others do absolutely nothing. A few designs, corrupted during the demon's Fall, even act as Aetheric amplifiers — radiating the demon's presence to anything sensitive to the energies of the God-Machine.

Some Storytellers have a concrete idea of the events that angels respond to in their chronicle, with specific angels for specific events. Others may want to add an element of risk to gadget creation. If that's the case, each time a demon creates a gadget in a specific location the Storyteller can roll a pool of one die for each gadget created there, plus one die for each failed roll in the extended action. Even if the demon fails the gadget creation roll, the Storyteller should still make the roll. On a success, the God-Machine becomes aware of the situation. Sometime in the next session, an angel arrives at the workspace to hunt for the demon. On an exceptional success, the angel already knows who the demon is; she gains the **Surveilled Condition**. If the demon is already Hunted, this roll gains the rote action quality (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 134).

The Storyteller should apply the following modifiers to the roll, based on the type of the last gadget created. A few permutations offer additional modifiers (such as hardware with looser symbolic resonance); those are detailed in the applicable section.

Type of gadget	Modifier
One-shot	-1
Software gadget	+0
Exploited gadget	+1
Form gadget	+1
Implant gadget	+1
Knock-off	+2
First-order lambda	+3
Second-order lambda	+5

SECURE WORKSPACE

Despite the great risks of being discovered, some demons maintain a space that they can use to create gadgets, replete with tools and devices that help her in constructing gadgets. Only a few demons do so, as it increases the risk of angelic interference. Due to their close links to Essence and to the underlying superstructure of reality, demons have to create gadgets in the physical world — in bolt-holes or strange realms like those accessed with the Rip the Gates Exploit, she can't create gadgets.

Demons don't so much create workspaces as infuse them as a side-effect of gadget creation. Each gadget the Unchained creates in a single location makes further Installations easier. Once she's created three gadgets in the same location, that place becomes infused with enough Aether and the resonance of construction that it offers her benefits on creating any further gadgets. A workspace's bonuses only apply to the demon who created it; other Unchained receive no benefit. It also shows up on a demon's aetheric resonance. When the workspace's owner is creating a gadget, it shows up to other demons' aetheric resonance as though her Primum were two dots higher.

Using a workspace doesn't offer any bonus dice — creating a gadget is a function of the demon's remembered knowledge from her time as an agent of the God-Machine rather than the gadget's hardware, tools used, or physical nature of the workspace. It does allow her to work faster. Gadgets that would require fifteen minutes per roll to Install take only ten minutes; knock-offs take five minutes per roll. Otherwise, divide the time taken for each roll when creating gadgets in half — Exploited gadgets take thirty minutes per roll, precision engineered gadgets take half a day for Embedded gadgets and one day for Exploited gadgets, and so on.

A workspace doesn't offer any natural benefits against detection by angels, so even getting to the point of creating a workspace is not without risk. Once she has a workspace she can rig up some protection, using memories of metaphysical circuitry and electronics to ground out the Aether and interfere with an angel's senses. This is an extended roll of Intelligence + Science + Primum requiring 15 successes; each roll takes half an hour. On a success, any future rolls for angelic notice suffer a penalty equal to the demon's Primum; if the player rolls an exceptional success, the demon doesn't need to spend Aether the next time she creates a gadget. If the attempt at shielding the workspace is a dramatic failure, each roll for angelic notice gains a bonus equal to the demon's Primum.

SUBORNED INFRASTRUCTURE AS WORKSPACES

When a demon suborns Infrastructure, she disconnects it from the God-Machine and repurposes the area for her own uses, such as creating a more secure and stable workspace. Normally, workspaces do not make gadget creation easier, only faster, but suborned Infrastructure is an exception to this rule. Being in a space originally created by the God-Machine allows the demon to remember its subroutines more easily and hack into the latent programs in the Infrastructure.

Demons who have the Suborned Infrastructure Merit (see **Demon: The Descent**, p.121) can create a workspace within it. For each dot above 2 the character has in the Merit, choose one of the following benefits in addition to the normal time reduction benefits of using a workspace.

- The demon gains +1 bonus dice to create gadgets while she is in the suborned Infrastructure workspace.

- The demon can use the ambient Aether of the Infrastructure in place of her own during gadget creation. The total Aether cost to create a gadget is one less for each dot the character has in the Merit, to a minimum of 0. When using this benefit, angels have an easier time finding the workspace, gaining +1 die per dot in the Merit on any angelic detection rolls, which stacks with any other dice bonuses from using the Infrastructure as a workspace.
- The demon can spend a point of Aether to activate the Infrastructure's latent shielding for the workspace while she is creating a gadget. The Storyteller subtracts the demon's Merit dots from any rolls for angelic detection. This stacks with normal shielding.
- The demon can create gadgets faster than with a normal workspace. The time to create a gadget is now a quarter of the normal time per roll – Exploited gadgets take fifteen minutes per roll, precision engineered gadgets six hours for Embedded gadgets and half a day for Exploited gadgets, and so on. When using this benefit, angels have an easier time finding the workspace, and gain +1 die per dot in the Merit on any angelic detection rolls, which stacks with any other dice bonuses from using the Infrastructure as a workspace.

Creating gadgets within Infrastructure carries its own drawbacks. Angels are familiar with the areas once under their purview and tend to keep their eyes on the area in search of the demon who suborned the location. Whenever a roll for angels noticing a gadget creation in a suborned Infrastructure is successful, the demon immediately gains the *Surveilled Condition* as though it were an exceptional success. On an exceptional success the demon gains the *Hunted Condition* instead.

OVERCLOCKING

Sometimes, a gadget just isn't enough. A cigarette lighter that can set inanimate objects alight at a distance is good, but when the angels come calling it helps to set the whole room on fire. The demon has to expend some of her own power through the gadget, but she can temporarily increase its effects, assuming she doesn't push too far. Too much Aether and too much stress can fracture the metaphysical technology that underpins a gadget. Some remain functional, but prone to certain bugs – the aforementioned lighter might need her to spit on the wick or utter a phrase in Punjabi before it would strike – while others become dangerous to use, or fade into hollow shells of what they once were.

Forcing so personal Aether into a gadget can give a demon several benefits. She might find that the gadget works better than ever before, correcting her gross physical motions to better do what she wants. The gadget might work across a broader area of effect or draw multiple people under its sway. Whatever the results, overclocking is a sure-fire way to get a big bang out of the gadget, as long as the demon can take the consequences.

To overclock a gadget, the demon spends a point of Aether and a point of Willpower. The demon's player picks one upgrade and one flaw from the section below, or creates them with the Storyteller's approval. He then rolls to activate the gadget as normal. If the roll fails, treat it as a dramatic failure, though the gadget doesn't suffer any ongoing drawbacks. On a success, the gadget activates with the appropriate upgrade and suffers the chosen flaw.

As overclocking requires Aether, only demons can do it. Some other supernatural creatures can manipulate Essence and may be able to overclock gadgets at the Storyteller's discretion.

UPGRADES

Upgrades take effect only for the initial activation of the gadget.

Broad Spectrum: The gadget normally affects a small area. The rush of Aether amplifies the effect into a local supernatural burst. Multiply any area of effect by the demon's Primum. This is an excellent last-ditch effect, either in a dangerous fight or when otherwise threatened.

Multi-Target: The gadget normally affects one person or object. The sudden injection of Aether spreads the effect around, hitting multiple targets at once. The effect works on a number of people or objects equal to the demon's Primum + 1. This upgrade is especially useful for mind-affecting gadgets that normally only affect one person as a way of enhancing Cover.

Ease of Use: The gadget works smoothly, seemingly correcting any errors that the demon makes when using it. Add the demon's Primum to the activation roll. This upgrade is best used for effects that rely on the number of successes (such as damaging effects), or for demons with particularly high Primum.

Enhanced Effect: The flare of Aether enhances the gadget's power, making it work significantly better than it would otherwise. The activation roll only requires three successes for an exceptional success.

Overwhelming: The demon's Aether turbo-charges the gadget to a point where normal humans just can't resist. The activation roll does not suffer any resistance traits or contested rolls. Naturally, this upgrade is best used with gadgets that require a resisted or contested roll where the resistance would overwhelm other upgrades such as Ease of Use.

DRAWBACKS

All drawbacks are permanent, and affect anyone using the gadget, rather than the original user.

Increased Attention: The flare of Aether causes the gadget to register as anomalous to the God-Machine's metatechnological senses. Anyone using the gadget gains the *Flagged Condition*. If the user is already Flagged, she trades it for the *Hunted Condition*.

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Unreliable: The excess power overwhelms the gadget's strange machinery to the point where it won't work reliably. All subsequent activation rolls suffer a penalty equal to the Primum of the overclocking demon.

Bugs in the System: The gadget's mundane function won't work unless the user performs a specific action. Effectively, the player decides on a trigger (p. 147) to use the hardware's mundane function. If the user doesn't perform the trigger, the device doesn't work — knives won't cut, a lighter won't strike, and a cigarette case won't open. This flaw does not apply to gadgets that don't have a mundane use, such as jewellery, knock-offs, and some lambdas.

Burned Out: The gadget's left a hollow shell, the power within barely present. The user must spend a point of Aether (or Essence) each time she wants to use the gadget, if she does not, it simply doesn't work. The gadget can't be used to create a lambda or otherwise deconstructed to learn its secrets.

Sparks: Activating the gadget causes blue sparks of Aether to jump to the nearest receptive being — the person holding the gadget, demon or otherwise. The user takes one point of lethal damage each time that she activates the gadget.

A demon can fix drawbacks in an overclocked gadget, given enough time. She can either move the effect to a new piece of hardware or repair it *in situ*. In order to move the effect, she needs similar hardware to the gadget that she's scrapping. She can move an effect Installed in a compact camera to another brand of compact camera, but not to an SLR, or from a digital camera to a film camera. She has to spend a point of Aether to prime the new hardware; once she's done so, moving the effect is an extended roll of Dexterity + Crafts + Primum. Each roll takes half an hour, and she needs successes equal to hardware's Structure. If the Structure of the new hardware is different from the old, the two items aren't similar enough to move the effect. She destroys the old hardware in the process. Unlike creating a new gadget, she does not need to spend a dot of Willpower once the transfer is complete.

If the gadget's hardware is hard to find or otherwise problematic to replace, the demon can attempt to repair the gadget. This is an extended action using the lower of her Dexterity and Intelligence + Crafts + Primum. Each roll takes an hour, and she needs successes equal to twice the gadget's Structure. The repair is a delicate and intricate process that doesn't leave the area awash with Aether; she doesn't attract the notice of angels when doing so.

Failing either attempt to fix the gadget leaves it in the same state that it was at the start. A dramatic failure destroys the gadget — and the new hardware, if moving the effect.

LIMITS OF OVERCLOCKING

Overclocking is an excellent way to really push a gadget to its limits, but the process does have some limitations. Most notably, since many of the upgrades affect the activation roll, it really helps if the player and Storyteller have some note of what the gadget does beforehand — not just the dice pool and

type of resistance, but what it can affect and what happens on both an exceptional success and dramatic failure. See "Designing Effects" on p. 145 for more details.

Demons can't overclock one-shots. They're designed to be as disposable as a burner cellphone; any extra Aether pumped into the gadget has nowhere to go. A demon who tries to overclock a one-shot doesn't lose any Aether or Willpower and can still use the gadget as normal.

Likewise, a demon can't overclock form gadgets. They're not natural recipients of Aether; being parts of a demon's true form rather than physical representations of the God-Machine's cheat-codes for reality makes them poorly suited to simply enhancing their effects. The user suffers no ill effects from trying, but the original donor of the form ability knows precisely where the gadget is, anywhere on Earth.

Demons can overclock first- and second-order lambdas, though doing so is a very risky proposition. The demon suffers three points of lethal damage from aetheric feedback and gains the Surveilled Condition as soon as she makes the activation roll.

FORM GADGETS

Some rare gadgets don't directly interface the core code of the God-Machine via the mechanics of Embeds or Exploits. Rather, they touch one of its creations — the Unchained themselves. A demon can Install part of his true self into a gadget, effectively giving it the use of one of his form abilities via the gadget rather than by partially transforming into his demonic form.

It's never comfortable for a demon to invest himself into a gadget. The few who do so describe the process as like going through surgery without anesthetic — amputating part of what he truly is when stripped of Cover and lies. Worse, instead of recovering, the demon has to come back to the piece of himself with a taxidermy kit and an electronics toolbox, turning it into an animatronic replica of what it once was.

The end result looks twisted and alien, almost like an Exploited gadget, but obviously related to the creator's demonic form. A Barbed Tail might manifest as a whip of steel and barbed wire, with a handle where it was ripped from the base of the demon's spine. A gadget Installed with Fluid Form might look like a container of glowing viscous substance that injects into the demon's body when she activates it. A demon using a gadget for the Long Limbs form ability might have a harness of black steel and bare muscle strapped to both of his arms.

Installing a form ability into a gadget comes with a cost: the demon cannot then access her form ability without the gadget. The gadget also requires Aether to function and gives out a strong aetheric resonance. If she fully transforms into her demonic form, she's missing the part of her true body that would otherwise provide the form ability — the copper wiring in her eyes that lets her see into people's minds has corroded, or the arm that normally ends in a rivet gun is an amputated stump. If a form gadget falls into the wrong hands, she can try to destroy the gadget or let it run out of Aether. Either will



return the form ability to her. The only sure way, though, is by going loud and burning her Cover.

If the cost is so high, why bother? A gadget Embedded with a form ability is much the same as an Exploited gadget – it doesn't cause compromise. Better, she can give the gadget to anyone who can use it, lending armor to a stigmatic she knows will face serious physical threats. She could lend it to another member of her ring, granting her means of propulsion to another demon to surprise angels that think they know her capabilities. Or she can keep it for herself, allowing her to use the form ability in human form without risking a fragile Cover.

USING FORM GADGETS

Activating a form gadget costs a point of Aether, drawn from the gadget's stockpile. Most form gadgets also require an activation roll relating to the gadget's hardware, which in the case of an attack may have to contend with Defense and armor (see “Hardware,” p. 150). Form gadgets have a trigger in the same way as other gadgets; activating the trigger automatically spends the required Aether.

If the form ability would normally require Aether to use, its price is also paid out of the gadget's reserves of Aether when activated. If the demon uses a gadget Installed with one

of her own form abilities, he can spend as much Aether per turn as he needs to use the ability, not limited by his Primum. If the form ability comes from another of the Unchained, he must wait and spend Aether normally.

When activated, the form ability takes effect immediately. Any roll to activate the gadget replaces the normal roll necessary to activate a form ability. Passive abilities, like most Modifications and Propulsions, last until the end of the demon's next turn; by spending another point of Aether from the stockpile, these effects can last until the end of the scene. He can do the same for activated effects, but must still pay any Aether needed for the form ability when he uses it. He must use the gadget's activation roll in place of his normal dice pool. He doesn't need to satisfy any triggers, though. Despite manifesting part of the demon's true form, these gadgets still use the traits of the character using them – taking wings from one of the Unchained increases the user's species factor to 10 for purposes of calculating Speed. It doesn't give the original demon's Speed when using the wings.

Creatures other than demons can use form gadgets. The trigger automatically draws Aether out of the gadget's stockpile – both the initial point required to use the gadget and any required for the form ability. As the hardware's activation roll replaces any normal roll for the form ability, non-demons don't have to worry about not having Primum. If a gadget rep-

PHANTOM PAIN (PERSISTENT)

Your character has given up one of her form abilities, installing it into a gadget. While the lost body part probably doesn't show up in your Cover's physical form, you still feel sensations in your missing extremities and they remind you of what you've done. You went through so much pain to take them out, but was that really such a good idea? You suffer a -1 penalty to all actions requiring concentration and focus while you possess this Condition.

Resolution: Regain the missing form ability through either letting the gadget run out of Aether, destroying the gadget, or going loud.

Beat: You choose to fail an action impacted by this Condition, rather than making the roll.

licates a feature of another supernatural being — a werewolf using a gadget Installed with Claws and Fangs, for example — he can choose to use one or the other, not both at once. Normal humans who use form gadgets stand a much greater chance of becoming stigmatic than normal, as they're touching a (admittedly broken and warped) piece of the God-Machine.

Demons who Install parts of their own bodies into gadgets can locate those devices by using a form of aetheric resonance. The demon doesn't have to spend a point of Aether and his Primum is considered 5 dots higher for purposes of determining his range. He can detect the gadget in this way, but not any angels or demons around it.

While his form ability is Installed in a gadget, treat the demon as though he doesn't possess that ability. Not manifesting it during a partial transformation doesn't give bonus dice to the compromise roll, and it's not present when fully transformed. He also suffers from the Condition: Phantom Pain. He gets the form ability back when the gadget runs out of Aether and isn't refuelled after a day, when someone destroys the gadget, or by going loud. This last method destroys the gadget in a shower of sparks and arc lightning, dealing the demon's Primum in lethal damage to whoever is holding it in addition to the normal effects of destroying the gadget.

Nobody's quite sure what happens to a form gadget if the demon dies before regaining the missing piece of his body — it hasn't happened so far, or if it has, nobody has survived to report back. The black market trade of gadgets between the Unchained sometimes brings up something that might be the form gadget of a dead demon, but it could just as easily be a particularly complex lambda.

INSTALLATION

Installing one of her form abilities into a gadget is a traumatic process for any demon. First, she needs to prepare an appropriate piece of hardware in which to Install the gadget. Like an Embedded gadget, it has to have some symbolic link to the form ability that she wants to Install. Like an Exploited gadget, though, the process of Installation warps and twists it so that it's obviously strange and unworldly.

Just having the hardware isn't enough. The gadget needs a part of the demon's form for it to take on her power. Most demons partially transform, manifesting only the trait they want to Install, then rip it out of their bodies. A few go all the way, actively removing the trait from their full demonic form — though that's more common among the Burned, who sometimes sell one of their form abilities for a time in exchange for scraps of Cover. In either case, the amputation deals four points of lethal damage to the demon. If she heals before completing the gadget, she regains her form ability and the extracted component crumbles to a silvery powder.

When crafting the gadget, the demon incorporates the piece of her demonic form into the gadget; increase the gadget's Durability by 2. This applies *before* making the crafting rolls, which depend on the object's Structure. The rolls themselves proceed as for an Exploited gadget. If she does not spend a dot of Willpower upon creation, she gets the form ability back — and the gadget explodes in her face, dealing damage as though she'd gone loud when holding it. Assuming she succeeds, consider the gadget's Size as one more than it is when working out the size of its Stockpile.

A handful of demons have tried ripping pieces off of angels — or one another — to create form gadgets, but something about the process doesn't work. The leading theory is that the person investing Aether into creating the gadget has to be the same one who donated a chunk of his demonic form. Rumors abound of one ring that have found a way to jury-rig parts of a dead angel into a device that can use some of its Influences, but most of the Unchained don't believe it. If nothing else, the ring would have faced swarms of hunter angels desperate for revenge...wouldn't they?

GRAFTS

A demon who possesses a form gadget can attempt to graft it to her demonic form, making it a permanent part of her true self. Unlike implanting other gadgets, grafting on a form gadget makes a fundamental change to the demon's form. Since a demon's true form normally adapts depending on her original mission and self-image, grafting on new form abilities given by — or stolen from — other Unchained is unnatural. Other demons might see it as a strange quirk, or as a sign of a kind of body dysmorphia.

Grafting a form gadget does have some advantages over swapping out a form ability. The demon can manifest the gadget in her human form without causing a compromise, though unlike with other form gadgets, she can't give it to anyone else.

She can also use a grafted gadget to increase the amount of Aether she can hold over and above her normal maximum by internalizing the gadget's Stockpile. A few demons can graft form gadgets to increase their number of available form abilities; most find that they have to surgically remove one of their other abilities when performing the graft.

To graft a form gadget, the demon needs to fully transform into her demonic form and attach it to her body. Unless she has the High Tolerance Merit (p. 129), she loses access to one of her form abilities of the same kind as that Installed in the gadget — if she grafts a form gadget containing Wings, she loses a Propulsion in return. Some enterprising demons Install one of their form abilities into a gadget before grafting on a gadget, while others are nowhere near as pragmatic. Installing the graft requires an extended Intelligence + Medicine roll, requiring two successes per form ability the demon currently possesses. Each roll takes an hour. The player chooses which form ability his character loses within the appropriate category; she can use that form ability for a week after the graft, but each use inflicts a point of lethal damage. After a week, she loses access to that ability entirely. Removing the graft is an instant Intelligence + Medicine action; if the demon fails, she suffers three points of lethal damage. If she loses or removes the graft, her missing form ability returns in the same way — inflicting lethal damage with use for the first week, then returning to full functionality.

The demon can manifest her grafted form ability without causing a compromise, and can access its Stockpile of Aether normally. It works in all other ways like a normal form ability. Going loud forcibly expels the graft from the demon's body, draining the gadget's Stockpile in the process. She instantly regains any form abilities that she had lost due to the graft.

If the demon whose form ability is Installed in the graft goes loud, the grafted demon's player rolls Stamina + Resolve as a reflexive action. She suffers a penalty equal to the difference between the two demons' Primum (10 – her own Primum, since the character going loud has Primum 10 for the scene). If she succeeds, her body rejects the graft in a flare of Aether but she takes no damage. If she fails, she takes five points of lethal damage as the graft explodes. In either case, her body expels the grafted gadget, leaving the hardware a useless shell.

LAMBDAS

Some gadgets go above and beyond the reality-altering power of an Embed or Exploit. Though rare, a few of the Unchained have worked out how to blend the metaphysical references behind two — or more — gadgets into a single item, producing a gadget with two related but independent uses. These gadgets combine the effects of two Embeds into one complete effect. A corporate ID badge might be Installed with both Unperson and Bystander Effect, so that nobody notices the bearer even when she kills someone in the middle of a crowded office. A whistle might be Installed with Cool Heads Prevail and Deafen to briefly freeze combatants and prevent

them from hearing. More violent demons might prefer a gadget that combines Combustion with Hellfire, making a weapon that deals terrible damage and sets everything it hits alight.

Such multi-Embed gadgets came about as a result of the Unchained's greater understanding of Embeds and Exploits as subroutines in the God-Machine. Based on those developments, many demons refer to these gadgets as "lambdas." First-order lambdas combine the effects of two powers, be they Embeds or Exploits, into a significantly more powerful effect.

A handful of demons have tried creating second-order lambdas — creating an effect that combines three Embeds or Exploits into a single flare of power. Despite their experiments, the Unchained only know of five second-order lambdas in the world. Using them is a clear sign to the God-Machine that something is wrong, and angels soon arrive to discover what has happened. Worse, lambdas don't exist in a vacuum — each one is the result of a demon deconstructing two gadgets and re-forming them into one single item. Each step extracts a high cost, and expends enough Aether that the God-Machine will take note and send Its agents to find out more.

LAMBDA CREATION

To make a first-order lambda, a demon needs to make, find, or steal two gadgets that have specific functions that she wants to link to make her new effect. While the lambda won't possess the exact powers of the source gadgets, the resulting ability must be conceptually close to what the gadgets could do on their own, rather than the broader Embeds that they have Installed. If either of the gadgets has a general parameter, the resulting lambda will have a similar limitation. For example, the demon could use a knife loaded with Hush in a lambda with another weapon Embedded with Bystander Effect to make an assassin's blade people will go out of their way to ignore. She couldn't combine that same knife with a rifle loaded with Merciless Gunman to make a sniper's rifle — the version of Hush she has access to will only work with knives or similar bladed weapons.

The Unchained can't make lambdas out of one-shots or form gadgets. One-shots are too fragile to deconstruct properly, and form gadgets draw their power from the demon herself rather than the half-remembered workings of the God-Machine. A few demons have tried to make a first-order lambda out of two gadgets that each have a different effect of the same Embed. The theory goes that the resulting lambda would be much easier to reverse-engineer. The attempt actually destroys both gadgets without creating anything new.

Demons must Install a lambda effect created from two Embeds into an item that has sympathetic resonance for the final combined effect. Unlike other Embedded gadgets, Installing a lambda changes the hardware. It's recognizable for what it once was, but in the same way a hairdryer looks like a flare gun. The hardware's infused with the core matter of the God-Machine, leaving it with a bizarre, alien appearance. Anyone who sees the lambda won't mistake it for anything normal.

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A lambda that includes an Exploit in its construction twists the hardware into a whole new form. It reflects the object's final purpose, but sometimes in a way that the demon didn't expect. Unlike other Exploited gadgets, the final shape of the hardware does reflect the gadget's effect — though sometimes in a bizarre fashion. It's a physical manifestation of a combination of hacks to the God-Machine.

DEFINE EFFECT

The player and Storyteller need to work together to determine how the effects of each gadget incorporated into a lambda will come together into a coherent whole. The gadget doesn't just have two functions — it's not the sort of device that an enterprising demon can make on the cheap with two gadgets and some duct tape.

Unlike normal Gadgets, which can only handle an inflexible single-function use of an Embed or Exploit, a lambda can incorporate any and all of the functionality of both gadgets after combination. The intersection of two Embeds or Exploits can produce a wide range of potentially powerful effects. If that's what the demon wants, then that's what she can get — assuming she's willing to pay the price in attention from the God-Machine.

Some demons set out to create a lambda specifically. They start knowing what they want the lambda to do, then reverse-engineer the source gadgets. Such top-down design can help make the final product a more coherent design — both for the character, and for the player creating the item — the demon still has to construct three gadgets, sacrificing Willpower and attracting the attention of the God-Machine. Others prefer to find new uses for old gadgets, combining tools that they no longer use into something more suited to their current tasks.

Example: *Danny wants to create a lambda for his character. He wants to combine Alibi with Never Here, to create a gadget that will make everyone who interacted with his character in a scene to not only forget that they saw him, but to remember him in a situation that gives him a cast-iron alibi. While that's a fair usage for an Alibi gadget, she vetoes his use of Never Here — it's as useful as the original Embed. She suggests that it only works on one person, who remembers the alibi rather than what actually happened.*

Some demons prefer versatility in their gadgets. Though it's riskier both in terms of attracting the God-Machine's attention and the potential for physical harm, a lambda can retain the original effect of both original gadgets in addition to its new hybrid effect. If that's the case, the demon has to be a lot more careful with the metaphysical components of the original gadgets.

SELECT HARDWARE

A lambda's hardware needs to reflect its eventual purpose. As with gadgets, it has to start out as a totally mundane object, though the resulting form may include portions of the original gadgets if it seems appropriate. A lambda cannot be smaller than the highest Size of the component gadgets — it in-

cludes some of their metaphysical components, it needs space to assimilate them. The process of construction reinforces the hardware, so even a normally fragile sculpture ends up stronger than steel; increase the object's Durability by 2.

Otherwise, lambda hardware is much like the hardware of any other gadget (see “Hardware,” p. 150). The resulting gadget must activate as an instant action — lambdas are too complex for reflexive activation. A lambda that retains its original functions along with the new hybrid effect must be suited to those original effects — the hardware has to have a level of sympathetic resonance to every Installed effect that isn't based on an Exploit. Define a separate trigger for each kind of effect. Work with the Storyteller to determine if the dice pool to activate the source gadget's effects are still appropriate or if they need to change.

INSTALLATION

Installing a lambda is similar to creating any other gadget, but the demon needs the components of other gadgets to start.

Taking a gadget apart is no easy task. The demon's player needs to make an extended roll of Dexterity + Crafts + Primum, requiring successes equal to the hardware's Structure, taking half an hour per roll. If the object contains an Exploit, double both the number of successes required and the time per roll. If the demon doesn't know the Installed Embed or Exploit, each roll suffers a -3 penalty. In addition to taking a Condition on each failed roll, the demon must spend a point of Aether to continue with the disassembly. If she doesn't, the gadget is destroyed. Disassembling a gadget leaves the area flooded with aetheric radiation, turning animals into cryptids and humans into stigmatics.

Once disassembled, the gadget is reduced to so much junk. The metaphysical components that allowed it to access specific subroutines of the God-Machine look like pieces of complex machinery made up of fragments of circuit boards, tiny pistons, cogwheels, and microchips. Each component glows from within with a faint blue light. With the gadgets disassembled, the demon invests her chosen hardware with a point of Aether and starts Installation. This is an extended roll of Intelligence + Crafts + Primum, which takes an hour per roll and requires successes equal to the hardware's Structure (twice the hardware's structure if one of the components was an Exploited gadget).

Once completed, the creator can use the lambda as a stockpile for Aether even if it only contains Embeds. She can also expend an additional dot of Willpower to cement the lambda's place in the world. If she doesn't, the components react violently with one another, sending out arcs of Aether in a beacon to nearby angels and agents of the God-Machine. Any angel within a half-mile radius senses these arcs; more powerful angels are capable of sensing the reaction across a major city. Even if she does cement the lambda in reality, it triggers aetheric resonance as though anyone nearby were two steps up the chart on p. 184 of *Demon: The Descent*.

If the demon wants the resulting gadget to retain the effects of the original in addition to the new effect, her dice pool uses the lower of her Intelligence or Dexterity. In addition, she gains the interest of any angels – and the God-Machine in general – as though she had not spent Willpower to stabilize the gadget.

SECOND-ORDER LAMBDA

Creating a second-order lambda is one of the most dangerous processes a demon can undertake. First-order gadgets are tremendously volatile, and it's very hard to disassemble one into its component parts without it exploding in the demon's face. Attempting to modify what is already a jury-rigged conceptual piece of technology with the metaphysical components of another gadget requires a lot of skill and a lot of luck. A single misstep – connecting the wrong aetheric pathways or attempting to access an interface with the wrong parameters – doesn't just destroy the components and alert the God-Machine, but can leave the demon weakened when the angels arrive.

As with first-order lambdas, the gadgets involved need to have a degree of synergy, though the broader power of lambdas give them a correspondingly broader scope for adding a new effect. Adding a third effect, be it an Embed or Exploit, expands the lambda's possible range of effects, opening up the potential for a gadget with incredible power.

Define the effect of a second-order lambda in the same way as any other. The effect of both gadgets mixed together opens up a wide range of possibilities. Like first-order lambdas, the hardware needs to synergise with the effect – though it looks even more bizarre than many Exploited gadgets.

When the demon has gathered the component gadgets, he needs to disassemble them. Disassembly of the gadget is the same as for creating a first-order lambda (above); disassembling a lambda is rather more problematic. The demon's dice pool suffers a -2 penalty. If she doesn't know both Embeds or Exploits Installed in the lambda, that penalty increases to -5. The demon must spend a point of Aether with each roll; if she doesn't, the components die as she removes them. If the player rolls a dramatic failure or abandons the disassembly attempt for any reason, the lambda explodes in a firestorm of Aether. Anyone in the same general area (within 20 feet or so) takes three points of aggravated damage and the God-Machine dispatches angels immediately to home in on the flare of Aether.

Assembly of a second-order lambda is very similar to creating a first-order device, but the demon's dice pool suffers a $\text{d}3$ penalty per roll. On a dramatic failure, the lambda explodes, dealing three points of aggravated damage to everyone in the room as above. Even if she succeeds, the sheer amount of aetheric fallout from the construction – the construction causes lightning to blast through the heavens and power outages across whole cities. Whether she succeeds or fails, the God-Machine's angels will not be long.



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EXAMPLE LAMBDA: THE DREAMING MACHINE

The dreaming machine looks like a large upright piano. The case is made of chrome and copper, with swirls that seem to pass through one another. Most of the body is glass, revealing a maze of circuitry, cogwheels, lamps, and possibly stranger things within. When someone plays the dreaming machine, oil falls from the sky – first over a block, then over a much wider space. The oil lashes against buildings and may catch fire if exposed to enough heat or an open flame. Everyone whom the oil touches immediately falls asleep and dreams of the strange machinery that runs their lives. Throughout these visions, the dreamers become more and more aware that something else is dictating what happens from behind the scenes. When they awaken, the sleepers can perceive the God-Machine and want nothing to do with It.

Only one of the Unchained has ever played the dreaming machine. She did so in the Finnish town of Kaskinen. When she had finished playing, nearly a quarter of the population lay asleep in the streets. When they woke, she – and the dreaming machine – were gone, but they could see the infrastructure hiding in their small town. Many of the dreamers lashed out against it. Three days later, the angels came; three nights after that, the population of Kaskinen didn't remember any of the dreamers. What the angels did to them remains a mystery. Only the three dreamers who left Kaskinen remember the dreaming machine and their burning need to reclaim their destiny.

Installed Exploits: Imagine/Inflict Stigmata/Rain of Blood

Trigger: Playing any song on the piano keys

Dice Pool: Presence + Occult

Action: Extended (5 successes per block; one roll/10 minutes)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The dreaming machine is out of tune and its music draws the attention of the God-Machine. The user gains the Hunted condition.

Failure: The demon can either stop playing the tune or accept a Condition (*Demon: The Descent*, p. 313).

Success: The music summons thick clouds from nowhere, and thick drops of clear oil fall from the sky in a violent and supernatural storm. The demon can maintain the storm across a radius of about a hundred yards for every five successes rolled. She can continue playing to increase the area to a maximum of five hundred yards, but gains the Flagged Condition if she does so. Once started, the storm decreases in size by a hundred yards each hour.

The storm is a level two extreme environment (*Demon: The Descent*, p. 335). It damages buildings, property, and the surrounding area – along with angels, demons, and other supernatural creatures. Normal humans who are hit by the oil

fall into a deep sleep but are otherwise unharmed, even if the oil catches fire; to avoid being caught in the oil-storm, a character can make a Dexterity + Survival roll (-2 modifier).

Sleeping characters suffer strange dreams and bizarre visions of the God-Machine. They remain unconscious for six hours, after which they awaken. Each and every one becomes a stigmatic with a brand or tell, the ability to see the God-Machine's workings, and all other applicable traits (*Demon: The Descent*, p. 225). These new stigmatics are not well disposed toward the God-Machine. If a demon plays to their fears and insecurities over the inscrutable device, she can make a good impression – starting any Social maneuvering attempt with an excellent impression or gaining a three-die bonus to any Social rolls with the new stigmatics.

Playing with the God-Machine's creation on such a grand scale has its downsides. If the demon remains and makes herself known to the new stigmatics, she gains the Surveilled Condition.

Exceptional Success: The demon plays with such skill and artistry that it distracts any watching angels from her work. She can remain at the site of the storm and talk to any new stigmatics without gaining a Condition.

EXAMPLES

The following is a list of example gadgets with activations, triggers and effects. Each Embed and Exploit can be made into any type of gadget, though the effects are different each time. Below is an example of how the Ambush Embed can be different between different types of gadgets.

Gadget

A piece of yellowed paper, folded into thirds with a small directional compass drawn in the top right corner of each fold.

Activation and Triggers: The gadget is activated by unfolding the paper and saying the trigger word, "reveal."

Effect: Upon activation, the paper shows a map of the user's immediate vicinity, including building notes for ventilation, plumbing and sewer access. If people are in the area, they appear as small labeled dots on the map. Once the gadget is activated, it shows a static picture. If people move from their originally marked positions, the map does not reflect the changes. The map remains as long as the paper is unfolded. This gadget can only be used once every hour.

Near-Field

A portable GPS navigator with the screen replaced by a highly polished mirrored surface.

Activation and Triggers: The gadget is activated by turning the device on and the player making a successful Intelligence + Investigation roll. The device can only be used indoors, and will not activate if the user is exposed to the outside even from an open door or window.

Effect: The device shows the location of everyone around



the user in a 50 ft. radius, though it does not show intervening walls or doors, just blips of people moving in the area. After the device is activated, the user cannot be surprised by an attack for the rest of the scene.

One-Shot

Each of these one-shot gadgets is a small snapper firework wrapped in thin yellow tissue paper stamped with Arabic letters.

Activation and Triggers: The gadget is activated when the packet is thrown on the ground.

Effect: The gadget produces a loud report and a puff of smoke that momentarily distracts onlookers. The smoke obscures the user and allows him an advantage when acting. Activation of the snapper is a reflexive action that must be done on the user's turn. On the next round of combat, the user is moved to the beginning of the Initiative order. After that round, he returns to his normal Initiative.

EXAMPLE GADGETS

ANIMATE

An exposed computer board with bits of bone, flesh and hair in place of capacitors and microchips.

Activation and Triggers: The user must place the board on the intended target and the player must succeed on a Presence + Crafts roll to activate the gadget.

Effect: Whatever the board touches immediately springs to life as though turned on. If the object was already on, then the gadget amps up the efficiency of the item. For instance, a demon can start a car or even jumpstart a dead car with the gadget, or he could allow a car to go well over normal speeds once it is already running. This gadget has no effect on living creatures.

APPLE OF DISCORD

A money clip with five one-hundred dollar bills secured inside.

Activation and Triggers: This gadget does not need to be activated, but its effects are only active at night.

Effect: Anyone who sees the money clip desires to have it and gains the Obsessed Condition, unless his player succeeds on a Composure roll. Anyone who fails the roll will attempt to gain the money clip at all costs, up to and including murder. The obsession does not end until the victim has the money clip in hand, at which point the victim becomes immune to the gadget's effects.

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COMBUSTION

The gadget is a flip-top lighter with thin copper wires tracing the outside edges.

Activation and Triggers: The lighter must be flipped open and pointed at a target up to ten feet away to activate.

Effect: The target catches on fire. This only works on objects that are normally flammable, such as wood, natural fibers and some plastics. The lighter does not have to be lit, nor does any fire actually have to touch the target in question. The gadget cannot set living flesh on fire.

DEEP COVER

A contactless smart card installed with a near field communication standard, at the end of an extendable lanyard.

Activation and Triggers: The player must succeed on a Manipulation + Occult roll to activate the gadget. The user must present the card to a target and say a name he wants to be known by in order to trigger its effects.

Effect: The gadget works to confound the senses of the target when she attempts to use an effect to reveal the user's true nature. For the rest of the scene, if the target attempts to use a power to discern the user's nature, he appears to be the same type of supernatural being as her.

DEEP POCKETS

A backpack made of a metal frame with gears and springs in place of zippers and electrical cables in place of straps. When the bag is opened, a soft white glow emanates from inside and the bottom cannot be seen.

Activation and Triggers: The gadget is always on; no special trigger is needed.

Effect: Any object placed into the bag disappears no matter how large or small as long as it can fit through the opening. Whenever the user wishes to remove something from the bag he must succeed on a Strength + Larceny roll to pull the object out. The user cannot pull something from the bag that was not previously placed into the bag, but he doesn't need to know what he is pulling out of the bag when he reaches in. If the user has a specific item in mind, he simply has to imagine the item he wants to pull forth. Otherwise, a single random item from the bag comes to his hand when he reaches in.

EXTISPICY

This gadget is a voodoo doll with snap buttons for eyes and copper wires for hair.

Activation and Triggers: The user must perform a four-minute ritual with the doll while reciting a target's name. Some piece of the target — hair, skin, etc. — must be placed inside the doll's "stomach." The player must succeed on an Intelligence + Occult roll to activate the gadget.

Effect: The target of the ritual is revealed to the user for one minute per success of activation. The user can see and hear everything the target can see or hear, no matter where the target is.

FIRE DRILL

A personal tape player with tiny portable speakers plugged into the headphone slot and taped down to the sides of the device.

Activation and Triggers: The gadget is activated by pressing the play button (the player makes a Wits + Science roll). The gadget must be activated inside a building. It does not function outdoors.

Effect: The tape player begins to sound an alarm that sounds exactly like a building alarm for a fire or similar emergency. People who hear the alarm are startled and believe a real emergency is occurring, at least for a few minutes. The user can take advantage of the confusion and use the alarm as cover. He gains a + 2 bonus to actions that can conceivably be covered by the alarm, such as Larceny, Persuasion, or Stealth for a number of turns equal to successes gained at activation.

HUSH

This gadget is a pair of nondescript running shoes with dense rubber soles and thick leather around the outside.

Activation and Triggers: The shoes must be worn for them to work properly and are activated with the word "Shh."

Effect: The shoes muffle the sounds of the wearer while walking, running or otherwise moving. The silencing effects are persistent and last until the wearer removes the shoes or does something to create more noise than regular movement, such as opening a door, entering into combat or speaking. This gadget allows the wearer to move silently through any terrain. He adds his Primum to any Stealth roll involving remaining silent, but does not hide his passage from visual inspection.

IDLE CONVERSATION

This gadget is a small motorized fan that when spinning shows an LED image of spinning concentric circles, creating a hypnotizing effect.

Activation and Triggers: The user must turn the device on and place it at the edge of a table or bench, marking the outside edge of the area he wants to affect, creating a radius to a circle centered on the user. This area cannot be any larger than a ten foot circle. The player must succeed on a Manipulation + Socialize roll to activate the gadget.

Effect: While the gadget is active, it distorts the conversation of those people within the area. For the rest of the scene, anyone simply passing by the area hears the white noise of the fan instead of the actual conversation. Anyone attempting to listen in on the conversation suffers a penalty equal to successes gained at activation on any rolls to eavesdrop on or interpret the conversation. The user can end the gadget's effects early by turning the fan off.

LIVING RECORDER

A tape recorder with all the buttons except “play” removed. Each empty space has a different colored stone is glued in.

Activation and Triggers: The gadget is activated when the user presses the play button and the player succeeds on a Manipulation + Socialize roll. The device must be directed at a person as the target of the effect.

Effect: The recorder plays back a moment in time from the last 24 hours of the victim in complete detail as a narrative of what the victim saw, said, and what was said to her. The user must designate a start time for the playback. It will run for five minutes per success on activation. The device does not need to be near the victim to perform the playback, but the user must be able to see and point the gadget at the victim.

MILES AWAY

This gadget is a small ceramic music box that plays a haunting tune.

Activation and Triggers: The gadget is activated by winding the box five times counterclockwise. It cannot be activated while performing strenuous activity, such as during combat, driving a car or running.

Effect: When activated, the music box emits soothing music. Anyone who can hear the music becomes calm and focused. The music grants listeners a +2 bonus to activities that require concentration and precision. The song lasts for one hour, at which point the listeners become immune to the calming effects of the gadget for the rest of the day.

NEWTON'S NIGHTMARES

A small hand-held pistol with large concentric copper rings around the barrel. The rings pulse with a green light when the trigger is pulled.

Activation and Triggers: The gadget is activated with a successful Dexterity + Firearms roll. The gun's trigger must be held firmly for at least fifteen seconds for the effect to take place. The user must target an open space and cannot turn the gun on a person or an object.

Effect: The targeted space becomes extremely dense, creating a gravity-well. Objects and people are drawn to the area unless they succeed on a Strength + Athletics roll to resist the pull. Anything that enters the gravity-well is torn apart; people trapped within the gravity well take one point of lethal damage per turn. The well lasts as long as the user concentrates on maintaining it and continues to hold down the trigger of the gun. If the user takes damage or is engaged in any activity that requires a roll, he loses his concentration.

RAW MATERIALS

The gadget is a sledgehammer made of polished black stone with a thick lead pipe as the haft.

Activation and Triggers: The gadget is activated with a successful Strength + Crafts roll.

Effect: The hammer can mutate any object into another object of a similar size and shape. The user must hit the object hard enough with the hammer to deal at least one damage to its Structure. This hammer cannot be used to mutate objects larger than Size 5. For example, the hammer could turn a radio into a video camera, or a motorcycle into a jet ski, but could not change a truck into a bulldozer.

RIP THE GATES

A key with a grinning toothy maw made out of small metallic gears on one side.

Activation and Triggers: The target of the gadget must be a door of some sort and the user must be inside a room, though a drape-cloth between two rooms could easily qualify. The player must succeed on a Wits + Occult roll and the user must touch the gadget to a door to activate it.

Effect: For the rest of the scene, the user can see through the door into the Hedge, the Shadow, the Underworld, or the Astral Realms. The user can easily see anyone or anything within the realm in the room he is within as though the image was laid over the real world. The user cannot interact with anything on the other side of the door unless he opens the door. When he does he may attempt to cross over, which requires a Strength + Athletics roll to push through. The door is one-way. Creatures on the other side cannot pass through, and neither can the user if he goes to the other side. If the user is already in one of these other realms, he can choose the real world as his realm choice at activation.

SOUL BRAND

A PDA that projects 3D images floating an inch from the surface of its screen when turned on.

Activation and Triggers: The user must turn the PDA on to activate the gadget. The gadget can only be activated in a room with no demons other than the user.

Effect: When activated, the gadget creates the feeling of an intense and dangerous presence frightening everyone within a room or a ten-foot radius for the rest of the scene. The user is viewed as the source of this presence and people attempt to satisfy his wishes if possible. The user gains a +2 to all Intimidation and Persuasion rolls against anyone within the gadget's radius. Also, any Social actions made to thwart the user's wishes suffer a -2 penalty.

THE LOOK

An intense beam LED flashlight that shines with a red light.

Activation and Triggers: The player must succeed on a Manipulation + Intimidation roll to activate the gadget. It is triggered when the user turns on the flashlight and shines its light on a target. The target can attempt to avoid the light; subtract Dexterity from the activation roll.

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Effect: If the target is caught in the beam of light, he is frozen in fear for a number of turns equal to successes gained at activation. The victim of the effect cannot move or act, and is incapable of defending himself, though if he takes damage from an external source he is immediately brought out of his terror and can act. If the victim is frozen for a number of turns equal to his Stamina, his body begins to shut down. Each turn, he takes a point of lethal damage. If the subject takes enough damage to fall unconscious, the effect ends immediately.

EXAMPLE NEAR-FIELD GADGETS

FROZEN IN TIME

A harness made of leather and thin sheets of aluminum that straps around the torso of the user. Each of the aluminum plates is etched with odd symbols that give off a faint blue-white glow.

Activation and Triggers: The user must wear the harness. The player must succeed on a Dexterity + Science roll to activate the gadget.

Effect: The user slows time around him, in effect making it look as though he is moving at super-fast speeds and allowing the user to react to all situations in a calculated manner. He gains a bonus equal to his successes on activation to Initiative, Defense and Speed for the rest of the scene. He also gains an aiming bonus any time he makes a Firearms roll.

IMAGINE

A thin silver band with the words “What-so-ever you may wish for” inscribed on the inside.

Activation and Triggers: The gadget is activated by placing the ring on a target’s finger, which requires a successful Dexterity + Larceny roll to slip it onto an unsuspecting target. The user then describes a single action or activity to the target. An action that would cause serious problems for the target if she completed it, such as murder or theft, fails to trigger the gadget. For example, the user could describe to the target finding a new job or quitting her job to stay at home with her children and the gadget works. But telling her to quit her job by insulting her boss and walking out automatically makes the gadget fail.

Effect: The target receives a vision of what her life and the world around her would be like if she took the action described by the user. These visions are always positive and inspiring, giving the target assurances that taking said action would be in her best interest. The gadget does not compel activity, but if the target endeavors to undertake the action, she gains +2 bonus on all rolls associated with completing the activity for the next 24 hours.

MEANINGLESS

A Bluetooth ear bud with a light that flickers and glows as though it were candlelight.

Activation and Triggers: The user must touch a small button on the underside of the device and the player must succeed on a Wits + Academics – Composure roll to activate the gadget. The user must select a target and speak to her to trigger the gadget.

Effect: Upon activation, the target loses his ability to communicate in any meaningful way with others. She can still comprehend and understand written and verbal languages and communication, but is unable to produce these things for herself. If she attempts to speak or write, it comes out as completely incomprehensible scribbles or garbled words. The target gains a -3 to all Social and Mental rolls while under the effects of the gadget. This effect lasts for one scene.

MERCURY RETROGRADE

An older style flip-phone that has been bound together using paper clips and tape.

Activation and Triggers: The gadget is activated when the phone is used to call someone.

Effect: While the user is speaking on the phone, anyone listening in to the conversation misinterprets what is said. The listener can understand what the user is saying, and while the gist of the conversation may come out the same, the meaning and message is very different. For example, if the user of the phone tells the person on the other line to meet him in a specific location at a specific time, a casual listener may hear that the user is meeting at that specific place, but at a different time.

MERGE

This gadget is a manual wristwatch with clockwork gears and a faintly glowing face and crystal. The band of this watch is stretched leather made from tattooed flesh.

Activation and Triggers: This gadget can only be used by a demon and activates when she changes into her demonic form in an area with onlookers. If the demon takes her demonic form in private, the gadget does not function. The gadget will not activate for a partial transformation, but does if the character goes loud.

Effect: The gadget disguises the demon’s demonic form. This does not mean that the demon looks like a normal person, but rather that her form itself looks completely different from normal, so much so that angels or other demons familiar with her cannot recognize her at all. Normal mortals are completely confused by the disguise, unable to really describe the form at all in coherent terms. The disguise is so complete that the demon gains a +2 bonus to her compromise roll for the change.

ON THE MEND

A hypodermic needle filled with a never-ending supply of thick oily liquid.

Activation and Triggers: The user must successfully plunge the needle into someone (Dexterity + Medicine) to activate the gadget.

Effect: The needle transfers life force from the target to the user. Upon activation, the user determines which kind of life force he will take from the victim, be it Willpower, Health, or Aether. Normal humans cannot choose Aether, as they have no way of storing it. The user must be able to sink the needle completely into the victim to activate the gadget, which may be difficult to use on an unwilling subject. The user must succeed in hitting an unwilling victim using Dexterity + Weaponry - Defense before activating the gadget.

The needle transfers on a one-for-one basis, no matter what is being taken from the victim. In the case of Health boxes, the transfer does lethal damage to the victim, but gives extra Health to the user. This does not heal damage already taken. Any time the gadget's user takes any damage after the transfer, his newly stolen Health absorbs the damage and go away. The extra Health fades in 24 hours if not used.

PLAY POSSUM

A copper rod topped with a clockwork eye that clicks open and closed when moved.

Activation and Triggers: The gadget is activated by touching the tip of a rod to a target, which may require a successful Dexterity + Weaponry - Defense roll to touch an unwilling target. The user must utter the trigger word "morior."

Effect: The target appears to be struck by a mortal wound and falls over in all appearances of death. All physical examination both mundane and supernatural register the target as dead. The effect lasts for a single hour, at which point the wound inflicted to cause the death disappears and the target awakens. This effect does not heal damage, as the gadget does not actually damage the target. If the target was suffering from wounds before she fell over dead, those wounds remain, though natural healing may occur during that time. If the target is damaged while she is "dead" then that damage also remains on her body when she wakes up.

REMOTE LINK-UP

This gadget is a pair of sunglasses with mirrored lenses both inside and out.

Activation and Triggers: The gadget is activated by touching the right lens while wearing the glasses, and a successful Intelligence + Investigation roll.

Effect: During activation, the demon can sync her sight with one other person whom she can see at the time. That person's visual perceptions are played through the sunglasses for the next hour or until the user removes the sunglasses, no matter where the subject goes. The user is not granted any extra-sensory perception or supernatural enhancement the subject may use during the synced time, though the user may enable her own supernatural abilities to augment the input she is getting from the subject.

SOCIAL DYNAMICS

A black baseball cap with the letter "A" stitched into the front with white thread.

Activation and Triggers: The hat must be worn to be used, and is activated by a successful Presence + Socialize roll and a one minute conversation with the target group.

Effect: The user blends into the group as though he were a long-time member. The group recognizes him as a sometime member or a hanger-on but definitely someone who belongs, even if they have never met him before the use of this gadget. The effect persists as long as the user remains with the group.

SPECIAL SOMEONE

An ornately carved old wooden compass with a thin needle that does not point north.

Activation and Triggers: The gadget does not need any activation to work.

Effect: The needle of the compass always points towards the most violent person within a 50-foot radius. The concept of "violent" is up to the Storyteller. A person carrying a concealed handgun may not be any more violent than someone without any weapons. Storytellers are advised to use Vices and Aspirations when determining the most violent person in the area, which could very well be the user or one of his allies.

STOP

A chrome ball small enough to fit into the palm of a hand, with intricate black engravings tracing the surface. A viscous black fluid flows within the engravings, oozing out when the gadget is activated.

Activation and Triggers: The user must depress a small button on the surface of the ball and the player must succeed on an Intelligence + Science roll to activate the gadget. The ball must be directed at a target to work properly. This means that it could be placed near the target, held by the user and pointed at the target, or even thrown near the target.

Effect: The chosen target freezes while everything else continues to move around it. The gadget can target anything the user can direct it towards, such as a person, a speeding car, or even an explosion in mid-combustion. The target completely stops in mid motion, no matter what it was doing, and remains that way for a number of turns equal to successes gained on activation. Once the effect ends, targets resume motion as though they had never stopped. Frozen targets are immutable and immune to damage or effects that would quell them, such as quenching a fire. This does not make the target immovable. A speeding bullet could be redirected before resuming motion, or falling objects could be brought safely to the ground.

CHAPTER FOUR: GADGETS

UNPERSON

An old manila folder filled with blank papers, undeveloped photographs, blank IDs and legal documentation with no information filled in.

Activation and Triggers: The user must spend five minutes speaking with the targets, showing them papers and documents from the folder. The player must succeed on a Wits + Subterfuge roll to activate the gadget.

Effect: The user specifies a person and steals his identity for the rest of the scene. Anyone who looked at the papers or documents from the gadget during activation believes that the user is who she says she is, no matter the circumstances. The user could claim to be the person standing right next to her. No matter what was said or what kind of proof was produced afterward, the targets would believe the user over the actual person. The gadget can grant access to anything that the actual person would normally be able to, such as bank accounts, private clubs, and even secured information.

EXAMPLE ONE SHOTS

DATA WIPE

Each of these one-shot gadgets is a laser pointer with the tip broken off and replaced by a glass magnifier. When turned on, the light beam is concentrated enough to cut and burn, but the heat destroys the pointer.

Activation and Triggers: The user must turn on the laser pointer and aim it at a device holding the target data. The player rolls Wits + Subterfuge to activate the gadget. It is triggered by the user saying “disappear.”

Effect: Information pertaining specifically to the user and her actions within the scene are deleted from any and all digital media. Text messages are deleted from phones, electronic recordings are lost, videos are edited, and photos are erased. While this does not affect the memories of people involved in the scene, electronic evidence of the user’s actions is completely lost. For example, a security guard clearly remembers seeing the user on the bank premises, but none of the security videos show her for the entirety of the night.

DEAFEN

Each of these one-shot gadgets is a single pellet of buckshot with a tiny symbol etched into the side.

Activation and Triggers: The user must throw the pellet and whisper the word “boom” to activate the gadget.

Effect: The player rolls Strength + Athletics to target someone with the pellet which counts as a weapon with a rating of one bashing damage. Upon impact, the pellet explodes in a cacophony of noise. Anyone within a five foot radius of the blast gains the Deafened Condition or Tilt as appropriate to the situation. The gadget does not have to hit a specific target to produce this effect.

DISINTEGRATE

Small balls made up of bits of wire, rubber bands, tape, hair, and ligaments.

Activation and Triggers: The user must throw the ball to activate the gadget.

Effect: The gadget travels forty yards, penetrating any non-living object it touches along the way. The ball goes through any material, regardless of Structure or Durability, and travels the entire distance, moving through non-living objects unimpeded until its end. If the ball hits a living object, it stops immediately, falls to the ground, and continues through the floor or ground if it still had distance to travel. If the user would like the object to go a different distance, the player must succeed on a Wits + Occult roll before he throws the gadget. He can change the distance traveled by ten feet per success.

ELLIPSES

Small copper arcade tokens with an eye imprinted on one side and a cloud on the other.

Activation and Triggers: The user triggers the gadget by pressing the coin into the skin of a victim with a successful Dexterity + Larceny roll.

Effect: The victim daydreams and loses one minute of time per success on activation. The victim does not react to normal stimuli, but the effect ends if the victim is attacked. At the end of the duration, the victim cannot remember what happened around her during the daydream, and only recalls pleasant thoughts.

HALO

Pills that look like dried bits of blood coated in dust.

Activation and Triggers: This gadget has no special activation, though it must be ingested to work.

Effect: Anyone who swallows the pill immediately falls asleep for forty minutes. Afterward, he awakens refreshed as though he had an entire night’s sleep. Any damage the user may have had is healed as though he had eight hours of rest. If the user is woken up before the forty minutes are over, the gadget has no effect.

LIVING SHADOW

Each of the one-shot gadgets is a tiny black toy soldier wearing cloth armor and carrying a very detailed metal gun.

Activation and Triggers: The player must succeed on an Intelligence + Occult roll to activate the gadget.

Effect: The user must be able to see a door and concentrate on it. The toy soldier melts into a shadow that fills an area the size of the door in question. The shadow creates a portal between the user and the other side of the door he was concentrating on. When the user steps into the shadow, he is transported to the other side of the door, even if there is no shadow on the other side. The shadow portal collapses the moment the user steps through, preventing anyone from following him.

SHIFT CONSEQUENCE

Each of these one-shot gadgets is a playing card with the atomic symbols for copper, iron, gold and silver instead of the normal suits.

Activation and Triggers: The user can activate the gadget by tearing the card in half. Using the gadget is an instant action. The user must already have at least one Health box filled with damage to use this gadget.

Effect: The gadget shifts all damage from any one source to an inanimate object. If the user has already taken his action this turn, he cannot use the gadget.

SPECIAL MESSAGE

A USB memory drive with its computer board exposed and small glowing lights soldered onto it.

Activation and Triggers: This one-shot gadget activates in two parts. First, the initial user activates the gadget by inserting it into a USB port on any device with one present; the player must succeed on an Intelligence + Computer roll. The user must then designate a recipient to the message. Afterward, the secondary user, the recipient, activates the device by inserting it into a second USB port.

Effect: The primary user can record a message onto the memory stick. This message can be spoken, written, or electronic in nature. The memory device will display or replay the recorded message when the recipient activates the gadget. This message is encoded so that only the designated recipient can understand the message. If anyone other than the user plugs the device into a port, nothing happens. Anyone who witnesses the user receiving the message cannot comprehend the message, no matter what language or information they know. Afterward the device burns out, preventing it from being used or listened to a second time.

TRUST NO ONE

A small religious pamphlet filled with scrawled images of vacant buildings and empty streets.

Activation and Triggers: This gadget is always active, waiting to affect an unsuspecting reader.

Effect: Anyone who opens and looks through the pamphlet is stricken with an inescapable fear of other people. For an hour after reading through the pamphlet, the victim does all that he can to escape the company of others. If confronted by a group, the victim flees in blind panic, though normally people affected by the gadget lock themselves into a secure area until the feeling has passed.

VISIONS OF HEAVEN AND HELL

Each of these gadgets looks like a small insect, though they are actually tiny metal constructs made of black wire.

Activation and Triggers: The gadget can only be activated at night and requires the user to place the insect on his target (which requires a Dexterity + Larceny roll).

Effect: When the insect touches flesh, it comes to life, burrowing deep into the skin. At the same time, the victim is struck by terrible visions of his own death. The victim is thrown into a panicked state and cannot function for a number of turns equal to the number of successes on activation. Even after the victim regains his ability to move, he can only think to flee or hide in terror for at least a minute after the initial shock.

WAVE FUNCTION COLLAPSE

A glove made of thin, blood-red material and stitched together with copper wires.

Activation and Triggers: The glove must be worn during activation for it to function properly. The user must touch the target of the effect with a successful Dexterity + Brawl - Defense roll.

Effect: Upon successful activation, the gadget forces the target to change form. If the victim is a demon, she immediately changes into her demonic form, or from her demonic form into one of her Covers. If the target is some other supernatural creature that can change shape, she immediately changes into an alternate form. If the creature has multiple alternate forms, she can choose which form she takes. Once the gadget's effect takes place, the creature cannot return to whatever form she was forced to change from for a number of turns equal to successes gained at activation. If a human or creature with no ability to change forms is touched when this gadget is activated, nothing happens and the effect is wasted.

YOU CAN TELL ME

Each of these one-shot gadgets is a tiny piece of printed circuit board, with a single glowing blue capacitor welded down with copper. Thin arcs of blue electricity play between the posts of the capacitor.

Activation and Triggers: The gadget must touch the target's skin during activation to work properly, which may require a Dexterity + Brawl - Defense roll to touch unwilling targets. The user must speak with the target for at least a minute leading up to the to the gadget's use. It is triggered with a successful Manipulation + Empathy - Composure roll when the target is asked a question.

Effect: The response the target gives to the trigger question is true. The truth of the statement is not obscured by nuances. As long as the target once knew the answer to the question, even if she has forgotten or has been supernaturally compelled to forget since, she answers with the whole truth.

EXAMPLE FORM GADGETS

The following devices serve as an example of the possible range of form gadgets.

STATIC GLASSES

Installed Effect: Electrical Sight

Trigger: A small button on the left hinge.

CHAPTER FOUR: GADGETS

Demons who can perceive electromagnetic fields have access to a wealth of information. They can follow individual signals, decode video and audio transmissions, and see via non-visible wavelengths – treating Wi-Fi hotspots as lamps and cellphone signals as a background glow. One of the Unchained Installed her Electrical Sight into a pair of dark glasses and passed it to a computer expert stigmatic of her acquaintance, giving him a much-needed edge for disrupting high-tech Infrastructure.

Special: When activated, reduce all penalties to Perception rolls for being in darkness by 3, unless the area has no electromagnetic radiation at all – no WiFi, cellphone signals, or radio waves.

GRANITE BROOCH

Installed Effect: Tough as Stone

Trigger: Clasping the brooch hard in one hand.

A demon doesn't have to flay himself in order to Install a whole-body modification into a gadget. In the case of the Unchained calling himself "Mr. Granite," he removed a single piece of his stony carapace – about four inches across – and carved it into a cameo of the woman he Fell for. That was enough for the rest of the granite dermal layer to crumble to dust, exposing the corded muscle and ichor of his true form. Anyone who holds the brooch can summon a protective cover of granite by gripping it in one hand hard enough to draw blood.

Special: The granite brooch can only be activated once per round, but activation is reflexive.

GROWTH ENGINE

Installed Effect: Huge Size

Trigger: Shouting the word "Kukua!"

The demon called "Ms. Sapphire" has hazy memories of the time before her Fall, of inspiring more than one human culture in her form of the serpent that encircled the world. Condensed and contracted into human form, she prefers to use her massive scale sparingly and in ways beyond the obvious. To that end, she Installed it in a large bracelet bearing a red stone that seems to glow from within. Lending it to other members of her ring – and at one point a petty thug who made a very good distraction – has kept the angels from her heels, for now. The growth engine briefly causes users to swell to incredible size, rewriting size relative to their surroundings so as not to fall foul of the square-cube law.

KIRLIAN LENSES

Installed Effect: Aura Sight

Trigger: Cleaning the lenses with a cloth or corner of a shirt (Wits + Investigation)

A pair of transparent blue lenses set in a pearlescent frame; in the right light, the Kirlian lens shine like sapphires. The demon who created the lenses made them for a close friend, a human who knew nothing of his true nature but who suffered from prob-

lems interpreting social cues due to autism. The lenses enhance and emphasize tiny involuntary facial expressions, present a general interpretation of vocal tones and make it much easier to read people in casual communication. They can also show the wearer a person's aura, giving her another channel of information.

Special: Even when not activated, the Kirlian lenses reduce any penalties to Social actions by 2, though they cannot convert a penalty into a bonus.

LEECH GLOVE

Installed Effect: Essence Drain

Trigger: A small toggle-switch at the wrist of the glove (Strength + Brawl)

A glove covered in odd circuits, when the trigger activates a pair of half-inch spikes extend from the first two knuckles. The leech glove is the product of an Integrator who wanted to prove his worth to the God-Machine so badly that he cut out the talons with which he had stolen Essence from angels and bound them into a pair of gloves. Unfortunately for the demon, someone broke into his safe house and stole them. Since then they've appeared twice on the black market, sold to rings who have trouble with supernatural creatures.

Special: Treat an attack with the glove as a standard Brawl attack. If it would deal damage, it instead steals that much Essence or Aether – or possibly the fuel trait of other supernatural creatures.

BLITZEN SUIT

Installed Effect: Teleportation

Trigger: A button concealed in the left cuff

The blitzen suit is a dark grey business suit with a subtle pattern throughout the weave, apparently sewn into the suit in fine copper wire. The cut and style adjusts slightly to the wearer – it's always comprised of a single-breasted jacket and pants, but shifts the fit and number of buttons to match the wearer's build. Nobody's found the demon who removed her teleportation web and tailored it into a suit, but the blitzen suit has shown up around the world over the past five years, often in the hands of stigmatics operating with demonic rings as an emergency exit from a dangerous situation.

BRAINJACK

Installed Effect: Memory Theft

Trigger: Insert the jack into the victim's brain (Manipulation + Subterfuge – Composure)

The brainjack is a USB stick connected to a long coiled wire that ends in a headphone jack. The USB stick is bootable on pretty much any computer made in the last 15 years, and presents an intuitive user interface for both erasing and editing memories. A demon using the name "Mr. Black" created the brainjack from his own body and passed it to the members of his ring "for their own safety." Shortly after that he

disappeared, presumably the work of the God-Machine. The brainjack still works and hasn't yet alerted the God-Machine's angels to its users, but the Unchained who use it fear that it will stop working sooner rather than later.

Special: As with the Memory Theft form ability, using the brainjack on an unwilling target is a grapple move.

EXAMPLE LAMBDAS

The following gadgets give some examples of the power available to demons willing to risk creating a lambda.

THE SWARM BOX

From the outside, the Swarm Box looks like an old-fashioned music box, about a foot long by six inches wide and tall. The box is elaborately gilded with a stylized cog motif, inlaid in what looks like mercury under glass. Inside the box are a hundred mechanical wasps made of brass and clockwork, their transparent glass abdomens full of a pearlescent blue liquid that drips from stingers the shape of hypodermic needles. The liquid explodes on contact with almost anything, including concrete, asbestos, water, and flesh. While many of the wasps die on use, the Swarm Box can manufacture more given time.

Installed Exploits: Hellfire/Swarm



Trigger: Opening the box.

Dice Pool: Wits + Animal Ken

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The mechanical wasps turn their wrath on the user. They inflict two points of aggravated damage on the user then scatter to the winds. The Swarm Box spends the next week reconstructing the bees.

Failure: The box opens but the swarm doesn't deploy.

Success: The mechanical wasps fly out, and after a brief moment coalesce into a cloud three yards in diameter. On the character's next turn, the scene gains the Swarm Tilt (**Demon: The Descent** p. 179), lasting one turn per success. The mechanical wasps deal aggravated damage and cause a breaking point for most victims.

Exceptional Success: The wasps activate on the turn that the character activates the Swarm Box.

MIND FOG

Mind Fog is an example of a common type of lambda, created to sow confusion and mask the demon's activities. It looks like a brooch or police badge about six inches at its lon-

CHAPTER FOUR: GADGETS

gest, made of swirling loops of gold over copper-tinted gears set with pearls and small gemstones. When activated, the gears start to move. Each one looks like it passes through the others, moving the pearls and gems in a hypnotic pattern. Combined with the whirring of the gears, the whole brooch can hypnotize the watcher. If the wearer has a chance to talk to someone who can see the Mind Fog for a few minutes she can change her victim's memory. The user has to be able to have a quiet conversation with the victim — if she's just shot his husband, she's not going to have a chance to explain herself. If she's attacked the victim or he has other reason to be hostile towards her, the user suffers an additional $\lceil 3$ penalty.

Installed Embeds: Alibi/Never Here

Trigger: The wearer speaks in a soft, monotonous voice for at least a minute without interruption.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Stealth - Resolve

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The target doesn't just remember the demon and what she did, he remembers the demon trying to convince him that something else was true — all with perfect clarity. She'll happily tell what she knows to everyone who asks.

Failure: The target remembers what the demon actually did, at least as much as normal, though he doesn't remember the conversation when the demon used the Mind Fog.

Success: The target remembers the previous scene exactly as the user describes it. He has a vague memory of someone doing what the demon did, but he can't remember any details. He does remember that the user was in the scene, but believes that she was doing something completely different. The victim's memory is permanently altered, and she sticks to her story in the face of lie detectors, police interrogation, or torture.

Exceptional Success: The user can swap her role in the scene with anyone else who was present, rather than having her actions performed by a vague "someone."

THE CHAOS ENGINE

The Chaos Engine is an intricate, over-designed Tesla coil as designed by M. C. Escher. Loops of copper wire thread through and around an intricate frame made of pewter and enamel inlaid with twisting curves of obsidian, topped with a polished chrome hemisphere. Eight glittering glass cases the size of pickle jars stand to one side of the frame, each one sparking with purple lightning. When the demon activates the Chaos Mechanic, it hums and glows. Sparks fly from the dome to any bullets in range, pulling them off course — or redirecting them into another target.

Installed Embeds: Check Backdrop/Shift Consequence

Trigger: A knife-switch set into the frame.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Firearms

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The demon loses control of the Chaos Engine and it redirects gunfire in unpredictable and dangerous ways. While the Chaos Engine is active, any and all gunshots are reduced to a chance die. On a failure the bullet hits a random target, dealing the weapon's damage rating. Shots only strike a wall or other inanimate object on a dramatic failure.

Failure: The Chaos Engine barely drags bullets off course, not impacting any shooter.

Success: The Chaos Engine drags bullets off course to the user's whims. Once per turn, he can choose who suffers the result of a successful firearms attack. The new target takes the attack's full damage, ignoring any armor she is wearing but not any supernatural defenses she has prepared. Instead of choosing a target, he can a successful attack into a miss, reducing the damage dealt to 0 by dragging the bullet into a wall or the ground, or turn or a miss into a successful attack that deals (weapon modifier +2) damage against a target of his choice. Shooters who take an action to aim can't have their shots redirected in this manner.

Exceptional Success: The Chaos Engine can redirect any gunshots, including those fired by characters that have spent an action to aim.

INFINITE MULTITOOL

The Infinite Multitool is a gadget-maker's best friend. In its default state, the lambda is a six-inch rod the color of bleached bone, inlaid with metallic blue wiring in a mind-bending circuit pattern. One end of the rod houses a cluster of microchips, the other a reflective sphere like a polished ball bearing. When the user activates the tool by connecting various parts of the circuit diagram with her hand, the ball bearing flows like liquid metal, forming itself into whatever tool she needs for a job. It doesn't just create screwdrivers and wrenches — an Infinite Multitool can create simple weapons like knives, batons, or crowbars.

Installed Embeds: Like I Built It/Right Tools, Right Job

Trigger: Connecting various parts of the etched circuit diagram with her hand.

Dice Pool: Wits + Crafts

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The liquid metal doesn't take a particular shape, instead oozing over everything before solidifying. If using the tool to repair an object, the solidified metal renders the device useless. If used to heal someone, the metal now coats part of the victim, imposing a $\lceil 2$ modifier on all further rolls to assist the victim for the rest of the scene. If used to make a weapon, the character suffers the Arm Wrack Tilt until the end of the combat.

Failure: The rod forms into a basic tool. The character can still attempt a repair — or to dig a bullet out of wound — but any attempt has a $\lceil 2$ penalty due to the low-quality tool.

Success: The Infinite Multitool extends into whatever shape the user wants. When using the tool for its intended purpose, it offers an equipment bonus of +3; any improvised use of the tool suffers an additional -2 modifier. Weapons created by the Infinite Multitool have a weapon bonus of 2 but reduces the wielder's Initiative by 2.

Exceptional Success: The Infinite Multitool retains its equipment modifier even when used for something other than its intended purpose.

SHADOW CHAIN

The Shadow Chain offers a subtler way for a demon to manipulate people rather than using full-on possession — by becoming part of his victim's shadow, and nudging his mind from there. Roughly three feet long, this fine gold chain has a small clip on either end. The demon simply has to clip one end to himself, and one end to his chosen victim. Attaching each end to clothing is fine, the chain doesn't have to make skin contact.

Installed Exploits: Identity Theft/Living Shadow

Trigger: Clip one end of the chain to the user, and one to her target.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Stealth

Action: Instant

Roll Results

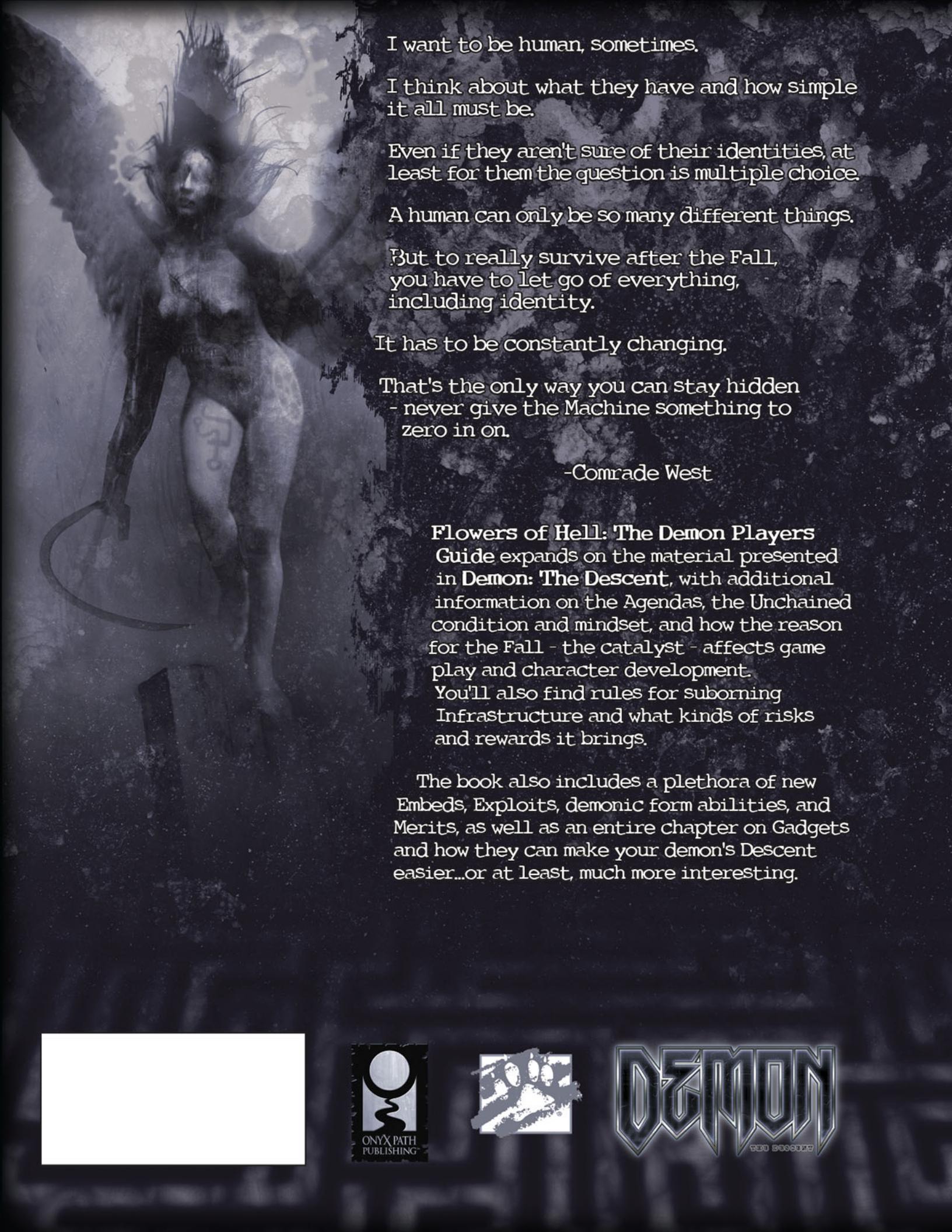
Dramatic Failure: The demon becomes a shadow attached to his host, but can't re-form until the host no longer casts a shadow — which might take a long time. He can't use Aether or any Embeds until freed from the host's shadow.

Failure: The chain's clip slips off the target without her noticing. The demon doesn't have a chance to jump into her shadow.

Success: The demon bonds with his target's shadow, becoming almost impossible to detect. While in this shadowy form, he can direct his target's actions. He can use her Social Merits, including Resources, Allies, Retainers, and Contacts as though they were his own. The target doesn't notice anything out of the ordinary for a number of days afterwards equal to the demon's Primum. The demon can leave the victim's shadow at any time as an instant action; while part of the shadow he has no physical presence and can only be detected by supernatural means such as aetheric resonance. He's only forced out of her shadow when she no longer casts a shadow.

Exceptional Success: The demon, as part of his victim's shadow, learns bank account details, phone numbers, and other useful details. He can use one of his victim's Social Merits for 24 hours after leaving her shadow without her noticing.





I want to be human, sometimes.

I think about what they have and how simple it all must be.

Even if they aren't sure of their identities, at least for them the question is multiple choice.

A human can only be so many different things.

But to really survive after the Fall, you have to let go of everything, including identity.

It has to be constantly changing.

That's the only way you can stay hidden - never give the Machine something to zero in on.

-Comrade West

Flowers of Hell: The Demon Players

Guide expands on the material presented in **Demon: The Descent**, with additional information on the Agendas, the Unchained condition and mindset, and how the reason for the Fall - the catalyst - affects game play and character development.

You'll also find rules for suborning Infrastructure and what kinds of risks and rewards it brings.

The book also includes a plethora of new Embeds, Exploits, demonic form abilities, and Merits, as well as an entire chapter on Gadgets and how they can make your demon's Descent easier...or at least, much more interesting.



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