

KIDS ON HELL



a player supplement for

DEMON
THE BOARD GAME

HAKKS TOKKUL



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SORRY, BABY

Tessa watched the clock. That was the sort of thing she did, staying aware of clocks, timepieces, and anything that ticked or made sounds at regular intervals. The nurses at their station seemed to interpret this as impatience, though it wasn't.

"It just takes a few minutes, honey, there's no reason to be anxious."

There were thousands of reasons to be anxious, but she shrugged and nodded and pretended to bow to their superior wisdom. Still, she listened to the barely audible ticking of the clock on the wall.

A plump woman with a cheerful, heart-shaped face came up behind the nurse's station and waved Tessa up. She smiled like she meant it, but her eyes were tired, and any sympathy she had came in small doses at best. Tessa didn't expect a shoulder to cry on. "It's positive, congratulations," the plump nurse said quietly.

That was it. Just like that. The clock ticking seemed to slow, the room tilted to the left, and she couldn't figure out why the nurse sounded like she was talking in slow motion.

Tessa shook off the moment of shock and closed her eyes, listening to the clock for five ticks. She opened her eyes and the nurse, running out of sympathy, repeated herself. "Do you want to make a prenatal appointment now?"

"I have to make a phone call. I'll... I'll do it later." Tessa moved away from the nurse's station, the plump nurse had already moved on to her next task, Tessa's sudden rudeness forgiven or forgotten. It was a high volume office, with nurses and doctors ticking away at their processes so efficiently that they might go on working even without patients.

Tessa pushed into the larger waiting room outside the little intake room, and sat down, taking out her phone. She called Dee, because there wasn't really anyone else to call.

"What are you going to tell Mark?" Dee asked a minute into the conversation. "Is it Mark's?"

It was a bullshit question, but it was also kind of a fair question. "Probably. I don't know. I'm not exactly notching my headboard with names and dates."

"Jesus, Tessa, what are you doing with your life?" Again, a fair question, but a fucked-up time to ask it.

"Everything's a lie, Dee. There's no point to anything but survival." It was the sort of thing she only said to normal people when she was drunk, and that's what this felt like, being dizzy and sick and confused, but no numbness. She reached to the table across from her and straightened the stack of Perfect Mother magazines, mostly because she couldn't stand the grinning perfect face of the mom on the cover three magazines down.

Dee went on, "I don't even know what that means. Maybe it's time to grow up, Tessa, and stop talking like some moody poet." Tessa stopped listening, her attention drifting to the clock on the wall.

The ticking skipped. Or, rather, the second hand skipped, it had been just about to land on the seven, Tessa blinked, and it was back just past the six. Clocks did that sometimes, but Tessa didn't believe in chance.

She thought of her mother, of all the time they'd spent together running. She thought of the lessons in survival her mother filled her head with, and how many years as an adult she'd had to spend unlearning those lessons so she could live a normal life. It turned out she hadn't successfully unlearned anything.

A pretty blonde nurse with bright green eyes walked into the waiting room from the hallway. She had bright pink scrubs on, with little forest animals playing baseball. The pretty nurse stopped at the table near Tessa to rearrange the magazines on the table. Not to straighten them, but instead, to return them to the haphazard disarray they'd been in earlier. The perfect smiling woman three magazines down the stack stared up at Tessa with vapid smug satisfaction.

"...We're not kids anymore, Tessa." Dee went on. "I know you've always gotten by on luck. Things always just work out for you, but that can't last forever. Isn't this exactly all you need to understand that bad things can happen to you too?"

Hints of jealousy sparked through Dee's tone like little flame tongues, licking her every word.

Tessa heard echoes of her mother's words in her head. *They won't understand, they can't help it. To them, you'll seem so lucky, so damn lucky. They don't understand you're damned, and worse, I don't even know if you can get to Hell. I'm so sorry, baby.*

I'm so sorry, baby. She touched her stomach, for the first time acknowledging what was going on inside of her. The smug perfect mother three magazine covers down seemed to be grimacing, but that was in Tessa's imagination, probably, so she pulled that magazine out and flipped it over on its face. Take that, happy perfect mother.

A pretty blonde nurse with bright green eyes walked into the waiting room from the hallway. She had bright purple scrubs on, with little chibi children playing basketball. The pretty nurse stopped at the table near Tessa to rearrange the magazines on the table. Not to straighten them, but instead, to return them to the haphazard disarray they'd been in earlier. The perfect smiling woman three magazines down the stack stared up at Tessa with vapid, smug satisfaction.

Tessa's mother called them "errors." Moments when the Machine fucked something up and everything was about to go sideways. An error meant that the Machine was responding to something, changing the plan, or else some part of the reality the Machine was creating broke and that meant the Machine was going to have to respond.

She got up, muttering "gotta go" to Dee before hanging up on her and headed quickly into the hallway.

Outside of the OB/GYN's office, Tessa cursed to herself. A few years ago, she would never have been this careless. Back when her mom was still around... She looked left and right down the hallway. A dozen offices, all identical but for the tiny plaque by the door. Too identical. Some of them worn in exactly the same place. The further down the hallway she looked, even the plaques had the same room numbers on them. Or repeated doctors' names. She squinted, feeling dizzy again, and was sure in an instant that several of the offices simply didn't exist, and only appeared to exist because they needed to. Going through the third door on the left would take you into the same office she'd been in, but perhaps off by three seconds so no one would get wise. Going through the door six doors on the right would take you into a vast nothing, an unreality, in which no human could survive. She wondered how many confused deliverymen or lost patients stepped through that door and just vanished forever.

This was Infrastructure, a piece of the Machine, and she was right smack in the middle of it. Her luck could get worse, in theory, but she couldn't see how.

She stuck close to the wall, phone in hand, messing with the apps on it. She wasn't paying attention to them, exactly, but needed to appear absorbed in what she was doing. Her

mother always told her The Machine didn't like people who were too aware of their environment. The last thing she wanted was to draw the attention of the Machine or its cogs.

Two doors down, she came to the elevator. A pretty blonde nurse with bright green eyes stepped off and adjusted her green scrubs before heading down the hallway to one of the offices. Sweat sprung up on the back of Tessa's neck and she hurried into the elevator, pressing the ground floor button. It took everything she had not to press the button over and over, but since she never knew who was watching what, she continued losing her game of Sudoku on the phone.

Then Mike called. Like things couldn't get worse, she answered it.

"Hey. Your MeYou post was weird this morning. Are you like, okay?"

She huffed, watching the elevator click down, floor by floor, too slowly. "Since when do you read my MeYou posts?"

"Woah, hostile. What did I do?"

Floor six. A wait. Floor five. A wait. This was taking too long. That never ever meant good things. "Nothing, Look. I got some weird news today, and things have changed. I think we need to stop seeing each other."

He didn't say anything right away, but there was anger in the way he breathed into the speaker on his end of the phone. Fourth floor. Wait. Third floor. Wait. Second floor. Wait. Second floor. Shit.

"I thought we were having a good time. I thought we were like, getting close or something. We took those pictures the other night..."

"Forget them. Delete them. Forget me. It's better that way." She hung up, watching the digital readout of the floor she was supposed to be on. First floor. But that could mean anything. The doors opened and she hurried out of the elevator. Her mother taught her never to trust them, but taking the stairs would have looked abnormal, so no winning on that front.

Mike was cursing her out when she hung up on him. Worse still, she wasn't on the first floor. She couldn't tell, maybe the fifth. Maybe the sixth. The offices were identical on each floor, and only some of them existed. The trick was figuring out if this was part of the glitch, or if this was a trap.

Her face didn't register much beyond a mild shock at getting off on the wrong floor. She wasn't the liar her mother was, of course, but she'd been lying to cops, and teachers, and authority figures on her mother's behalf just about as long as she could talk, so what she lacked in supernatural gift, she made up for in raw hours of practice. To the casual observer, she noticed nothing, she saw nothing, and was totally engrossed in her game.

Four doors, five, six, where were the steps? Did the Machine just forget them on this level, or remove them to keep her moving? The offices didn't stop in this direction. For every door she passed two more sprung up at the end of the hall. The further down she got, the less the plaques by the door made sense. Soon they were nonsense words and numbers that didn't exist in rational, real world math. None of these doors went anywhere real, and so when one slid slowly open, Tessa's heart stopped in her chest.

"I'm sorry, baby,"
she thought before
she could stop herself,
her hand on her stomach.

To most people, normal people, the group that exited the open door was eccentric, but not remarkable. A man and woman, identical-looking twins in janitor uniforms, a fairly androgynous nurse with bright copper red hair and a man in a suit with a face that was hard to describe.

Because of who Tessa's mother was, or rather, what Tessa's mother was, she saw the truth.

The twins connected at the hip, their hips locked together with chains and deadbolts that grew into, out of, and through their stomachs. They may have been one entity, but Tessa couldn't be sure from this distance. The androgynous nurse was a naked figure, easily seven foot tall, made entirely out of copper colored flames with brilliant green tips. The man in the suit was a pit of blackness that rattled like bones every time he moved and bled from the joints.

Demons. They were demons. Her stomach lurched and she felt a wave of nausea; she wondered if that was her condition or the unnatural things in front of her. On the bright side, that meant the Machine probably wasn't screwing with her. It must have been after them, and she'd just had the rotten luck to be in the same place at the same time.

Rotten luck was sort of her birthright, no matter what Dee thought about it.

Her mother would have exposed the others and ran away with Tessa in the chaos. Tessa considered it, considered just slipping back and escaping while the ring of demons did whatever they were going to do.

Maybe she felt a kinship. Maybe she was just an idiot. Whatever the reason, she went toward the demons instead of fleeing in the other direction.

The twins looked at her, heads tilted in either direction, but only the void of a man spoke, and it hurt her ears just a little. "What are you looking at?"

"Don't even bother," the giant flame said, "we have a schedule."

"You're going to have to fuck your schedule," Tessa told them, looking up and down the hallway for cameras or open doors. "The Machine changed something, something big, it's skipping and repeating patterns it shouldn't and messing with the floors. I think it knows you're here, or at least that something is up."

They exchanged a look. "Stigmatic?" the twins asked with one voice.

"No, I'm not a stigmatic. Don't worry about that, okay? I'm telling you the Machine knows something is up and you have to abort. You have to."

The void-man declared, "She's a distraction. A tool or something. Take her out, Howard." The giant flame lit up, moving toward her.

She put both her hands over her stomach and backed up. "Don't. Look, it's hard to explain. My mother was one of you, that's why I can see you for what you are. I don't think the Machine can detect me the way it can you all, so it didn't notice me noticing something was up. I didn't have to warn you. I could have left."

"Good story." The void-man said. The flame hesitated, though. Void-man shook his head. "Come on, take her out, we have to get moving."

She closed her eyes and opened them again, glancing up at the lights above then back down at the demons. "I'm trying to help you here. You can kill me, sure, but in the meantime I'll make such a ruckus that there are half a dozen angels here before you can curse the name of God. Try me."

The void-man huffed and muttered “impossible” at the ground. The twins, heads cocked to the same side now, crept up behind the giant flame. “How would you help us? If this mission has gone bust, we will have to blow the building. This problem is bigger than any of us.”

“It has something to do with the babies coming out of the OB/GYN, right? The whole place seems framed there.”

The demons exchanged looks, then looked back at her. “How could you possibly know that?”

“Because without bad luck, I wouldn’t have any luck at all. Look, there’s about a hundred women and children coming in and out of this place day and night. You can blow it up and disrupt things, but that’s more innocent blood on your hands than you can justify. I won’t let you.” Plain and simple. “I can’t lie like you can, so you can tell I’m telling the absolute truth, yeah? I won’t let you murder that many innocent people. I’ve got a better idea.”

“What do you propose?” the twins asked.

“You have someone on the inside. Someone who is, so far as I can tell, undetectable. We can get a better idea of what exactly they’re doing and stop it with a scalpel instead of a chainsaw.”

The twins moved around her, one standing on the other side, with a leathery cloak of flesh and chain stretched across her back where they were connected. “I see. And you’d be willing to do this if it meant saving many human lives?”

She swallowed. “Yes.”

The void-man snorted and paced in place. “Didn’t your mother tell you not to make deals with demons?”

“No.” She grinned. “My mother told me how to win out in deals with demons.”

Just then, the lights went out, and Tessa grabbed one of the twins by its wrist and tugged. “This way,” she hissed, tugging the twin in one direction. “We can get out this way.”

The twins chuckled, following her reluctantly, while the other two demons fell into step behind them as they hurried to the elevator. It opened when the button was pressed, but the floor numbers spun wildly, occasionally configuring like foul curses and blasphemous code not meant for human eyes.

“What’s the plan now, bright eyes?” The void-man asked, sneering.

Tessa, phone in hand, started messing with her wi-fi settings. “Haven’t you heard? Sometimes cell phone signals bouncing around can interfere with computer signals in giant offices like this. Something to do with the wi-fi. I’m not sure how it works.” She set Sissy Bird 3 to start downloading over the network and all of the sudden the elevator groaned and then began to descend.

“Cute trick.” The giant flame said.

“It’s pretty much my only trick.” She shrugged. When the doors opened, they were in fact on the first floor.

“We doubt that.” The twins said with one voice and smiled at Tessa with two mouths.

Tessa grinned back, and this time at least, the group of them escaped the building in one piece.

Out on the street, a block and a half down, the void-man jabbed a finger into Tessa’s chest. “We’ll keep you to your word. We’ll find you. We’ll finish this your way or ours. Do you understand?”

“Sure.” She said. “That’s just my luck.” She turned to leave, her hand on her stomach.

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Sorry, Baby	2	<i>Step Five: Apply</i>	34
Introduction	12	<i>Demon-Blooded Template</i>	34
Why Heirs to Hell	12	<i>Step Six: Merits</i>	34
Inspirations	13		
Chapter One: The Demon-Born	16	<i>The Demon-Blooded Cipher</i>	34
Raising Hell	16	<i>Cipher Conditions</i>	35
<i>Special Kinds of Hell</i>	16	<i>Keys and Interlocks</i>	35
Managing Family	17	<i>Backtracing</i>	36
Growing Up	17	<i>Storytelling and the Cipher</i>	36
Beyond Normal	18	<i>New Merits</i>	37
<i>Childhood Many Steps Removed</i>	20		
<i>Home Damned Home: Offsprings of Hell</i>	21		
<i>Where You Lay Your Head</i>	21	Chapter Three:	40
Coming of Age	22	A Common Sense Guide to Hellspawn	40
Exploited Offspring	22	<i>Child's Play</i>	40
All Grown Up	23	<i>Acts of Rebellion: Making Demon-Blooded</i>	41
Chapter Two: Stages of Development	28	<i>Pregnancy Conditions</i>	41
<i>Special Systems</i>	28	Sample Characters	42
<i>Ambient Aether</i>	28	<i>Assimilated Offspring</i>	45
<i>Aether Pool</i>	29	<i>Little League</i>	45
<i>Compromise</i>	30	<i>Hell's Fourth Legion</i>	45
<i>Embeds</i>	30	<i>Saint Jerome's Academy</i>	45
<i>Infrastructure Proficiency</i>	30	<i>Project 4X</i>	46
<i>Integrity</i>	31	<i>Liberators</i>	46
<i>Language Affinity</i>	33	<i>Griffin-Blackburn Family Firm</i>	47
<i>Perfect Recall</i>	33	Story Hooks	47
<i>Quantum Understanding</i>	33	<i>Standardized Tests</i>	47
<i>Unseen Sense</i>	33	<i>Field Trip</i>	47
Character Creation	34	<i>Homing Pigeons</i>	48
		<i>Cattle Call</i>	48
		<i>Parapsychology</i>	49
		<i>Sand in the Gears</i>	49
		<i>Rerouted</i>	50



The demon knocked on the door of the doomed woman. They had not spoken for 389 days.

The demon was exposed. It had no way to conceal itself from the things hunting it. It could not hide behind a human name, a human body, a human job, even a human gender. It was silvery and metallic and thin and flowing and terrified. It stood there, afraid but not displaying fear, knocking on the door of the farmhouse.

The woman who lived in the farmhouse was alone. Her lover was gone, already driving the long highway back to her own home, seething because the woman in the farmhouse hadn't let her stay. The woman's son was with his father for the weekend, and the woman felt, but did not say aloud or even think, that perhaps he was happier there, in the city and away from the miles of nothing around the farmhouse.

The demon knocked, and the woman answered.

"No," said the woman.

The demon said, "I'm afraid so." Its voice was the pop of a light bulb dropped on a stone floor.

"You said five years," said the woman. She started to back up. The demon followed.

"I know," said the demon, "but I didn't promise that. I'm sorry." The demon truly did feel sorry, but it had no choice.

"This isn't fair." The woman tripped over a chair and landed on her back. The demon slid forward and leaned down to her.

"I know," said the demon. "It's not. But it must be."

The demon touched the woman on the leg, and the woman was gone. The demon, now a woman, now the woman, stood up and placed a hand on her belly. "It must be," she whispered, feeling her baby moving, once again part of her, flesh instead of possibility. "We had nowhere else to go."

INTRODUCTION

**"Wrong? What could be wrong with our child, Robert?
We're beautiful people, aren't we?"**

- Kathy Thorn, The Omen

When a demon joins the human race, she takes on everything about being human. As an angel, she was only “human” to the degree the God-Machine required, but as a demon, she wears a Cover that carries with it all of the best, worst, and most challenging facets of humanity. The ability to reproduce is one of those challenges.

The child of a demon is one step removed from the agonizing choice that his parent — or parents — had to make. That child is born to humanity and will never have to Fall. That child, however, has other complications in his life. The God-Machine prizes demon-blooded for reasons that the Unchained have never fully come to understand. Cults, occultists, and other students of the esoteric trade stories about “hellspawn” and see the children of demons as harbingers of doom or potential saviors of mankind. For the most part, though, the demon-blooded are just people born into a difficult situation.

Heirs to Hell presents the stories behind the demon-blooded, explanations of how such characters are born and develop, rules required for playing them, and story hooks and sample characters to bring these fascinating people into your World of Darkness.

WHY HEIRS TO HELL?

The “Little Monsters” sidebar on p. 44 of **Demon: The Descent** was just kind of a throwaway. We addressed it because it was something we knew folks would ask about, but it was never meant to be a focus. As it happened, though, it was something a lot of people latched on to, and honestly the idea of the demon-spawn is such a common and evocative one in demon-related fiction that it seemed silly not to address it.

In literature and media, children with demonic parentage tend toward two kinds of stories: damnation or redemption. In the former case, the stories are about people who *cannot* be redeemed because of who and what their parents are, and who are sometimes willing participants in their own

evil. Sometimes they just can’t help it; they bring evil to the world because it is their destiny to do so. In either case, the notion of evil children with or without demonic parentage brings out fears of a younger generation as well as the feeling of “other” that children sometimes evoke in people who aren’t experienced with them.

In the latter case, the story becomes about escaping destiny. The demon-child isn’t evil by design, but is, perhaps, inclined toward evil. This inclination can influence behavior to any degree for the story in question, but at the core of it, the story is about the demon-spawn coming to love and respect humanity enough to choose to become part of it.

These stories are, at once, both applicable and off the mark for **Heirs to Hell**. It is certainly possible for a demon-blood to be “evil” or to be dangerous, but that isn’t because her parents are demons. It’s because her parents chose to be human, and humanity carries with it the possibility of evil. In fact, it’s probably fair to say that demons are capable of evil where angels are not — an angel that follows its programming literally does not have a choice in its actions, and so calling an angel “evil” is a stretch, philosophically. The Unchained, though, and by extension their offspring, *do* have that choice, and as such are capable of bad (and good) acts just as any person is. Demon-blooded do, however, have options and abilities that most people do not.

To be clear: The demon-blooded are not Satan’s children. There is no Satan in **Demon**. The characters here are angels who defected to the human race, which means their children are comparable to people who grew up the children of, at best, political refugees or defected agents. That means that their parents might keep them at arm’s length (never mind the problem that demons don’t show emotion unless they do so deliberately), are gone for long periods of time, and just vanish sometimes (because their Covers become compromised).

This is important precisely because demon-blooded aren’t inherently cursed or evil or anything like that. The God-Machine might be interested in them, but then again, It might just regard them as stigmatics (useful on a case-to-case basis), security risks, or a way to get to a demon (but remember that the

God-Machine doesn't get "parental love"). In fact, the biggest threat demon-born present isn't that they're "evil" so much as that the math doesn't add up around them. They're human beings capable of accessing the background subroutines of the universe (Embeds), which means they throw off variables just by using those powers. Any given demon-born can probably live his whole life without that becoming a problem, but few of them are that lucky.

INSPIRATIONS

Literature and cinema have no shortage of stories about people with infernal or supernatural parentage, and the trials they face (or create). Here are a few of our favorites:

Escape to Witch Mountain (1975, dir. John Hough). This live-action Disney film stars is about two orphaned siblings with mysterious power on the run from a rich man who wants to control them. If you ever wonder what might happen to demon-blooded kids out on their own, this is a great source of inspiration for a game.

Firestarter (Stephen King). Charlene McGee is the child of two otherwise normal people who took part in an experiment designed to awaken psychic potential. She turns out to be an incredibly powerful pyrokinetic, but she and her father are hunted down and enslaved because of what she can do.

This book actually works nicely as a **Demon** story. The movie (1984, dir. Mark L. Lester) is also worth watching.

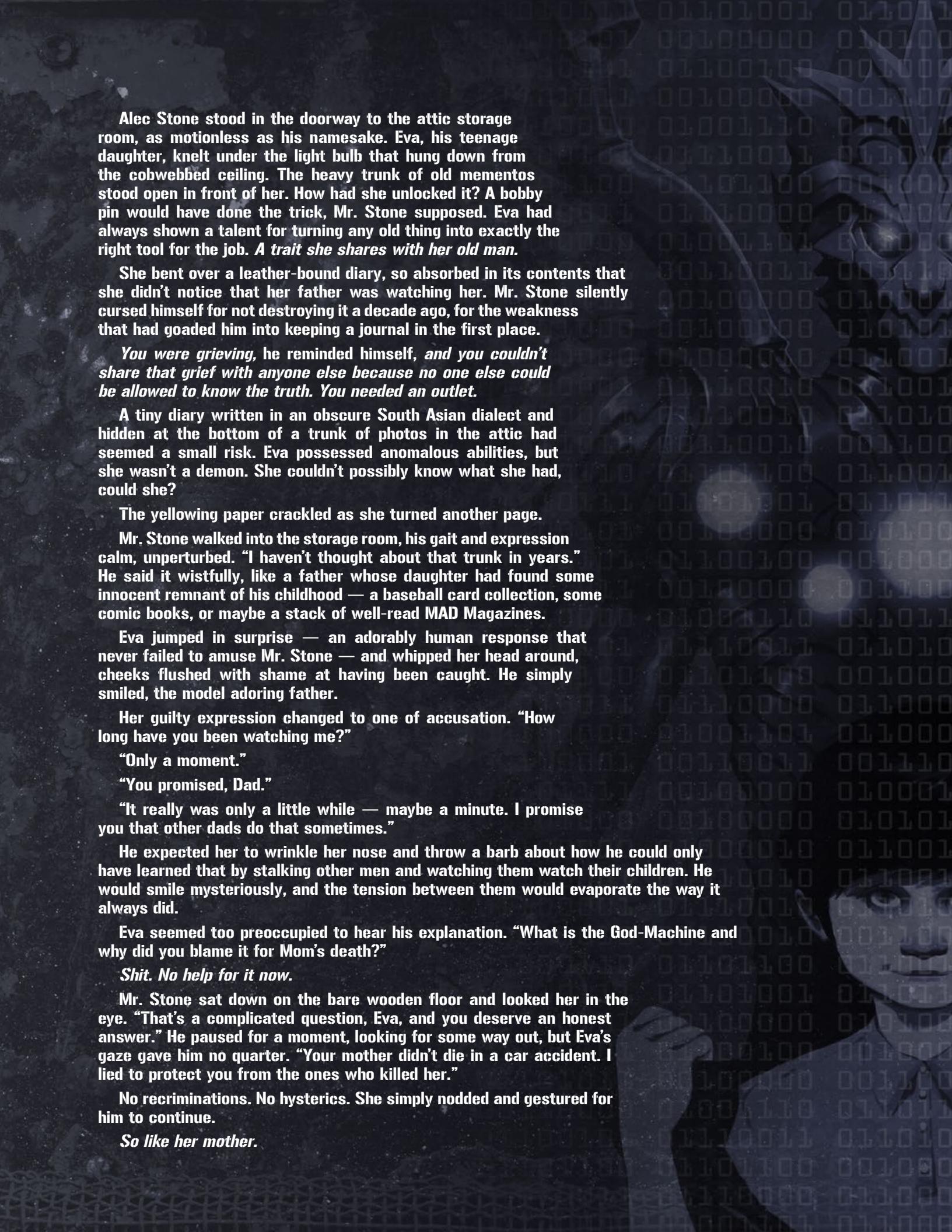
Good Omens (Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett). Humorous novel about an angel and a demon who compete to raise the boy they think is the Antichrist in a manner that will lead him to fulfill his destiny...or not. As it happens, they have the wrong kid anyway, and the actual Antichrist grows up human. Not exactly the right tone for **Demon**, but still examines a lot of the same themes.

The Omen (1976, dir. Richard Donner). The story of a man who adopts an orphaned child when his own child is stillborn, but then gradually learns that he is raising the Antichrist. The movie is really about the father (played by Gregory Peck), not the child. The boy, Damien, is apparently completely complicit in his heritage and what it portends for the world.

The Shining (Stephen King). Another of King's novels about children with bizarre powers, *The Shining* tells the story of Danny Torrance, a little boy with the ability to communicate psychically. His family goes to a remote mountain resort as caretakers, whereupon the supernatural forces there drive his father murderously insane. As with *Firestarter*, the story works nicely as a **Demon** story (assume the Overlook is Infrastructure and Halloran is a demon trying to get Danny out, maybe?). The movie (1980, dir. Stanley Kubrick) comes highly recommended.







Alec Stone stood in the doorway to the attic storage room, as motionless as his namesake. Eva, his teenage daughter, knelt under the light bulb that hung down from the cobwebbed ceiling. The heavy trunk of old mementos stood open in front of her. How had she unlocked it? A bobby pin would have done the trick, Mr. Stone supposed. Eva had always shown a talent for turning any old thing into exactly the right tool for the job. *A trait she shares with her old man.*

She bent over a leather-bound diary, so absorbed in its contents that she didn't notice that her father was watching her. Mr. Stone silently cursed himself for not destroying it a decade ago, for the weakness that had goaded him into keeping a journal in the first place.

You were grieving, he reminded himself, and you couldn't share that grief with anyone else because no one else could be allowed to know the truth. You needed an outlet.

A tiny diary written in an obscure South Asian dialect and hidden at the bottom of a trunk of photos in the attic had seemed a small risk. Eva possessed anomalous abilities, but she wasn't a demon. She couldn't possibly know what she had, could she?

The yellowing paper crackled as she turned another page.

Mr. Stone walked into the storage room, his gait and expression calm, unperturbed. "I haven't thought about that trunk in years." He said it wistfully, like a father whose daughter had found some innocent remnant of his childhood — a baseball card collection, some comic books, or maybe a stack of well-read MAD Magazines.

Eva jumped in surprise — an adorably human response that never failed to amuse Mr. Stone — and whipped her head around, cheeks flushed with shame at having been caught. He simply smiled, the model adoring father.

Her guilty expression changed to one of accusation. "How long have you been watching me?"

"Only a moment."

"You promised, Dad."

"It really was only a little while — maybe a minute. I promise you that other dads do that sometimes."

He expected her to wrinkle her nose and throw a barb about how he could only have learned that by stalking other men and watching them watch their children. He would smile mysteriously, and the tension between them would evaporate the way it always did.

Eva seemed too preoccupied to hear his explanation. "What is the God-Machine and why did you blame it for Mom's death?"

Shit. No help for it now.

Mr. Stone sat down on the bare wooden floor and looked her in the eye. "That's a complicated question, Eva, and you deserve an honest answer." He paused for a moment, looking for some way out, but Eva's gaze gave him no quarter. "Your mother didn't die in a car accident. I lied to protect you from the ones who killed her."

No recriminations. No hysterics. She simply nodded and gestured for him to continue.

So like her mother.

chapter one: DEMON-BORN

"And it came to pass when the children of men had multiplied that in those days were born unto them beautiful and comely daughters. And the angels, the children of the heaven, saw and lusted after them, and said to one another: 'Come, let us choose us wives from among the children of men and beget us children.'"

- The Book of Enoch 6:1-2 - Translated by R.H. Charles

Some Unchained are fond of saying that they rejected the primacy of the God-Machine and defected to the human race. Not all demons feel a strong emotional connection to humans in general or concern themselves with the fates of humanity as a whole, but only the most deluded outcasts pretend that they are not reliant on humans to keep them safe from the eyes of the God-Machine's servants. So long as demons hide in mortal flesh and the God-Machine finds humans too useful to annihilate out of hand, the Unchained have little choice

but to play nice with humanity in order to maintain their Covers (at the very least).

Children are the occasional, inevitable result of having human bodies that possess the full range of biological processes. The children of demons in particular inherit some measure of their Unchained parents' connection to the God-Machine's arcane physics. In this chapter we'll discuss the logistics of parenthood among the Unchained, the experience of growing up the child of a demon, and the roles these demon-blooded take in the adult world.

RAISING HELL

Parenthood is a many-headed creature that radically changes the lives of those who navigate it, but it poses a particular danger to demons. As a fugitive from the God-Machine and participant in the cloak-and-dagger world of Unchained society, an outcast's enemies may target her children to get to her. Why then would a demon take such a chance?

For starters, few Unchained have ever encountered one of the demon-blooded. The expectant parent rarely has any idea what she is getting into. She has no reason to expect anything but a normal child. After all, the demon's Cover is only human. That it coexists in a quantum state with the demon form and possibly other Covers shouldn't affect the body's descendants in any way, right? The most common reasons demons have children include:

Accident: Even the most dedicated Agent or single-minded adherent of a particular Agenda seldom remains entirely aloof from the human experience. The skins the Unchained wear are living flesh, and they enjoy and come to crave physical pleasures as surely as humans do. Occasionally these pursuits have unexpected consequences.

Affection: Some outcasts Fell out of love for a human, so it comes as no surprise that they choose to settle down and raise a family. Other demons regard the Descent as a spiritual quest that does not require all-consuming devotion, and when a chance at something like a normal life presents itself, they don't reject it.

Paranoia: A handful fear they will attract God-Machine attention unless they act as human as possible — even if that means conspicuously pursuing the American dream of a house, a dog, and 2.5 kids. Despite their reputations as secretive loners, a surprising number of Inquisitors enter into family life for this very reason.

Adoption Facts: The fairy tales about a mortal who sells his firstborn child to a creature of darkness in exchange for health or money have some basis in fact. A human cannot sign a soul pact on behalf of her child, but she can offer her relationship to that child so that the demon can incorporate it into a patch job (see **Demon: The Descent** p. 189–195). Some demons even bargain for a child who has not yet been born and might never be. More than one human has entered into an agreement of this sort thinking that he would never

want children, only to find the outcast waiting in the nursery twenty years later. One side-effect of these adoption pacts is that when the demon calls in the deal, the child becomes an Offspring (see below).

SPECIAL KINDS OF HELL

All demon-blooded have at least one demon ancestor, but not all result from one demon and one human parent. Depending on ancestry and chance, the blood of a demon can manifest immediately in dangerous ways, or it can sleep for generation at a time. Those Unchained familiar with the demon-blooded place them into one of three categories: Offspring, Latents, and Fractals.

OFFSPRING

When a demon has children with a human, Offspring result. Offspring are born stigmatic, which means they have the Merit: Unseen Sense – God-Machine and a minor glitch. Their demon lineage allows them to use Embeds; most discover these abilities in childhood or adolescence. Although they are not able to absorb Aether the way their outcast parents can, some Offspring develop techniques manipulating ambient Aether that mimic the Exploits and other capabilities that demons take for granted (see p. 28).

Although Offspring are most often the result of demon-human pairings, they may also come from Fractal-human, Fractal-Offspring, or Offspring-Offspring parents (see below). In rare cases, Offspring are born to two Latent parents or are the consequence of adoption pacts.

LATENTS

Those Offspring who survive into adulthood sometimes manage to live relatively normal lives and have children of their own. Most of the children of Offspring are Latents. They have no unusual abilities, but they still carry the blood of their demon ancestor, quietly passing it along to their children and grandchildren.

In almost every respect a Latent is an ordinary human, albeit one slightly more likely to manifest minor paranormal abilities. Any event that would cause a Latent to become a stigmatic, however, wakes his demon blood and makes him an Offspring instead. Even then, they're indistinguishable from other stigmatics until they start manifesting Embeds, which are still subtle enough to escape notice much of the time. Depending on the Embed, even newly roused Offspring might not be fully aware of what they are doing.

No one knows how many Latents exist in the world. Even if some detailed genealogical study were possible, Latents only pass on their demon blood to their children half the time. Most Latents have no idea that they have a demon ancestor. They are no more likely to have first-hand knowledge of demons than any other human.

DEMON-BLOODED GENETICS

Although demon blood doesn't manifest as a literal gene, in many ways it behaves that way in Fractals, Offspring, and Latents in that it is an inherited characteristic that frequently "skips" generations. Demon-blooded have recessive Fractal (*f*) and/or Offspring (*o*) traits, while mortals with no demon blood have the dominant Human (*H*) trait.

Fractals always have the *ff* combination. Offspring are demon-blooded with the *oo* or *fo* combination (the Offspring trait becomes dominant only when paired with the Fractal trait). Latents have either the *Ho* or *Hf* combination, and all humans are *HH*.

Fractals and Offspring born to demons are always *ff* or *oo*. After that, the demon-blooded only passes along one of those *f*'s or *o*'s, so a Fractal passes an *f* and an Offspring passes an *o*. Because all mortals who don't have demon blood pass on the dominant human trait (*H*), the children of Fractals and Offspring are always Latents (*Hf* or *Ho*) unless the other parent has demon blood (is a Fractal, Offspring, or Latent).

Demon-demon and demon-Fractal pairs always produce Fractals. Demon-Offspring and demon-Latent pairs produce Offspring half the time and Fractals the other half of the time. Demon-human pairs and adoption pacts always produce Offspring.

If two Latents have a child together, that child has a small chance of being born an Offspring. Rare cases of Offspring born of seemingly ordinary parents have given rise to legends of demonspawn in mythology and media. Any Offspring child's powers are enough to keep a demon parent on her toes, and Offspring parents at least have the advantage of personal experience to light their way. But Latent parents often have no explanation for why their child sees things that aren't there and exhibits capabilities that violate their understanding of natural laws. Some do the best they can with these troubled kids, but many Latent parents ultimately abandon their Offspring children or place them in adoption centers. It is difficult to discipline a child who can simply rewrite her parents' memories.

FRACTALS

In mathematics, a fractal is a pattern that is identical or nearly identical at every scale. They are, in the words of famed fractal mathematician Benoît Mandelbrot, beautiful, damn hard, and increasingly useful. In Unchained parlance, Fractals are the extraordinarily rare progeny of two demons and, as children go, they fit Mandelbrot's description of fractals perfectly. They are a beautiful mingling of human flesh with the intuitive mastery of the laws of arcane physics that marks demons. As children, they are extremely difficult to keep hidden from the eyes of the God-Machine's servants. Those Fractals who reach adulthood are undeniably useful to anyone interested in the God-Machine or its projects, so they're frequently courted by Agencies, angels, and occult organizations of all kinds.

Like Offspring, Fractals are stigmatics from birth. Additionally, they are born with an understanding of at least one Embed, can see through their demon parents' Covers, and usually have a few other innate talents that either mimic some of capabilities of their Unchained parents or allow them to achieve seemingly impossible feats (see Chapter Two).

Nearly all Fractals have two demon parents, although some are the children of two Fractals, or of a demon and a Fractal or Offspring. In very rare cases, parents who are Offspring with Fractal ancestry will have a Fractal child.

MANAGING FAMILY

Depending on the outcast's Cover, the simple act of having a child may or may not be a compromise. In rare cases, a Cover's failure to have children could be a compromise (when the father of four who has always expressed the wish to have at least six children suddenly announces that he doesn't want more kids, for example). Most Covers will support a demon's decision to have or not have children without incident, but that is not to say that parenthood doesn't pose risks to a demon that must be managed.

Even before the proverbial bundle of joy arrives — and preferably before she is conceived — a demon needs to decide how to protect his child (and himself). Hunter angels have no compunctions about using a demon's family against him. Other enemies might likewise use his child to coerce or injure him. Finally, some occult groups kidnap demon-blooded children in order to exploit their abilities to their own ends.

Some outcasts distance themselves from their children. They fake their deaths, burn away the parent Cover, force themselves to play out the narrative of the man who fled the state as soon as he found out he was going to be a father, or put the child up for adoption anonymously. Many demons believe their child's connection to them presents the greatest danger. An Offspring without a demon parent to guide her may face struggles, but at least she is unlikely to attract the attention of everyone who wants to manipulate or hurt her

Unchained mother. Granted, some who take this route do so to save their own skins or because they have gone loud and burned away the parent Cover.

Other demons reserve one of their Covers for child-rearing. They never use this parent Cover in any way that will connect it to the Unchained. They frequently hide their demon nature from their children — and possibly their partners — as an additional protective measure. While this double life carries some risks, it allows the outcast to remain close to his children and reduces the chance that the parent Cover will become compromised beyond recovery. Once the outcast's Offspring learns to manipulate arcane physics and discovers the truth about her lineage, however, the demon may reap the consequences lying to his child for a decade or more.

A minority of demons never try to keep their nature a secret from their children. They instead emphasize the importance of not discussing family business with anyone else and rely on the reluctance of adults to take a child's apparent fantasies seriously. In most cases, the outcast's partner (if any) must be in on the secret, too — and this is in some ways even more of a security risk than entrusting the truth to a child. Some of these demons strongly discourage their children from using Embeds and other special abilities, hoping to head off the inevitable incident where Junior knocks the class bully unconscious with a single punch. Others encourage their children to master their abilities — whether as a means of self-defense or to make them more useful to their demon parents.

Extraordinarily provident demons occasionally form rings with other family-oriented outcasts. They carefully craft an elaborate extended family with their allies through patch jobs that interweave Covers. At their most basic, these communities provide mutual protection from outside threats and a built-in network of childcare providers who won't panic when little Sally recites the periodic table of elements in 3rd grade science class. Unchained hear rumors of small towns completely controlled by such demon clans, but no one seems to know where to find these tiny pockets of Hell.

OFFSPRING HAVING OFFSPRING

Demons must be wary of compromising their Covers, but Offspring labor under no such impediment. Organizations that kidnap Offspring and Fractals exist, but they are nowhere near as common as the human predators who traffic in their own kind. Unless an Offspring does something to attract the God-Machine's attention, he is no more likely to become entangled in its schemes than any other stigmatic. An Offspring who has Offspring children must still decide whether to hide or reveal their heritage, and whether to discourage or encourage his kids to use their abilities. He might still have to clean up a mess made by his child's accidental Embed use. But he can take some comfort in the knowledge that he has fewer natural enemies than his Unchained ancestor.

Fractals are a different animal. Many possess abilities that are of considerable interest to anyone connected to the

God-Machine or the Unchained. Even so, Fractals can live quietly, avoid using their exceptional abilities, and largely pass as stigmatics or humans with minor supernatural capabilities. A Fractal who attracts the attention of those who covet her capabilities likely faces real danger of abduction or elimination. These opportunists are even more likely to target a Fractal child who has no demon parent to protect him.

Latent parents seldom have any means of protecting their Offspring or Fractal children from those who would harm or exploit them. Unless they have Unchained or supernatural connections at their disposal, Latents seldom have the resources to locate and retrieve their stolen children. Human law enforcement is usually helpless against those who abduct and imprison Offspring and Fractals.

IMPERATIVES OF COVER

Pregnancy is often a dangerous time for male and female demons alike. Changing Covers or entering demonic form doesn't harm the developing fetus, as the outcast's quantum nature means she is perpetually her demon form and all her Covers simultaneously. However, this existential instability can work against an expectant demon parent, as well – the father as well as the mother.

Covers shield a demon from the God-Machine because people perceive him as "my brother" or "that guy in accounting." The absolute faith humans have that they know his identity generates a psychic concealment. This is also why acting different from the way these human connections would expect can erode the demon's Cover. As long as the demon limits his behavior to what makes sense for his Cover, he remains hidden.

An unborn child has an undeniable bond with her parents. That connection goes down to the genetic code, and as with other sources of Cover, that both protects the expectant parent and limits her in some ways. This connection obeys laws of quantum entanglement and therefore affects an Unchained expectant father as surely as it does a pregnant demon woman. The exact form this takes varies from demon to demon, and may even change during the course of the pregnancy. Treat these as Conditions the player of an expectant parent may choose to apply during a given scene:

Locked Cover: The unborn child acts as an observer, which forces the demon to remain in her active Cover until the end of the current scene. Take a Beat whenever the demon would receive a significant benefit for changing Covers (or is seriously disadvantaged by remaining in her current Cover) but is unable to do so. This only applies to demons with two or more Covers.

Silenced: The destruction of the demon's current Cover would create a paradox – an unborn child who has either no mother or no father. Take a Beat when the demon attempts to go loud. His Cover is reduced by one (to a minimum of 1), but he receives none of the benefits of going loud. Furthermore, he cannot attempt to go loud until the end of the scene.

A DEMON IN YOUR CONDITION

We created all these conditions both to address questions about what happens when a pregnant demon (or an Unchained expectant father) goes loud and to give troupes options they can use when portraying demon parents. Everyone has a different sense of what makes for interesting drama. For some, knowing that going loud could mean never meeting the child you've dreamed about since before you Fell creates interesting story possibilities. For others, it feels like an artificial limit on a character's actions that prevents her from doing something awesome.

Suggesting several ways to handle the destruction of a Cover during pregnancy leaves the choice in the hands of the player of the expectant parent. Does the player want to tell a story about his character's hard choices, loss, and regret over what might have been? Or does the player want her character to have a child without feeling like she is being punished or sidelined by arbitrary rules on what her character can or can't do while waiting for labor and birth? Whatever the player's goals, he should have a choice in how the story of becoming a parent affects his character. He should earn Beats when he disadvantages his character to tell that story, but the Storyteller should not force any of these Conditions on the player without his consent.

Irreconcilable Paradox: The fetus cannot exist if either of her parents lose the Cover that made her life possible. Take a Beat if the Cover that is the unborn child's mother or father falls to a rating of 0 (whether because of going loud or failing a compromise roll). The resulting paradox annihilates the growing fetus.

Flexible Parenthood: The unborn child exists in a quantum state of his own and can survive the destruction of the parent Cover. If the Cover that is the fetus' mother or father falls to a rating of 0, another of that demon's Covers becomes the parent Cover instead. So if a demon goes loud in her pregnant Cover, one of her other Covers would become the pregnant Cover instead. Similarly, if an expectant demon father loses the last point of Cover, one of his other Covers becomes the father of his child. In either case, this changes the child's DNA as if the new Cover was always his parent. In most cases, the fetus forms this bond with another of the demon's sexually

AN OFFSPRING LEARNS TO CHEAT

Li Na knew how and when to keep her head down. She'd become an expert by age eight at getting an idea of when the Machine's agents were around and how to get out fast. Once or twice she'd seen Mom throw a distraction the other way, or pull some kind of con to keep the agents busy elsewhere. Fire alarms were Li Na's favorite, but not always handy. Today, though, Mom was out with her ring and Li Na was on her own at school when something went wrong.

Police of the Machine, all stigmatics, came into the class to talk to the teacher. She spotted what she figured were signs and looked around for escape routes. She had several. The problem was when she looked around the faces of her classmates: Mary, Jerome, and Talli. Her friends. Any good exit would mean putting these kids in danger, and she wondered for the first time how many kids she'd put in danger before when running from the Machine. These were kids, just like her; what would the Machine do trying to figure out which one of them was demon-blooded while she was safe and on the run again? In that moment, she realized she needed a distraction, a real one. She needed something that was stronger and far more interesting to these guys than she was.

Something sparked inside of Li Na in her moment of need, and she realized she could rewrite the way light bounced in the hallway behind the agents. If she just concentrated for just a moment... There. She willed Trick of the Light to manifest, and the stigmatics saw something that looked like their target run down the hallway. The cops ran after it, and the kids went wild at the excitement of cops and chases and disruption in their boring school day. In the chaos, Li Na hit the fire alarm and ran.

active Covers of the same sex. Given no other alternative, the unborn child may attach itself to a Cover that would normally be physically incapable of taking that role. Only if the demon parent has no other Covers will the fetus become the child of the parent's demonic form – a thoroughly unpredictable and quite often dangerous state of affairs. If this change in parent

Covers creates significant story complications for the demon during a scene, take a Beat.

Quantum Pregnancy: The unborn child doesn't exist in only one of her demon mother's Covers. One or more of the demon's other Covers is also pregnant – even if that would ordinarily be anatomically impossible. If this quantum pregnancy creates significant story complications for the demon during a scene take a Beat. This may be a temporary condition, but it could also last for the duration of the demon's pregnancy. This only affects a pregnant demon, which is usually but not always a female Cover.

Shunted Offspring: The unborn child's quantum connection to his father can manifest physically, transporting to the body of its mother's partner. The fetus's mother appears to miscarry, but the child instead appears in one of his father's Covers – even if this is normally impossible. In some cases this condition will reverse itself later in the pregnancy, but the demon father may need to carry the child to term. If the shunted offspring causes significant story complications for the demon during a scene, take a Beat. This condition only affects a demon who has fathered the unborn child.

Invite Scrutiny: A demon can endanger her children simply by breaking her Cover in their presence. Take a Beat when a demon parent fails a Compromise roll or goes loud during a scene that she shares with at least her child (unborn or not). Her child moves one step further on the Demon-Blooded Cipher (see Chapter Two). Both demons and demon-blooded characters can earn this Beat, but this condition is not available if the child already has the Activated Condition.

Once a demon's child is born, the outcast no longer needs to worry that going loud will erase her child from reality. Fractals recognize their demon parents regardless of form or Cover and are more likely to take a sudden change in physical appearance in stride. Offspring have no such ability, however, and most find the sudden appearance of another person claiming to be Mom or Dad uncomfortable or completely incomprehensible.

GROWING UP BEYOND NORMAL

No demon-blooded grows up completely normal. Latents may enjoy the appearance of normalcy and cling to it. For Offspring and Fractals, however, even that veneer is wiped away. Even if their parents or guardians can provide a stable home life, the otherworldly and the impossible creep in. These children are magnets for the supernatural. It's no coincidence that most demon-blooded have several brushes with the God-Machine and the rest of the World of Darkness even before they can conceptualize what they are experiencing. They may not realize what they're seeing is different – after all, doesn't every child worry that there's something under the bed or in the closet when the lights go out?

The difference is, for the demon-blooded child, these horrors may not be his imagination. This section discusses the unique development of the various types of demon-blooded and may help in establishing personality and background for any demon-blooded character in addition to acting as roleplaying guideposts for playing children in your game.

CHILDHOOD MANY STEPS REMOVED

Demons, the Fall, and the God-Machine are a distant genetic memory for most Latents. The blood of Fallen angels is so many generations past that many Latents live and die without ever knowing the secrets their blood contains.

For most Latent children, tomorrow may expose them to a World of Darkness and the machinations of the God-Machine, but today is just for exploration. Like so many children, the Latent child is compelled to discover more about herself and the world around her. She experiments with cause and effect, with what her body is capable of, and with the social norms her parents or guardians are teaching her as best they can. She doesn't just want to know why her mom yells when she pokes a fork near the electric socket. She *has* to know why. Everything she does, from making a mess of dinner when dad's back is turned to carefully staring, unblinking at a stranger for three minutes straight on the subway, is a part of her learning about her world.

The difference between the Latent child and the average child is that the Latent lives with her foot in the door to a world of unseen masters and monsters. Most children can only learn about the world that is mundane through the lies of the Machine. The Latent, because of her heritage, has access to explore the world beyond that lie, and it's only luck that determines which world she ends up living in.

STIGMATA AND THE LATENT CHILD

Bad luck and terrible fates are not the most common outcome for these brilliant little scientists. In fact, most Latent children, unless carefully watched and obsessively sheltered, have an overwhelming talent for running into the cogs of the Machine. Imagine a child walking home from her elementary classes every day, the same way every time. She passes by three different little shops, all of which sell some kind of snack or sweet. If she's a Latent, she will be drawn to pick the one that is venting the waste from a city-wide Infrastructure, and a result, will flood her little body with Aether one fifty-cent candy at a time. A Latent child's curiosity and her instinctual attraction to the workings of the God-Machine make her especially prone to becoming stigmatic as well. The only real way to guard against this is to shelter the child. That sort of parenting behavior rarely happens naturally, and tends to start after it's already too late and the child has already opened Pandora's Box.

Then again, even becoming stigmatic and therefore elevating the child into being considered an Offspring doesn't necessarily mean their childhood spirals into tragedy and horror. A curious child who has gotten a glimpse of the monsters in the shadows may well convince himself, in time, that what he's seen and the strange feelings he's developed are "just kid stuff." In this way, he may not develop his first Embed until later, sometimes into his teens.

If, however, his sense of wonder and exploration isn't squashed, he may begin to look at himself and what even he is capable of in a different way. He is an Offspring, at that point, with all the trials that presents.

HOME DAMNED HOME: OFFSPRINGS OF HELL

Early childhood for Offspring is rarely as secure as that of their average Latent cousin. No matter how removed they may be from their demonic heritage, it's strong in their blood. This pulls the child to the workings of the God-Machine as it does with Latents. Worse, though, it isn't uncommon for agents of the God-Machine to be unusually curious about Offspring, a sort of curiosity that can lead to exposure for their parents or caregivers. An Offspring can be a metaphorical weight around their parents' necks; nothing is sadder than when a sensitive child realizes that he may be the reason Daddy sleeps sitting up in a chair in the living room holding a shotgun.

Children are perceptive and uniquely tuned into their parents' moods and emotions. While everyone around a demon may believe their lies, their Offspring are often able observe their parents' behavior and make judgments based on that. The result is a young child who senses her parents' stress and frustration but no one else does. In this case, the child might develop a closer tie to their parent, realizing they have a very special relationship even if they'd never put it in so many words. They might appear clingy or overly attached, though, considering the reasoning, it isn't actually an unnatural reaction. For the child, their parent is the default for normal: they are the control group in any experiment. All the rest of a child's time spent discovering the world is comparing their tests against their parents as baseline.

Between their own curiosity and their parents' complicated lives, the home of most Offspring is chaotic at best. Change schools when a Cover is blown. Lie to your friends, your teacher, everyone, because you've got a secret they can't hope to understand. Still, there's defiance in Offspring just the same as there is in their demon parents. What doesn't crush them just makes them tougher and, often, more curious about the world that's bearing down on them.

Whether clingy, distant or defiant, all Offspring eventually reach a certain understanding about themselves and the world around them. With mundane children, a series of thresholds and singularities of understanding mean that a toddler

becomes a child and a child becomes a teenager and so on. With an Offspring, any one major developmental step could mean a real and quintessential change in what and who they are. With some Offspring, their first steps could be a cause for congratulations. They could also be a cause for all kinds of mischief as the child develops, in that moment, her first Embed. Most commonly, though, Embeds follow the point when an eight- or nine-year-old child first realizes that other people think and feel, just as they do.

This theory of mind is an important part of child development. For some reason, the first time an Offspring realizes the deep significance of consciousness, and more importantly that other people all around them actually have consciousness as well, unlocks a deeper understanding of the cosmos. From this age forward, Offspring tend to recognize two things. First, people and other things can think, feel, and exist just as the Offspring herself does. Second, that the universe, as most thinking, feeling people view it, is lying to them. They come to understand that the baseline reality they understand is not the baseline that most people think and feel and experience. As soon as the demon-blooded understands that there is a baseline, they have the understanding to change and manipulate it.

WHERE YOU LAY YOUR HEAD

If things are chaotic for Offspring, the childhood of Fractals is a phantasmagoria. A Fractal learns almost from birth that nothing is real and anything is possible. These children almost never experience real stability. Their parents struggle to keep them out of sight of the Machine while dealing with the dangers of a child who can, on a whim, freeze their bank accounts or cause all the electronics in the house to stop functioning. The Fractal child is as much a danger to others as she is in danger herself, and that's a thing her parents know better than anyone. Those who do survive to adulthood tend to do it because their parents stuck with them regardless. A part of that may be that Fractals have a much more intense connection to their parents than even the most sensitive Offspring. After all, a Fractal might see through all Covers and know what mommy really looks like, with her broken crown and bleeding wings. A demon has no better opportunity for honesty than with a Fractal child, and because children take their parents as the norm, being honest with a Fractal is rarely met with judgment. A Fractal child isn't afraid of her father's red skin and metal eyes. A Fractal child doesn't care how many scales made out of pennies her mother has instead of hair. That's just mom and dad, and they are, to the Fractal, perfect.

Unlike Offspring, Fractals are born with one Embed, meaning that there is no point when they suddenly learn what they can do. It is an intuitive understanding of the way the universe really works, their demon blood, which allows them hack the code. A Fractal doesn't need to come to understand

that her Embed does something special and unique. As with her demon parents, having an Embed is normal. In fact, she may run into a great deal of frustration when she realizes that other people can't do the thing she can do. Of course she can talk to machines and understand how they work. Can't everyone? Why can't everyone? For most, this means assuming that there is something wrong with everyone else rather than something special about herself.

Early childhood starts with a necessary sort of egocentrism and builds out, so for a child who can bend the rules of time and space, anything is possible and there is something odd about people who are limited by those rules. This can be important in the development of the child and more than occasionally results in feelings of superiority over the "mundanes." The child's ability to sympathize, understand, and even recognize that other people think like they do can be severely altered by the Embeds with which they begin their lives. Heart's Desire could show a child very early that people want basically the same things, and that would promote an easier time with empathy even if it showed the young Fractal how very selfish people can be. However, a Fractal born with Unperson may never fully be able to recognize other people as people, since their very identity can 'so easily' be stripped away from the child's point of view. Her ability to empathize could be forever stunted.

COMING OF AGE

Puberty doesn't mean the end of social experiments. In fact, most teenagers swing into full experimental mode. Every snide question a teenager has ever asked to challenge the status quo is a part of her learning processes. Her focus may shift to social science, but she's still driven by the need to understand and prove what she understands against new situations. The major difference is that with a child's brain, development is limitless; they can take in any amount of information and simply build on it. The teenager brain is slowing down, shifting from being fairly selfish to aware of the world in a larger context. Their ideas and concepts of who they are and what the world is become more defined. They're laying down circuits now in place of the fuzzy logic of children. Now is when they develop real prejudices and predilections.

For the demon-blooded, this developmental turn gets even more complicated: with the independence that being a teenager offers and expects, the demon-blooded is more likely to be outside the shelter of her parents. This is the point at which most Latents end up running across the supernatural. This is when most Fractals get exposed to the Machine. This is also the point at which most Offspring decide whether they favor their demon or their human half, often foreswearing the other side ferociously.

Then, over one day or one week or one month, the teenage demon-blooded realizes they aren't or can't be a kid anymore. Outside of the totally sheltered Latent, few demon-blooded are allowed to have a gradual transition into adulthood.

Instead, most commonly, it is another singularity-like moment in which they believe for the first time it's them versus reality, or the first time they realize they are different from the other kids. For most demon-blooded, adulthood comes in the moment they realize that not only shadows and nightmares lurk in the world, all around them, but that in some way they are a part of those shadows. Literature and media often depict the image of hellspawn and the Devil's seed growing to be charismatics, cult leaders, or power-mad politicians. This may be something the young Fractal internalizes, or it may come through development since he already sees himself as better than most because he has these natural, other-ing powers.

The mundane will never fully accept him for who and what he is, and thus, it just makes sense that he may cling to the supernatural, the strange, and the occult in the World of Darkness – at least there he need not lie about the strangeness of his nature.

Adulthood for most demon-blooded means facing the fact that they have only a tangential hold on humanity, and that it isn't their birthright. From there, some flee the realization and work doubly hard to live with their heads in the sand. For others, it means doubling down on their claims of humanity. For some, it means reveling in the shadow, for good or ill.

EXPLOITED OFFSPRING

Not many people in the World of Darkness know the Unchained exist. Even fewer are aware of the existence of Offspring, much less Latents and Fractals. Large Agencies that actively recruit stigmatics usually discover the truth about demon-blooded sooner or later. Virtually all Free Agencies have at least heard rumors about the children of outcasts. The God-Machine and many of its servants certainly know, as do a handful of occult organizations not directly connected to it. These factions frequently seek out and recruit – or in some cases abduct – demon-blooded in order to further their goals.

DEMONS WITH CHILDREN

Those who have frequent contact with the Unchained often seek demons whose Covers have children (or grandchildren) and target those Offspring directly. This tactic presents challenges. First, the occult talent scout must successfully identify a demon's Cover and hope the outcast has children. Second, Offspring with demon guardians frequently know their heritage and have greater mastery of their abilities. While these Offspring are more immediately useful to the recruiting group, it also means these demon-blooded can fight back. Abduction is usually a doomed strategy in these cases. Even if those who wish to exploit the Offspring overpower the child, they must still take the parent into consideration.

Some groups rely on deception to lure demon-blooded beyond the easy reach of their Unchained parents. "I'm your Dad's other Cover" is a popular ploy. Once the Offspring realizes he has been duped, he may prove difficult to control. For that reason, the most successful of those occult talent scouts lure their victims with honey. This is most effective if the Offspring is unhappy or if his relationship with his demon

parent is strained. The recruiter gives the demon-blooded a chance to escape or promise him rewards in exchange for service. Some of these groups even keep their word – the better to ensure the Offspring's continued cooperation.

ORPHANS

Orphans, in the parlance of those groups who recruit demon-blooded, are those Offspring and Fractals who do not have a demon guardian. Some are literal orphans – children whose Unchained parents have been captured by the God-Machine or killed. Most have been abandoned by their demon parents, either for their own protection or that of their outcast parent. A few are the children of Latents. Regardless, orphans either lack guardians or have guardians who are no match for the sorts who recruit Offspring.

This is easily the most common strategy among those who seek out Offspring. The danger of rebellion is smaller than it is for demon-blooded who have an Unchained parent (or foster parent) in their lives, although this means they will require more training to become truly useful to the organization they serve.

Not everyone who seeks out orphans is engaged in abduction and human trafficking. Some take in at-risk, abandoned, or homeless Offspring and provide them with a safe living environment and an education intended to teach them to master their abilities and to help them avoid God-Machine entanglements. Even these seemingly altruistic boarding schools are seldom charities. Most act as training and recruiting centers designed to quietly shape their young protégés into adults who will loyally serve the organization that sponsored them. Agencies favor this approach.

ACTIVATED LATENTS

Latents can become full Offspring by the same process that transforms humans into stigmatics. Because these demon-blooded frequently do not know their heritage and come into their new powers during a traumatic experience, they are often highly vulnerable to exploitation. Occult talent scouts can manipulate these Offspring with misinformation, promises, or threats in order to ensure their cooperation. Although a child's immature body and mind make her more susceptible to outright abduction, adults who suddenly manifest powers they don't understand are even more vulnerable in some ways. Their disappearance seldom causes immediate alarm, and people are less likely to challenge their decision to keep questionable company.

The success of this recruitment strategy requires either exceptionally good luck or a large pool of potential candidates. Recruiters who aren't clued into the nature of Latents and so have no idea where their powers come from may use this

approach by default. These ignorant opportunists would take a keen interest in anyone who suddenly came into superhuman abilities. They don't care whether the source of that power is God, Satan, or extraterrestrials, just so long as it serves them.

The God-Machine and its agents frequently adopt this approach, rounding up dozens or hundreds of people for arcane testing. Those who fail to manifest latent talents are discarded – killed or merely wiped of memories and left with only a stigmatic's mark as a memento of the experience they have forgotten. Those who pass the tests receive additional training and conditioning to shape them into the God-Machine's tools.

Some large and powerful human and supernatural groups employ this strategy as well. It is a favorite of corrupt governments, brutal military regimes, and mystery cults. Some Agencies stoop to this, too, but a sudden explosion in the population of stigmatics tends to attract unwanted attention from angels and other God-Machine agents.

ALL GROWN UP

Sadly, Offspring often do not survive into adulthood. Immune as they are to most Concealment Infrastructure, many run afoul of the God-Machine's servants at a tender age. Others fall in with dangerous crowds, trading on their special abilities until their luck runs out. Many, however, simply succumb to depression – the sad consequence of seeing innocent people unknowingly dance to the God-Machine's tune.

AN UNCANNY INHERITANCE

Offspring and Fractals share stigmatics' ability to see the God-Machine's gears. That certainly colors their perception of the world, but it is their unusual abilities – particularly their access to Embeds – that tend to define how they make their ways in the world. Demon-blooded who maintain their independence and avoid entanglements with the world of the Unchained effectively hold cheat codes to reality, which have the potential to make them legendary among their colleagues and feared by their enemies.

An Offspring with Momentum can make any team effort easier. One with Just Bruised can greatly improve her survivability as a soldier or save lives as a firefighter. Some of these capabilities are narrowly useful. Merciless Gunman is great for a soldier in a warzone, for instance, but an Offspring in a peaceful occupation is unlikely to find much use for it. On the other hand, Lucky Break and Efficiency turn the

demon-blooded into a virtual miracle-worker regardless of his occupation.

A PARADE OF INSISTENT SUITORS

Embeds cost the Offspring nothing. They don't require occult rituals or arcane materials. They almost never leave behind evidence that can be traced back to the Offspring. Yet those who hunt demon-blooded recognize the signs they leave behind. If someone leads a charmed life or exhibits glitches, hunters take notice and investigate further. Some of these watchers are actually looking for demons – whether to recruit them or to return them to the God-Machine – but most at least regard an Offspring as a consolation prize.

Some Offspring eventually join one of the groups courting them. Agencies can always use Agents who possess some of the capabilities of their demon relatives without the complications of maintaining Cover. The God-Machine's cults and the Deva Corporation value Offspring as useful tools and typically treat them well. Government agencies and specialized military units have no difficulty finding uses for demon-blooded.

Those who avoid misfortune, predators, and unwanted angelic interest can seldom leave their natures behind entirely (although many certainly try). The God-Machine has its own plans for the demon-blooded; even if they avoid Its scrutiny, they still see too much. The temptation to interfere with the

God-Machine's projects follows them their whole lives. Many become occult investigators. While most of these focus on the God-Machine, others broaden their interests or specialize in some other arcane academic discipline, such as ghosts, cryptozoology, or paranormal psychology. A few found their own cults – whether in service to the God-Machine, a demon ally, or something else entirely.

THICKER THAN WATER

An Offspring who has contact with his outcast parent often finds the reality of life with a demon uncomfortable. Either his parent lies to him his whole life about her nature and activities, or she teaches him to keep the family secrets from everyone, including (if not *especially*) trusted authority figures. Once the Offspring leaves the nest – if he ever does – he lives with the knowledge that his mother could be captured or killed at any time simply because of what she is. Moreover, her enemies might choose to kidnap her children in an effort to draw her out of hiding or force her cooperation.

An Offspring knows his demon parent lives a shadowy, dangerous life. He knows he might get a phone call while he's at the gym or a text message at three in the morning asking

for help. If he goes, he enters the world of alien machines and supernatural horrors that the Unchained face daily. If he refuses the request, not only is that world likely to find its way to his door eventually anyway, he will forever wonder whether he could have saved her should anything terrible happen to his demon mother (or father).

An Offspring who explores the occult world has advantages most human investigators do not, and among these is a demon parent she can call for help if she runs into something she isn't equipped to handle. Playing this trump card comes with its own risks, however. First, involving an outcast may attract the attention of those who hunt demons, which can put both parent and child alike in greater danger. Second, breaking out the big supernatural guns encourages the Offspring's opponents to seek out occult allies of their own, and the demon-blooded's parent can't be there to protect her all the time. Third, although they possess powerful abilities, demons aren't invincible. The Offspring might summon her demon father to his death or, possibly worse, into a situation that will force him to go loud. The God-Machine is not blind to such overt demonic activity. It may send hunter angels to capture Its wayward servant, but It will also take that opportunity to draw the demon-blooded deeper into Its schemes.





"How has the worry been?" asked Dr. Nills.

Alana shrugged. "OK."

"You've been OK getting up and going to school?"

The girl nodded. Her hair tickled her chin. She was still getting used to the length. She'd had it cut short and donated for children with no hair. Her father liked to brag about that, and it gave Alana a good feeling, too.

"Would you tell me what happened in the store?"

Alana blushed and looked down. "Um. I'd rather not."

Dr. Nills smiled. "I understand, but it really had your Dad worried. So maybe just to make him feel better, we could talk about it?"

Alana teared up a little. "I wanted to go and get a stuffed animal. I don't know. It just felt really important, but it really wasn't. I was just—" she thought for a moment about the word Dr. Nills used. "I just let bad feelings escalate."

"What kind of bad feelings?"

"I missed my mom." Alana dropped her head again. "I was mad and sad. I thought maybe a stuffed animal would make me feel better, but Dad said we couldn't afford it. He wasn't mean or anything, he just...we didn't have money."

"So what happened?"

"I started thinking about how much I hate money and how we don't always have it. And then...I guess I was mad at my Dad. Suddenly he didn't have *any* money."

Dr. Nills' brow knit. "What do you mean?"

"Like, his card wouldn't work to get gas. And then at home he spent all day on the computer and on the phone with his bank, trying to figure out where his money went. He told me that we always have *some* money, but we have to be careful what we spend it on. But that day he couldn't spend *any*." Alana paused. She realized she was short of breath. "We had to go to Nana's for dinner because we couldn't go grocery shopping."

"But that's not your fault, right?" Dr. Nills looked at her in the eyes.

Alana looked up, blue eyes bright with tears. "I think so. I think I made his money go away because I was mad."

"But that isn't possible, honey. Did the money come back?"

"Yeah, the next day." Alana wiped her eyes and reached for a tissue. "When I wasn't mad anymore."

chapter two: STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

"You know what happened," he hissed excitedly. "He was left alone! He grew up human! He's not Evil Incarnate or Good Incarnate, he's just... a human incarnate."

-Terry Pratchett and Neil Gaiman, *Good Omens*

Some demon-blooded are fortunate. They grow up never knowing about their heritage. They live and die without ever realizing their potential as inheritors of the power of the God-Machine, and for that ignorance they are rewarded with normalcy. Others, however, delve into their own capabilities and discover the physics of the universe, the mystical subroutines that drive the difference engine of all Creation. That curiosity carries rewards of its own, but it carries even greater risks.

This chapter examines the game mechanics of playing demon-blooded characters. It presents the rules for creating them, both as adults and as children, and explains how they fit in to the God-Machine's schematics of the world. The chapter also presents new and modified Merits, suitable for demon-blooded characters.

SPECIAL SYSTEMS

Before discussing character creation or the different types of demon-blooded in a game context, we present the various game systems and terminology used to discuss the powers and capabilities of these characters. Some of these rules draw on systems presented in Chapter Three of *Demon: The Descent*.

Note that not all of these systems apply to all demon-blooded. The character creation section later in this chapter refers to these systems by name, so that you can easily discern what kind of character has which traits.

AMBIENT AETHER

The character can draw small amounts of Aether from the atmosphere and use it to super-charge her Embeds in much the same way a demon creates Exploits. Demon-bloods do not possess the natural affinity for Aether manipulation that the Unchained do, and so they cannot create the reliable Exploits that demons can. Instead, by charging an Embed with Aether, they produce unique, explosive, and dangerous effects.

To gather Aether, the character must draw it from the world around her. This is much easier to do when an angel or demon is nearby, or when the demon-blooded is within active Infrastructure. Once the character has coaxed a bit of Aether out of the world, she activates an Embed and forces the Aether

into it, much like adding a fuel additive to a gas tank. Then she simply hopes for the best. The resulting effect is always similar to the Embed in a conceptual way, but is overtly supernatural, unpredictable, and spectacular. In addition, much like using Exploits risks a demon's Cover, using Aether to amp up an Embed risks the God-Machine's notice.

GATHERING AETHER

Dice Pool: Stamina + Occult

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character accidentally creates a kind of funnel, sucking all Aether in the immediate area toward her. Any demon within 10 yards of the character loses Aether equal to the player's Resolve. The character suffers bashing damage equal to the Aether lost, as well.

Failure: The character gathers no Aether.

Success: The character gathers a single point of Aether. She must use it on her next action or it vanishes.

Exceptional Success: The character manages a great degree of control over the Aether, and can keep it stable without using it for the rest of the scene, at which time any Aether still unused dissipates.

Modifier	Circumstance
+4	Demon within 20 feet of the character (Primum 6 or more)
+3	Within Infrastructure
+2	Angel used a Numen within the last two turns
+2	Demon within 20 feet of the character (Primum 5 or less)
-1	No angels or demons involved in the scene
-2	No machinery nearby (cars count)
-3	No wireless communication or internet nearby (smartphones count)

CHARGING THE EMBED

The player rolls to activate the Embed as usual and states the character's intent in activating the power. The player should think of this as taking the usual effect of the power and making it dramatically, overtly supernatural. Finally, the player rolls the number of successes on the Embed roll as a dice pool (if the Embed roll failed, the player rolls a chance die) and applies the following results:

Dramatic Failure: The Aether supercharges the Embed and it succeeds (if the player achieved any successes on the Embed roll), but the effect carries with it a great deal of collateral damage and visibility for the character. The player must roll to avoid the God-Machine's notice with a -4 modifier.

Failure: The Aether dissipates harmlessly without charging the Embed's effects. The Embed succeeds or fails as indicated by the roll. The player need not roll to avoid the God-Machine's notice.

Success: The Aether supercharges the Embed and the result is fairly close to the player's intent. The player describes what happens and the Storyteller can make additions or tweaks, but the general effect is up to the player. Note that the character doesn't have a great deal of control at the best of times; the demon-blood can mitigate collateral damage, but the effect is still showy and overt. The player must roll to avoid the God-Machine's notice.

Exceptional Success: The Aether supercharges the Embed, but the character maintains a considerable amount of control over the final result. The character can cut off the effect at any time, meaning that if things start to go badly, the character can simply dissipate the Aether and stop any further problems. The player must still roll to avoid the God-Machine's notice.

Example: Wendy, a Fractal, uses the No Quarter Embed at a street fight. Watching the fight from a rooftop, she gathers up some Aether and supercharges the Embed — she wants to see these men murder each other for what they did to her father's store.

The player rolls Manipulation + Brawl as usual (the roll for the No Quarter Embed), and rolls three successes. Since Wendy supercharged the Embed, the player now rolls three dice (the number of successes on the Embed roll). Wendy's player states that she wants the combatants to gain supernatural strength in their brawl.

If the player comes up with a dramatic failure (note that this is only possible if she fails the roll and chooses to take a dramatic failure and a Beat, since she doesn't have a chance die), the gangs still fight and Go For Blood. The Storyteller decides that their madness is contagious. They foam at the mouth and their eyes glow red, and anyone they see is fair game for their rage. If not contained, this brawl might spread throughout the city.

If the roll fails, then the No Quarter Embed works as usual, but has no special effect.

SHARED STORYTELLING

Supercharging Embeds is tricky, because it is more freeform than most powers in **Demon** and grants a great deal of narrative control to the player. A few precepts are important to remember, here.

First, remember that this isn't a competition between the players and the Storyteller. The player isn't trying to find a way to "break" the Storyteller's game, and the Storyteller isn't trying to torture the players. If the player offers us a description of a supercharged Embed that is simply inappropriate to the story, the Storyteller, as always, has the right to veto it.

Second, remember that such effects should be impressive, perhaps even as impressive as an Exploit, but much more frightening because they can't be controlled. A demon-blood supercharging the Combustion Embed might get a result similar to the Incendiary Exploit — but she won't be able to control it as well as a demon would.

If the roll succeeds, Wendy's player can describe what she sees as the desired effect. She says that the combatants eschew weapons for beating on each other with bare hands and that none of them feel pain — they just keep fighting until the alleys and streets are smeared with blood. The Storyteller adds that their teeth elongate slightly into vicious fangs, and as the fight wears on they bite and rend each other. In addition, anyone that they see during the fight becomes a target — they won't seek out new victims, but passersby aren't safe.

On an exceptional success, Wendy's player gets to describe what happens, and she begins the same way — enhanced strength, not pain. The Storyteller adds the bit about fangs, and the player thinks that's cool and appropriate, so she lets that ride. But then the Storyteller describes a local street person peeking into the alley at the commotion and one of the gang members charging at him, fangs bared. Wendy's player shuts down the supercharged aspect of the Embed — only the combatants will fight, though they do continue fighting without surrender (as is usual for No Quarter).

AETHER POOL

Some Fractals can hold small amounts of Aether. Such characters have a maximum Aether pool of 5 and can spend one point of Aether per turn. They can recharge Aether by

STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

gathering it as described above; each success on the roll to gather Aether grants the demon-blood one point. Doing so more than once a day, however, risks the God-Machine's notice for every subsequent attempt.

Demon-blooms with an Aether pool can sense aetheric resonance just as demons can (p. 184 of *Demon: The Descent*). Doing so also allows demons to sense them, however. A demon-blood's aetheric range is the same as that of a demon with Primum 1.

Characters with an Aether pool can also use that Aether to supercharge Embeds.

COMPROMISE

Some Embeds call for a roll to avoid compromise. Demon-blooded, despite not having Cover to risk, can learn and use these Embeds. Likewise, a demon-blooded character might manipulate Infrastructure, run afoul of an angel, or simply be present when a demon draws down the notice of the God-Machine. When this happens, the demon-blooded character runs the risk of attracting the same notice, but the God-Machine has no desire to recycle or capture demon-blooded. It does, however, have plans for the children of its Fallen angels (see *The Demon-blooded Cipher*, p. 34).

If an Embed calls for a compromise roll, either as part of its basic system (such as Shift Consequence) or when the player rolls a failure or dramatic failure (such as Occam's Razor), the character risks drawing the God-Machine's notice. The player rolls Intelligence + Occult. This is different from a demon's attempt to avoid compromise (Wits + Manipulation), because although the demon-blooded and the demon use the same arcane mathematics to influence the world through Embeds, demons "speak" this math as their native tongue. Demon-blooded are second-generation users of these routines, at best, and their ability to hide what they are doing is based upon their understanding of said routines. A clever student of occult lore, then, is better able to use Embeds subtly.

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Occult

Action: Reflexive

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character draws the notice of God-Machine and feels the Machine's attention turn towards him. The player must immediately make a breaking point roll for the character (p. 32). The character advances one level on the Demon-blooded Cipher.

Failure: The God-Machine notices or acknowledges the character, but the character doesn't necessarily sense the notice. The character advances one level on the Demon-blooded Cipher.

Success: The character dodges the God-Machine's notice... this time. The character does not advance on the Demon-blooded Cipher.

Exceptional Success: The character not only avoids the God-Machine's notice, but he also figures out a way to remove a few

THE GOD-MACHINE'S NOTICE

What does the God-Machine's attention look like? The Storyteller is encouraged to telegraph this attention through some subtle alteration of the world around the characters. A pay phone starts ringing, and then stops. Television screens flicker. Radio signals distort for a few seconds. Passersby all fall silent and glance at the character, only for a second, but noticeably in unison.

The event should be quick, obviously strange but not overtly supernatural, and it should be something that the characters can't run down or easily investigate. It should make clear to the characters that something isn't right, but the event shouldn't scare them so badly that they spend the rest of the chapter trying to figure out what happened and why.

variables from the physics of the universe and undo some of the God-Machine's control. The player can, if he chooses, attempt a backtrace (see p. 36).

EMBEDS

All demon-blooded can learn Embeds. They see these abilities less as supernatural powers or magic, and more as an innate understanding of the world around them. A child would be hard-pressed to explain how she knows that the three sounds that make up the word "cat" refer to the animal, she just knows that they do — she can't pinpoint a specific moment when she learned that fact, or provide any justifiable reason *why* those sounds, assembled in that order, "mean" anything. Embeds, for the demon-blooded, are much the same way. A child might grow up knowing that she can always find her favorite toy (*Tag & Release*) or pull money for a gumball machine out of her coat (*In My Pocket*). She never stops to think about how or why this happens, and might not realize that other people don't have similar abilities. She just knows that by concentrating in a particular way, she makes something happen.

While no specific Embeds are forbidden for demon-blooded characters, the Storyteller should approve all such choices to make sure that a given Embed doesn't take the chronicle in a direction for which she is not prepared.

Learning a new Embed costs 4 Experiences for demon-blooded characters.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROFICIENCY

Anyone with Unseen Sense: God-Machine, and therefore all demon-blooms, can recognize Infrastructure. A demon-blood

with Infrastructure Proficiency, though, has an instinctive understanding of Infrastructure. This has the following effects:

- The character is never lost in Infrastructure. She can always find her way out.
- The character cannot be surprised by angels or guardians of the Infrastructure (other intruders, however, can surprise her). Surprise is described on p. 319 of **Demon: The Descent**.
- The character understands how to operate any machinery or mechanisms within the Infrastructure. This includes driving vehicles that are part of the Infrastructure. If a roll is required, the character does not suffer an unskilled penalty.
- The character recognizes the Linchpin of the Infrastructure when she sees it and can find it instinctually.

INTEGRITY

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).

BREAKING POINTS

A character stands to lose Integrity when she experiences a *breaking point*. 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 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 your 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? For demon-blooded characters, this question might refer to the first time the character used an Embed (or, at least, the first time she remembers using one). Describe this scene in as much detail as you can. This is a breaking point that already occurred, but it helps set a benchmark for what your character would have to see in order to experience one now.

STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

- *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, involved in a serious car accident, been kidnapped by a parent during a divorce, survived a life-threatening disease, attempted suicide, been attacked by a supernatural (or natural!) creature, or any number of other traumatic experiences. The goal here, again, isn't to make a traumatized character. It's to set a bar.

DETERMINING A BREAKING POINT

Once the player has completed the five questions, 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: Consider Wendy, the Fractal described earlier, in the aftermath of the street fight. She didn't start the fight, but she certainly escalated it. This is probably a breaking point for her, especially if the fight got out of hand and people died.

The character might experience the breaking point while the fight is still going on (as Wendy watches in horror and fascination) or the next day as she learns about what happened (maybe she sees bodies being pulled, piece by piece, out of a trash bin). The Storyteller determines that this is a breaking point for Wendy; her player rolls Resolve + Composure to avoid losing Integrity. Since Wendy feels she was justified, she might apply a +1 modifier, but if people died, especially innocent bystanders, the Storyteller should probably apply a negative modifier as well. Finally, the answer to one of Wendy's five questions ("What is the most traumatic thing that has ever happened to the character?") concerns street violence. As such, Wendy's player takes an additional penalty.

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
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.

LANGUAGE AFFINITY

Demon-blooded do not have the same gift for languages that their demonic family members do, but language seems to come naturally for many of them. The Language and Multi-Lingual Merits are revised for demon-blooded characters, as detailed on p. 37.

PERFECT RECALL

Some children and descendants of the Unchained share their mnemonic proficiency. All demon-blooded characters may purchase the Eidetic Memory Merit (p. 288 of *Demon: The Descent*) for one Merit dot instead of two.

QUANTUM UNDERSTANDING

A very few demon-bloods can do something that no other being in the World of Darkness can manage. They can sense whether a demon is telling the truth.

A demon's ability to lie perfectly has nothing to do with the objective or subjective truth of the statement. It has nothing to do with a demon's ability to cover up tells or regulate his body's responses. The Unchained can lie perfectly because of their quantum natures — a demon is, at once, all of his Covers and his demonic form. This paradoxical state extends to whatever a demon says; a statement is, at once, true and false until the demon decides the matter. The statement doesn't change the facts, but it does allow the demon to state, "The sky is orange" and be, from the perspective of someone using mundane or supernatural means to check the "truth" of the statement, correct.

Some demon-bloods, then, have limited access to this same quantum understanding. They can't manage to manipulate it like demons can, but what they can do is recognize which way a demon chooses to collapse the wave function. As such, when the demon determines that the statement is true, the demon-blooded can recognize that decision.

This ability takes some concentration on the part of the demon-blood. She needs to be paying attention to the demon and deliberately checking his statements. Quantum Understanding carries a risk, as well; the demon-blood can become lost in the possibilities.

Dice Pool: Wits + Composure vs. Cover (or Primum, if in demonic form)

Action: Instant and contested

"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 demon-bloods 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 demon-bloods characters, then? They are human, but are touched by the God-Machine and descended from the Unchained. Killing another person should still probably be a breaking point for a demon-blood, provided that she is aware of what she is doing. An Activated demon-blood (see p. 35) who kills someone shouldn't undergo a breaking point for it — at least, not until she becomes aware of what she did.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character becomes confused by the myriad possibilities that the demon presents. The character gains the Fugue Condition (p. 309 of *Demon: The Descent*). The character immediately enters a fugue state, and the Condition resolves itself at the end of the scene. During this time, the character talks aloud about what she sees, which might involve the demon's other Covers or his demonic form.

Failure: The character cannot determine the truth or falsity of the demon's statement.

Success: The character realizes which quantum "path" the demon has decided upon, and can tell whether or not the demon's statement is true.

Exceptional Success: As above. Also, the next time the demon-blood attempts Quantum Understanding on this particular demon, the demon resists using only his Primum.

UNSEEN SENSE

All Demon-blooded have the Merit Unseen Sense: God-Machine at no cost. This Merit does not allow them to detect demons, but it

does allow them to sense and see through Infrastructure, recognize Linchpins (though they don't always know what they've found when they see one), and sense angelic Numina (Wits + Composure – angel's Rank to sense a Numen within half a mile).

CHARACTER CREATION

Creating a demon-blooded character progresses in much the same way as creating a mortal character (described in the **World of Darkness Rulebook** or the **God-Machine Chronicle Rules Revisions**), which a few changes.

Steps One through Four, Seven, and Eight remain unchanged.

STEP FIVE: APPLY DEMON-BLOODED TEMPLATE TYPE

Choose Offspring, Latent, or Fractal. All demon-blood characters have the following traits:

- Compromise
- Integrity

Offspring: The children of a demon and a human, or, rarely, other demon-blooded. These characters have the following traits:

- Stigmata (begin play with a single permanent brand)
- Unseen Sense – God-Machine
- Embed: Choose one Embed, receive one more from the Storyteller (the first Key).
- Noted Condition (p. 35)

Latent: The children of Offspring, Latents begin play with no other traits than the ones listed above. If, during play, a Latent character experiences an event that would cause a normal human to become stigmatic, the character becomes an Offspring instead. She immediately develops a permanent brand, Unseen Sense – God-Machine, an Embed, the Noted Condition, and may use Experiences to purchase Merits that are available to Offspring characters (at the Storyteller's discretion, the player may shift existing Merit dots under the Sanctity of Merits rule).

Fractals: The rare children of two demons, Fractals are more powerful than other demon-bloods, but they are also considerably more visible. Fractals have the following traits in addition to those common to all demon-blooded:

- Stigmata (begin play with a single permanent brand)
- Unseen Sense – God-Machine
- Embed: Choose one Embed, receive two more from the Storyteller (the first and second Keys).
- Catalogued Condition (p. 35)
- First Interlock (provided by the Storyteller)

STEP SIX: MERITS

Demon-blooded characters have access to Supernatural Merits (pp. 298-302 of **Demon: The Descent**), at the Storyteller's discretion. In addition, players can spend Merit dots on demon-blooded Merits. These are summarized beginning on p. 37.

THE DEMON-BLOODED CIPHER

Demons are, for the most part, unaware of the God-Machine's plans or intentions toward demon-blooded. The Unchained usually assume that, since the God-Machine wants them dead or recycled, It either doesn't care about demon-blooded or wants them exterminated as well. Demons trade rumors about hordes of hunter-angels descending to kill innocent Fractal children, or Destroyers sent to make pregnant demons miscarry. While this kind of thing might happen on occasion, it's not at all consistent or common. Indeed, the God-Machine has important and very specific plans for the children of demons.

Note: Before proceeding, the next section delves into some "behind the scenes" material for **Demon**, discussing why things are the way they are and how the God-Machine functions. The player should consider whether reading this will undermine her enjoyment of a **Demon** chronicle — some players like to know the background and underlying assumptions of a game, while others prefer to be in the dark and let the unknown actually surprise them. Either is fine, but the reader has been warned.

Likewise, the Storyteller is encouraged to make of this section whatever she wishes. If the demon-blooded Cipher is useful and fun for your troupe, include it. If the assertions made here about the God-Machine and its plans for demons and their demon-blooded sound like they line up with your chronicle, use them. If not, change or ignore whatever you like. With all of that said....

The demon-blooded Cipher differs from the Unchained Cipher in a number of important ways. Demons argue about what their Cipher really is — it seems to stem at least in part from the God-Machine, so is pursuing the Cipher safe? Completing the Cipher leads to a poignant, if puzzling, truth about the Descent, though, and why would the God-Machine provide that? A going theory is that the Cipher is a kind of melding of a demon's catalyst (the reason for the Fall) and the God-Machine's original purpose for the demon. As such, every demon's Cipher is unique and mysterious. The demon must choose to pursue the Cipher. It is perfectly possible for a demon never to spend a moment's thought on it, and to live and die without ever completing a single Interlock.

A demon-blooded Cipher, though, happens without conscious effort on the part of the demon-blooded character. The character progresses through the Cipher without necessarily noticing anything, without pushing herself to

unlock new Embeds or otherwise engage her demonic heritage. The character needs only draw the God-Machine's notice, and then the Cipher begins.

CIPHER CONDITIONS

As indicated on p. 30, a demon-blooded character is vulnerable to compromise just as demons are, and under similar conditions. True, demon-blooded do not assume demonic form and they have no Covers, so they don't need to worry about acting "out of character." They can use Embeds, however, and some can activate and use Infrastructure; these things can cause compromise. When a demon-blood is compromised, she doesn't risk immediate attention from angels. Instead, the God-Machine collects data on her, moving slowly to the point that it can activate and use her for its most sensitive and complex machinations.

The four Cipher Conditions are: Noted, Catalogued, Examined, Activated. They always progress in order; a demon-blooded cannot jump straight from Noted to Examined. Demon-blooded characters begin play at different stages in the Cipher. Latents start with no Cipher Condition, Offspring start out Noted, and Fractals start out Catalogued.

NOTED

The God-Machine knows that the character exists and is demon-blooded. The character gains an Embed; this Embed is the first Key in the character's Cipher. The Storyteller chooses this Embed. Rolls to avoid compromise suffer a -1 modifier.

Beat: n/a

Resolution: The character either progresses to Catalogued or successfully backtraces and loses this Condition.

CATALOGUED

The God-Machine knows the character's name, vital statistics, and pays enough attention to keep rough tabs on her. If the character dies, the God-Machine may dispatch an angel to investigate the circumstances. The character gains another Embed (the second Key) and an Interlock. Rolls to avoid compromise suffer a -1 modifier.

Beat: n/a

Resolution: The character progresses to Examined or successfully backtraces to Noted.

EXAMINED

The God-Machine pays attention to the character's activities and whereabouts. If the character is in danger, the God-Machine may send an angel to assist. The character gains another Embed (the third Key) and a second Interlock.

Rolls to avoid compromise suffer a -2 modifier. In addition, the heightened scrutiny makes the character dangerous for demons to be around. If a demon suffers a compromise within sight of the demon-blooded character, the demon's player takes a -1 modifier on the compromise roll.

Beat: n/a

Resolution: The character progresses to Activated or successfully backtraces to Catalogued.

ACTIVATED (PERSISTENT)

The God-Machine completes the character's Cipher and puts its plans for the character into action. The character gains an Embed (fourth Key) and a third Interlock. In addition, the God-Machine can nudge the character in minor ways. Once per chapter, the Storyteller can take one action with the character, independent of the player. This can be in a high-stress situation, but is just as likely to be seemingly innocuous — the character switches on a light, leaves keys in a car, makes a phone call, or in some other way interacts with his environment. The action always winds up playing into the God-Machine's wider plans, however.

The penalty for a demon's compromise roll increases to -2, as well.

Beat: The Storyteller takes control of the character for an action.

Resolution: The character dies or the God-Machine chooses to release the character. It is not possible to backtrace out of being Activated.

KEYS AND INTERLOCKS

While demon-blooded characters can learn any Embed, certain Embeds never appear in their Ciphers. These include Interference and Voice of the Machine, as well as any other Embeds published in other sources that enable manipulation of the God-Machine's apparatus on a direct level.

A demon-blooded's Interlocks can resemble the Interlocks that demons uncover: combinations of two Embeds. Unlike a demon's Interlocks, though, a demon-blood's Interlocks almost never involve the expenditure of Aether (since these characters can't usually hold or spend it). If a demon-blooded character *can* maintain an Aether pool, the Storyteller might consider an Interlock that requires a point of Aether to use.

In addition, sometimes instead of combining Embeds for a new effect, the God-Machine grants the demon-blood access or privilege against the day when she becomes Activated. Instead of a power, the Storyteller can grant the player one of the following Merits (up to five dots): Allies, Alternate Identity, Contacts, Fame, Mentor, Mystery Cult Initiation, Resources, Retainer, Safe Place, Staff, Status or True Friend. Unlike other Interlocks, though, such Merits disappear if the character backtraces the Condition that led to them (see below).

BACKTRACING

A “backtrace,” in programming terms, is used in debugging to show which functions are active. In **Demon** context, backtracing allows a demon-blooded character to determine how much the God-Machine knows about her and alter that data, so that the God-Machine purges some of its internal “records” and loses track of her. In game terms, it allows a player to resolve a Cipher Condition and regain the previous one, rather than gaining the next one. Activated characters cannot backtrace back to Examined.

Backtracing requires the character know that the God-Machine exists (not all demon-blooded do), and access Infrastructure. The demon-blood doesn’t necessarily need to have Infrastructure Proficiency (p. 30), but backtracing without it is more difficult.

The character finds a way to interact with the Infrastructure. If the Infrastructure includes computers, this is fairly simple – she just has to sit down at a terminal and start typing. If the Infrastructure is a horse ranch, she might start brushing and grooming a horse. If it is a recycling plant, she might gather and sort materials. Whatever the case, once she has taken part in the Infrastructure, she meditates on the background equations of the universe in much the same way she would if attempting to use an Embed. She concentrates on erasing her own data from that equation. If she is successful, the God-Machine loses track of her. Of course, it’s easier if she has a new variable to include in the equation.

Successfully backtracing does not affect the character’s Keys. If the demon-blood gains a Condition, backtraces and loses it, and then regains it, her Cipher doesn’t change (that is, she doesn’t gain a new Key). Interlocks likewise remain even if the character backtraces, unless the character gained a Merit for an Interlock. In that case, the Merit vanishes with the Condition, and the Sanctity of Merits (p. 287 of **Demon: The Descent**) does not apply.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Occult

Action: Extended (one roll equals 10 minutes, successes vary by Condition)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The action fails, and the player must immediately roll to avoid the God-Machine’s notice (p. 30).

Failure: The player must either quit the attempt or take a Condition to continue (as described on p. 313 of **Demon: The Descent**).

Success: The player accumulates successes toward the goal. To successfully backtrace, the player must accumulate 4 successes for Noted, 8 for Catalogued, and 12 for Examined. Once the player accumulates the proper number of successes, the Condition is resolved. The character can attempt to backtrace another Condition, but doing so is dangerous (see Modifiers).

Exceptional Success: The player can choose one of the options for exceptional success listed on p. 313 of **Demon**, or she

can attempt to backtrace another Condition in the same attempt. That is, if the character is attempting to backtrace Catalogued and the player rolls an exceptional success, the character can attempt to resolve Catalogued, shift to Noted, and resolve Noted in the same attempt. This adds the number of successes required to the target (and the maximum number of rolls does not change), but it avoids the penalty for a second attempt at the same Infrastructure.

Example: Lucius is attempting to backtrace and lose the Examined Condition. His player needs 12 successes in total to do so. Lucius’ unmodified Manipulation + Occult pool is 7, so the player can only make seven rolls in total. On the second roll, the player rolls a spectacular six successes. That means that the player could choose to try and resolve the Catalogued Condition after he reaches the target for Examined, which means that the extended action would require 20 successes altogether. Since Lucius only has five more rolls, he opts not to do so. Instead he subtracts his Occult rating (3) from the total number of successes he needs.

MODIFIERS

If the demon-blooded character wishes, she can replace her “equation” with someone else’s. Using a normal human being for this doesn’t have any benefit; the God-Machine simply ignores the new person (usually, although sometimes the God-Machine entangles this unfortunate person in its plots and he winds up stigmatic...or dead). If the demon-blooded uses another demon-blood or a stigmatic, this treachery grants a +2 modifier on the backtracing. If the character uses a supernatural being other than a demon, the modifier is +3. If the character uses a demon, the modifier is +4. Note, however, that demons are more likely to be able to figure out who sold them out and how, not to mention the fact that the Unchained a demon-blood knows best are often her relatives.

If the character is making a second attempt at backtracing at the same Infrastructure, the attempt suffers a -4 modifier.

STORYTELLING AND THE CIPHER

Activated demon-blooded characters are tools of the God-Machine. Their mortality, human souls, and access to Embeds combine to make them perfect sleeper agents. They can access power and Infrastructure that the Unchained rarely even know exist.

The God-Machine sends people through time to enact its plans, driving scholars mad and putting engineers in the perfect positions to prevent the apocalypse. It grants these beings unspeakable power and access to the inner workings of the universe – but the only beings it allows to do this are Activated demon-bloods. Angels are no good, after all; they can Fall. The Unchained are out of its control, as are supernatural beings and most of humanity, even stigmatics. Only a thoroughly researched, documented, and trained (via the Cipher) demon-blood can perform these tasks reliably.

Is that, then, why the God-Machine continues to permit angels to Fall at all? Perhaps the “war” between the Unchained in their creator is nothing more than an elaborate ploy to keep demons fighting for the right to defect to humanity, to love humans and interbreed with them, thus producing the one resource that the God-Machine *cannot* create by itself – demon-bloods.

Perhaps not.

NEW MERITS

The following Merits are available to demon-blooded characters.

AMBIENT AETHER (• OR ••)

Prerequisites: Offspring or Fractal

Effect: Your character can use the Ambient Aether system (p. 28). This Merit costs one dot for Fractal characters and two dots for Offspring.

AETHER POOL (••)

Prerequisites: Fractal, Ambient Aether

Effect: Your character has an Aether pool and can hold, at maximum, five points of Aether. See p. 29 for the relevant systems.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROFICIENCY (•• OR •••)

Prerequisites: Demon-blooded

Effect: Your character enjoys the benefits of Infrastructure Proficiency (p.30). This Merit costs two dots for Fractals and three dots for Offspring and Latents.

INSTINCTIVE DEFLECTION (••)

Prerequisites: Demon-blooded

Effect: Your character hasn’t necessarily had any particular schooling in the occult truths of the world, but she knows,

somehow, how to avoid the God-Machine’s antiseptic gaze. When the player rolls to avoid the God-Machine’s notice (p. 30), the roll is Wits + Resolve.

LANGUAGE (•)

Prerequisites: Demon-blooded

The character speaks one language fluently and one additional language conversationally. Conversational speakers have difficulty understanding idiom, humor, figures of speech, dialect, and rapid conversation, but they can get by for day-to-day communication. At the Storyteller’s discretion, the player might need to roll Wits + Academics (for spoken communication) or Intelligence + Academics (for written communication) to understand or express herself in a language she speaks conversationally.

The player can purchase multiple versions of this Merit for a character.

MULTILINGUAL (• TO

Prerequisites: Demon-blooded

The character speaks a number of languages conversationally. Each dot in this Merit grants proficiency in *three* additional languages, subject to the same limitations listed under Language for conversational communication.

QUANTUM UNDERSTANDING (•••)

Prerequisites: Fractal

Effect: Your character can use Quantum Understanding to determine if a demon is lying (p. 33).

UNKNOWN (•)

Prerequisite: Offspring or Fractal

Effect: For whatever reason, the God-Machine has no knowledge of your birth or parentage. You begin play with no Cipher Conditions.

Drawback: You begin play with only one Embed and no Interlocks.



Dear Aunty June,

Mom said it was important that I try to write to you when I can. She says it'll help me feel "normal" while we're away. I'm sorry I can't tell you where we are now, or what we're doing. Mom says it's too dangerous.

Anyway, I see a thing outside my bedroom window every night. You don't know how good it feels to just write that down and see it on the page, you know? It's like, I wrote it down so it's not all in my head anymore. I tried to tell Mom about the thing, but she tells me to ignore it because it's probably not real anyway.

That's such crap.

Whatever it is, it's real and it's not going to just wait out there forever. You know Mom, sort of, half of her anyway, maybe you can get through to her? I know she's probably going to read this before she sends it, but I don't care. The thing is watching and planning and I can hear it sort of thinking like the rumble of an overtaxed hard drive.

I know I'm going to get in trouble for telling you this, but I've got to tell someone and maybe you can get through to Mom for me.

I went out last night to see if I could catch it in the act. I had a baseball bat at least, and a kitchen knife in my belt. I don't know what I thought I'd do with them.

I could see it through shadows just sort of hovering outside my window watching inside. It was shaped like a man, more or less, but its body was all liquid silver that occasionally rippled with tears where its face and chest would be. I know this sounds crazy, but it was beautiful. Like, love at first sight, struck through the heart, something out of a YA novel kind of beautiful.

Luckily, I'm immune to YA novels.

So I watched it watching me for a while, and then when I tried to get closer it turned to face me. It knew I'd been standing there the whole time and didn't seem particularly concerned. It didn't say anything, just looked at me with its weeping, solemn, liquid metal face. I told it to leave me alone. It didn't say anything, just maybe wept a little harder. Then it turned all white and vanished, like a chemical reaction in a test tube. There was even some ash on the ground. I don't think it's dead or anything, just gone.

I don't think it means to harm me? IDK. It just seems so sad. But Mom wants me to just pretend it isn't there, even though I KNOW she knows it is.

I'm going out there tonight again, I think. I'm going to get it to talk to me. Somehow.

You'll talk to Mom, right? Anyway, I miss you and my cousins. Even Uncle Jerry. Maybe I can see you all at Christmas this year.

TTFN

Rajani

chapter three: A COMMON SENSE GUIDE TO HELLSPAWN

"Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour."

-1 John 2:18

Just like there's no right way to raise an actual child, there is simply no single way to run a chronicle involving the demon-blooded. This chapter provides story hooks, roleplaying guidance for playing children and even pregnant characters. Additionally this chapter includes ready-to-use Storyteller characters for character inspiration.

CHILD'S PLAY

Chapter One covered what it's like to grow up part demon and what sorts of development the various sorts of demon-blooded experience. That chapter also touched on the idea that children, demon-blooded or not, are scientists discovering the world and performing experiments on it in order to grow and learn. While that is a simplistic discussion of a complex topic, especially when it comes to the ingrained curiosity of the demon-blooded, this concept is a good starting place and guidepost to depicting interesting children in your game.

As the Storyteller or a player, understand that the motivations that move an adult are not very much different from what motivates a child. Many of us have forgotten what drove us to do the strange things we did as children. As a result, thinking of your child character as a scientist is great shorthand for both the development and the motivations of your young character.

Have a rough idea about the stage of development your character is in. Not all children are five years old, and speaking with a lisp is pretty poor representation of all children everywhere, no matter the age. Many children are intelligent, well-spoken considering their vocabulary, thoughtful, and able to come up with solutions to problems adults around them couldn't put together. Honor how clever children can be, and demonstrate their development and limitations based on their age rather than some amorphous concept of "children are bad at...."

Jean Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development is a great starting place because he breaks down the stages of development clearly. Pick a stage of development to start from when working out a character's concept and Aspirations. For example, if you decide that you want to play a child somewhere around seven years old, and read that this is a stage Piaget refers to as an intuitive sub stage. She's apt to ask millions of questions and know that she knows many things but not necessarily how or why she knows as much as she does. This could be a strong guide for how she interacts with any powers she might develop as well as tell her player that questioning the world around her is the start of a great set of Aspirations.

Children are capable of emotional intelligence. Children are self-centered by nature. This is a survival mechanism, and a part of their normal development. They are not, however, sociopaths. Even those children with special powers don't automatically start burning people with magical magnifying glasses. Very young children possess compassion and empathy: these are also survival traits, meant to help them relate to their mothers and sense the moods of their caregivers. Children early on learn that sharing, soothing, and comforting others brings them joy as well, and repeat the behavior whenever possible.

Still, we see and hear examples of children being cruel to each other all the time. This is where the scientist and the egotist meet in kids. They must test limits, boundaries, and social interactions just as much they need to understand the physics of walking and running. They learn from their peers about social pressure and test these theories out by bullying those they can get away with bullying. Some children grow to enjoy it or use it to supplement some other thing they are lacking in their lives. Some children simply never have boundaries set for them and so the experiment gets out of hand. Remember when playing your child character that malice is rarely the starting place for such behaviors. Instead, it's a result in a social experiment gone awry by a child who hasn't learned to extend his or her natural empathy to everyone.

ACTS OF REBELLION: MAKING DEMON-BLOODED

Pregnancy and playing pregnant characters have a sordid history even in modern and otherwise forward thinking roleplaying games. It is occasionally used as a punishment, inflicted on a character to cripple them or remove them from play. Even positive portrayals of pregnancy are rife with misunderstandings and biological impossibilities that create unnecessary limitations on what the pregnant character can and can't do.

Limiting choice for a character is not often the best way to handle a situation, even a situation like pregnancy, childbirth, and parenthood. Removing a character from play or limiting their access to story before the player is ready can alienate the player as well as feed into all sorts of dull tropes about pregnant people and, by extension, women at large.

Any **Demon** chronicle should, at every turn, encourage the players by having more choices to make, not less. They may be hard choices, but limitations that prevent the choice from even coming up are counterproductive when it comes to exciting and powerful stories. As such, pregnancy in your game should be treated not as an obstacle for the character, but as a new series of challenges. If you as the Storyteller can keep that single concept in mind, you will be able to better facilitate powerful stories about the fear and exhilaration of bringing a new life into the world.

Here are a few more quick guidelines:

- Talk to all your players about this sort of storyline. The sad fact is that, in the US for example, one in nine women has experienced a miscarriage in her life. Chances are good you already know someone who has experienced trauma related to pregnancy and childbirth. For this reason, make sure everyone is on board with a pregnancy-related story taking place, as well as with how much focus the story should receive. Perhaps it can be a side story blue-booked with the player or players interested that doesn't come up much in the main game. Maybe it's a thing better left to a different mix of players. Don't be invasive; just ask how the players feel about this sort of storyline before you go down that road.
- Keep player agency in mind. Don't include pregnancy as a plot point for a character unless the player has agreed to it. Likewise, trauma to that character that might result in trauma to the fetus or the process of the pregnancy should never happen unless the player chooses that as the best option. That's not to say pregnant characters should be immune to bullets, but rather you should offer Beats or plot hooks in exchange for heightened drama with the pregnancy and let the player decide how much he wants to deal with.

GENDER AND PREGNANCY

Gender is fluid and gender expression does not always relate to reproductive capability in the real world. In the World of Darkness, even more is possible. As such, with some species (such as demons), with their otherworldly origins and the flexibility of Cover, gender should have no bearing on whether or not a character can become pregnant. Demons are rebelling against both the God-Machine and reality simply by having the audacity to reproduce at all. That act of creation is so defiant that gender is not even a concern. The only thing that should stop a male character, for example, from having a demon-blooded child is that the player doesn't want to tell that story.

Pregnant people do amazing, heroic, and terrible things all the time. History is full of examples of pregnant women living exciting and even dangerous lives while expecting. If you're in doubt, look into the stories of Mary Ann Patten, Isabella I of Castile, and Phung Thi Chinh for an idea of just how much adventure a pregnant person can get into. Pregnancy is a set of new challenges, not one insurmountable obstacle.

PREGNANCY CONDITIONS

Pregnancy does not need to be expressed mechanically for it to be successfully depicted. If players and Storytellers would like to use this optional rule, however, these Conditions inform play without making heavy demands of the players. The details of the pregnancy can be played on screen or off while using these Conditions.

FIRST TRIMESTER (PERSISTENT)

The first trimester refers to the first three months of the pregnancy. A person at this stage may not realize she's pregnant. She may experience nausea, fatigue, and flu-like symptoms. As a result of that fatigue, she suffers a -1 to Initiative and any Stamina related rolls.

Most pregnant people also report extraordinarily vivid dreams. As a result of these dreams, the character regains an additional Willpower when she can sleep for four hours or more.

Beat: When you come to the realization that you are pregnant, take a Beat. This Beat can only be earned once this trimester.

Resolution: Start of the second trimester or the end of the pregnancy.

SECOND TRIMESTER (PERSISTENT)

The second trimester is freeing. A pregnant person feels energetic and creative. The player adds one die to Stamina rolls during this trimester (though Health does not increase). She also suffers -2 to all extended action dice pools, as any given task can turn quickly to thoughts and worry over the future.

Beat: When the character first feels the baby move, or quickening, take a Beat. This Beat can only be earned once this trimester.

Resolution: Start of the third trimester or the end of the pregnancy.

THIRD TRIMESTER (PERSISTENT)

Now the pregnant person turns inwards. Her thoughts take on stillness as she prepares for coming changes to her life. She gains an additional +1 Wits and Composure rolls during this trimester. Her body has experienced some of the most dramatic change imaginable. Even her brain changes to accommodate the growth of her fetus, so that she grows more forgetful and sometimes confused. She subtracts one from Dexterity and Resolve rolls during this trimester.

Beat: When the character gives birth, in a scene or during downtime, take a Beat. This Beat can only be earned once this trimester.

Resolution: Birth or the end of the pregnancy.

SAMPLE CHARACTERS

The following characters can be used as supporting cast in your **Demon** chronicles, whether allies or antagonists. They can also serve as inspiration for player-controlled characters.

GRANNY LORELEI (LATENT)

Honey? Can you pick me up? I was jogging and I just wanted to take this new road, and I think I just saw a man murder his wife. I'm going to take a closer look. Call me back when you get this. Love you!

Background: In the 70s, Lorelei was a nurse taking care of the boys coming back from Vietnam. She's been through a lot in life, but stays mellow about it. She remembers when the Sex Pistols got sacked as well as when Elvis died. She retired early from nursing, left her husband, and now lives in an active seniors community with her long time friend and current lover Dorothy. Retirement changed Lorelei, and she realized just how much life there was still left to live. She's become a dynamo of curiosity and exploration. Suddenly, in her golden years, she's gotten a sense that there's more to the world than meets the eye. She wants to see whatever of it she can.

Description: Lorelei is in her early sixties, but that's not slowing her down. She's fit and dresses for her new active lifestyle.

To this day she maintains the same bright, almost impossibly red curls she had all her life, though they're touched with silver now. She has a tattoo on her shoulder from "that year I spent in the London Underground." When she remembers, she wears a yellow ribbon and a rainbow ribbon pin on her lapel.

Storytelling Hints: Lorelei has the curiosity of a child, the experience of a grown woman, and the smarts of a person who has gone through the highs and lows that life has to offer. She senses that there's more to the World of Darkness than is apparent and she just won't stop poking until she finds out more. She's probably on the cusp of becoming a full-blown Offspring thanks to her curiosity and meddling. She might be another character's mother, great-aunt, one-time nurse, or adoptive guardian. Whatever her relation to the characters, she's going to draw them into trouble with her persistence.

Virtue: Compassionate

Vice: Curious

Aspirations: Find the people who have been vanishing from the Senior Community Center (short).

Convince her younger relatives that the metal feathers and claws she found and lost mean something (short).

Get her ex-husband out of her life once and for all (long).

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics (Music History) 3, Crafts 3, Medicine (Emergency Services) 3, Occult (Wives Tales) 2, Science (Biology) 2

Physical Skills: Larceny 1, Stealth 1, Survival 2

Social Skills: Intimidation 2, Persuasion 2, Socialize 1, Subterfuge (Innocent) 3

Merits: Allies (Veterans) 2, Area of Expertise: Emergency Services, Contacts (Medical Community, Veterans) 2, Instinctive Deflection, Resources 3

Health: 7

Embeds: None

Willpower: 6

Integrity: 7

Size: 5

Speed: 9

Defense: 2

Initiative: 5

Armor: n/a

Stigmata: Bright, almost impossibly red hair that will not go all the way grey and cannot be dyed.

ANIYAH MBANEF (OFFSPRING)

Actually, officer, I don't have to tell you anything. And questioning me without my guardian present will not only make anything I say inadmissible, but it'll mean my parents sue the department and you personally for violating my civil rights. I can show you where it says that in your little book if you want.

Background: Aniyah hasn't had it easy, not once in eight years. Born to a demon father who lost his ring, she's moved six times in five years. Worse still, three years back Dad died investigating an Infrastructure, and she's been on her own since. The authorities told her that her Dad died from an overdose. She doesn't buy it for a second. Since his death, she's been in and out of foster homes. She's not a bad kid. She's smart and sensitive. It's just that no one can understand what she's going through because no one knows what she is, not even Aniyah. All she needs is a guiding hand, or at the very least, a lengthy explanation to turn her life around.

Description: Aniyah is eight years old, black, and indestructible. She dresses like a foster kid but keeps her braids neat and her teeth clean no matter where she's living. She smiles and knows how to appear happy in spite of her situation. Joy is a kind of rebellion.

Storytelling Hints: Aniyah's smart for a girl her age and reads anything she can get her hands on. She's learned how to work the system from the older kids. She refuses to be its victim or be beaten down by it. If she ever learns about the God-Machine, she'll just see it as another system to resist and conquer. If she makes it to adulthood, she'll be a force to reckon with. She may be a distant relative of the other characters or a ward put under their care, or she may simply sneak into their hideout one night trying to escape her foster home.

Virtue: Optimistic

Vice: Hard Headed

Aspirations: Get into a private school (short).

Get out of the foster care system (short).

Find out what really happened to Dad (long).

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics 1, Computer (Internet) 2, Investigation 1, Politics (Working the System) 3

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 1, Larceny 1, Stealth 1

Social Skills: Empathy (Predicting Anger) 3, Persuasion 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge (Defying Authority) 4

Merits: Ambient Aether 1, Infrastructure Proficiency 3, Resources 1, Small-Framed, Unknown

Health: 7

Embeds: Cool Heads Prevail (Key,) Social Dynamics

Willpower: 7

Integrity: 7

Size: 4

Speed: 7

Defense: 3

Initiative: 5

Armor: n/a

Stigmata: Aniyah has never noticed it, but her eyes are reflective at night, more like a road marker than a cat's eyes.

JINHUN LEE (OFFSPRING)

I've got hands, eyes, lips, words. They're all human things. But they're all I need to build you Heaven or drown you in a river of burning blood.

Background: Jinhun's mother was a nun. She spent most of his childhood reminding him that he was the result of her unholy seduction at the hands of a demon. He didn't believe her, not really, until he turned 14 and met his dad. They talked, dad explained a few things, then they got in a fistfight and Dad told Jinhun he had to split town because South Korea wasn't big enough for the both of them.

Jinhun left and wandered for a while until he wound up in Hong Kong hustling to make ends meet. He saw the workings of the God-Machine, the meddling of demons, and the victimization of humans. He decided there and then that he wasn't going to be a victim. That's around when he started dancing professionally at a club. His undeniable, raw sexuality earned him a reputation and a lot of money. He's got a following now, small but growing, and a few people promising to put him into movies. It'll do, but it isn't exactly what he wants out of life. What he wants is power over people, like his father had, so that no one can deny him ever again. To get that he's tried everything from the occult to the mundane, but he's heard rumors, recently, about a street drug, a crazy metaphysical thing that might give him the gifts of the Hellbound — and he wants a taste.

Description: Jinhun is raw sex walking. Eyes at once full of confidence and sincerity, lips soft and expressive. He dresses fashionably but flamboyantly. He uses makeup with little concern about gender roles and looks perfect doing it. His masculinity is undeniable, if challenging at times. He's often seen with beautiful women on his arm when out on the town, or having secretive private dinners with wealthy foreign men.

Storytelling Hints: Jinhun is living as a demon as best as he understands it, manipulating sycophants and making deals that benefit no one but himself. He's not exactly battling the God-Machine or seeking Hell, but otherwise he's surrounding himself with all sorts of occult trappings. He's not just a pretty face, though, he's a tightly corked bottle full of explosive daddy-issues just waiting to blow in the wrong place at the wrong

A COMMON SENSE GUIDE TO HELLSPAWN

time. He may be one of the character's cousins, brother, or lover. He may also act as a sort of mentor to younger Offspring who haven't discovered much about what they are. He's not an expert, but he thinks he is.

Virtue: Confident

Vice: Suspicious

Aspirations: Get his hands on a street drug that'll bring him closer to Hell (short).

Leverage his dancing into an action movie role (short).

Beat his dad until he's nothing but quantum particles and shame (long).

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Crafts 1, Occult (Cultists) 3

Physical Skills: Athletics (Dance) 4, Larceny 1, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Expression 3, Persuasion (Turn On) 2, Socialize 2, Streetwise (Sex Work) 2, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Aether Pool, Area of Expertise: Dance, Contacts 1 (Sex Workers), Double-Jointed, Resources 2, Striking Looks 2, Interdisciplinary Specialty (Dance) 1

Health: 7

Embeds: Knockout Punch, Shift Consequences (Key)

Willpower: 4

Integrity: 7

Size: 5

Speed: 11

Defense: 6

Initiative: 6

Armor: Bike Leather, 1/0

Stigmata: When he cries, his tears are hot liquid candle wax, though they don't burn him when they fall.

OFELIA MADALENO (FRACTAL)

Shut up. I gotta line up my shot.

Background: Her mom and dad did everything they could to protect her. It wasn't ever easy and sometimes they made mistakes, but they did love her and tried to keep her safe. Still, a life in hiding, avoiding anything that might expose her as a Fractal or them as demons meant living stifled by fear and frustration.

Imagine being a child in Mexico, raised to hate angels. That's Ofelia.

When she was close to 16, they lost Dad to an angel. It ripped him to pieces in front of her. She escaped, but only because he sacrificed himself. A year later, she lost track of her mother. She eventually heard through the grapevine that Mom wasn't dead. Mom had been absorbed and recycled back into the Machine.

She could have given up then. She almost lost herself to despair when she heard. Instead, she went the other way. Taking up with mercenaries, she learned everything she could about fighting back. She considers herself a one-woman-insurrection and wants nothing less than to be an angel hunter.

Description: Ofelia is no nonsense and all business. If she's on the trail of the Machine's servants, she'll dress the part. Dress and heels, fatigues and flak jacket, it doesn't matter to her. She is of Mexican descent and in her mid-20s. She is fit and athletic, but trains for speed rather than pure muscle.

Storytelling Hints: She doesn't bother lying unless she needs to in order to avoid the Machine. The truth works well to alienate and keep other people at bay. She's always planning the next job; if she were a demon, she'd make an excellent Saboteur. The demons in town know about her but aren't sure how to handle her, so they steer clear. That suits her fine, since on some level she believes all demons are potentially angels waiting to happen. She would make a good mentor character for other demon-blooded, a powerful but dangerous ally for demons, or a strange choice in guardian for a younger orphaned character.

Virtue: Righteous

Vice: Arrogant

Aspirations: Confirm her mother's betrayal (short).

Obtain a military quality sniper rifle (short).

Kill an angel (long).

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Crafts (Traps) 3, Investigation 3, Science 1

Physical Skills: Athletics (Climbing) 3, Firearms (Rifle) 4, Larceny 1, Stealth 3, Survival 2

Social Skills: Empathy 1, Intimidation 3, Subterfuge 1

Merits: Area of Expertise: Rifle 1, Fast Reflexes 1, Infrastructure Proficiency 2, Marksmanship 4, Trained Observer 3, Quantum Understanding

Embeds: Merciless Gunman (First Key), Strike First, Unperson (Second Key)

Interlock: Alternate Identity (varies; Ofelia has a variety of false IDs and passports, which she obtains through a connection in Juarez).

Health: 8

Willpower: 6

Integrity: 7**Size:** 5**Speed:** 11**Defense:** 6**Initiative:** 8**Armor:** Tactical Vest 2/3

Stigmata: Ofelia always smells strongly of ozone, as if lightning had struck where she's standing just moments before.

ASSIMILATED OFFSPRING

Demons have it easy. The God-Machine's angels might be hunting them, but at least they have the option of laying low and pretending to be ordinary humans. Offspring and Fractals don't. All of them have glitches that announce their connection to the God-Machine to anyone who knows what to look for. Once they're found out, they don't have the option of changing Covers or going loud and running like Hell until whatever is pursuing them gives up the chase. The predators who hunt the demon-blooded might not be as relentless as angels, but they are many times more numerous. Even a Fractal is ill-equipped to fend them off forever.

For this reason, demon-blooded tend to find each other, whether because they recognized each other's marks and decided to band together or because they were kidnapped by the same scientist obsessed with the God-Machine's arcane physics. The demon-blooded band together either because they know they can't take on the World of Darkness by themselves, or because they have no choices but conspiracy or slavery.

LITTLE LEAGUE

Art Dawkins grew up surrounded by members of Brooklyn's gangs and organized crime syndicates, but he never quite had the connections (or the ruthlessness) to make it big. For the last twenty years Art has led teenagers and children into lives of crime, teaching them skills from shoplifting and purse snatching to burglary and confidence games. He encourages them to exploit the tendency of adults to underestimate and trust children. When they grow too old for the innocent kid act, many of Art's pupils move deeper into the city's criminal underworld. Because Art's gang has become a feeder for organized crime, syndicate bosses have taken to calling it the Little League. If Art resents this little joke, he has never let it show. He takes the moniker with a grin, all too aware of what happens to little people who rock the boat.

Five years ago, Art Dawkins recruited his first orphaned Offspring. At first, he chalked up her ability to find any hidden object as luck, but eventually he realized that she was something special — something with the potential to send him

to the Big Leagues. He sent his Little Leaguers out to find more children with strange markings or seemingly impossible luck. Those he couldn't lure in with promises of money, he abducted. Offspring were so rare that he couldn't afford to take no for an answer. At first he resorted to threats and physical abuse to prevent his "star players" from leaving his growing dream team, but now he uses drug addiction as a leash. In spite of these precautions, the Little League has grown beyond Art's ability to control it. He has recently made contact with a potential partner he hopes will be able to help him maintain order in the ranks, but Art refuses to say anything about who (or what) that partner might be.

HELL'S FOURTH LEGION

Under its original name, Hell's Fourth Legion was a specialized enforcement arm of the KGB in the Communist Bloc, composed entirely of Offspring and the most powerful human psychics the Soviet Union could find. While they occasionally frustrated enemy counter-intelligence operations, their main purpose was to identify and eliminate supernatural beings who attempted to subvert or sabotage the USSR's interests in Eastern Europe. Their involvement in the Red Midnight Operation in East Berlin earned them a reputation among the Unchained for efficiency and ruthlessness. For the rest of the Cold War, mere rumor that the Fourth Legion was coming to a city was enough to drive Inquisitors into hiding and urge Agencies to exercise greater discretion (or even to suspend their operations entirely).

The Legion lost much of its funding during the 1980s as the Soviet Union's economy crumbled. It was officially disbanded shortly after the fall of the USSR. In reality, Hell's Fourth Legion became a mercenary company selling its services to anyone who could afford to pay them. They have seen considerable success, considering the risky nature of their business. Over the past few decades they have opened chapters on every inhabited continent. The Legion's current commander is a Fractal; they primarily recruit Offspring, but they have a few specialists to fill unusual niches. Hell's Fourth Legion specializes in covert operations against targets with occult connections, but they'll engage in search-and-destroy missions or rescue jobs if the money is right.

SAINt JEROME'S ACADEMY

When the hunter angels caught up with the other members of his ring, Mr. Helix adopted their two orphaned children — Offspring who had known him their whole lives. Cautious even for one of the Unchained, Mr. Helix carefully crafted a new Cover as Father Daniel, the headmaster of the small orphanage and boarding school he christened Saint Jerome's Academy. He hired one assistant teacher — a fellow demon — and built up a student body of twenty-five ordinary children and six orphans. As Mr. Helix feared, though, local Agents eventually learned the truth about Saint Jerome's. To his surprise, the Agency didn't attempt to take control over

A COMMON SENSE GUIDE TO HELLSPAWN

the school. Instead, they asked Mr. Helix to take in several other Offspring who had been abandoned or orphaned by their Unchained parents. He accepted, and the Academy has grown and flourished in the decades since.

The Agency bankrolls the academy's operation through a network of charities and philanthropists that only exist on paper. This allows Saint Jerome's to focus exclusively on demon-born children. The academy's curriculum includes classes intended to help demon-blooded master as much of the God-Machine's arcane physics as the demons themselves understand. In return, the Agency uses the existence of the academy as a recruiting tool. Its Agents can send their children to Saint Jerome's as a benefit of membership. This simplifies many things for Unchained parents — providing a good education to their children at a school that understands their heritage and can teach them skills they couldn't learn anywhere else. Many of the academy's students eventually join the Agency, but they do so willingly and with knowledge of the risks.

Mr. Helix stepped down as headmaster at the end of the last term. The demon's Father Daniel persona has grown old in his service to the Unchained community, and Mr. Helix does not want to draw unnecessary outside attention to the school. In truth, the demon longs for something new after three decades spent as an educator. The Descent calls to him, and he has gone to answer it.

Mr. Vicars, a high-ranking member of the Agency, has taken over as Saint Jerome's new headmaster. He secretly holds the strange and controversial view that demon-blooded are the key to defeating the God-Machine and achieving Hell. Mr. Vicars is particularly obsessed with Fractals and the children of Fractals, to whom he believes a messiah will be born. This would be troubling enough, but the headmaster also intends to take the academy in a more militaristic direction. Rather than giving students a realistic understanding of the world of the Unchained, Mr. Vicars believes he has a mandate to indoctrinate the demon-blooded of his academy so that they feel they have no real choice but to join the Agency. Many of Saint Jerome's alumni and most of its teachers will not like these changes, but Mr. Vicars is a dangerous enemy for an Offspring to make.

PROJECT 4X

Billionaire Larry Kirlian founded this organization several years ago to study paranormal phenomena. Project 4X's field agents investigate reports of everything from cryptids and fairies to ghosts and people possessed by demons. In some cases they merely collect data on non-human entities (NHEs), but they usually take any opportunity they have to bring back live specimens. If they encounter a hostile NHE, these occult investigators take steps to neutralize the threat — violently, if necessary. Their primary objectives, however, are investigation and specimen collection.

The scientists in Project 4X's research labs examine each subject brought to them by the field investigators. They have already captured hundreds of NHEs, which they hold prisoner in isolation cells, and their knowledge of the supernatural grows daily. This is especially impressive considering the organization is still in its infancy. Some Unchained suspect something else is at work here — especially given that Project 4X learned about the existence of demons so soon after its creation.

Their suspicions are well-founded. Project 4X is a front for several of the God-Machine's hunter angels. The organization actively recruits stigmatics and seems especially interested in adding Offspring and Fractals to its investigative arm. Many of the demon-blooded that work for Project 4X are orphans or activated Latents, but a handful are runaway Offspring or Fractals.

The organization prizes investigators who have a deep and lasting hatred of the Unchained. Some were victims of abuse. Others lost friends or family members because of a demon's loyalty to an Agency or Agenda. Whatever the cause of their vendetta, the God-Machine directs that hatred against any demons Project 4X's field investigators identify. When the hunter angels ride out to bring down a compromised demon, these Fractals and Offspring act as their packs of barking hounds. In some cases, the demon-blooded are given leave to lead these hunting parties, but this privilege is seldom extended except to those investigators who have proven their loyalty by bringing down their own demon parents.

LIBERATORS

While some Offspring and Fractals enjoy reasonably ordinary upbringings and may even be happy as adults, many of them fall prey to abusers who wish to exploit the demon-blooded's abilities. These unfortunates often have little choice but to smuggle drugs using In My Pocket or encode advertisements for illicit services in ordinary places using Special Message. Perhaps their captors bind them with threats of physical harm or deprivation, or maybe the bonds are forged of blackmail or threats against those the Offspring care about. In some cases, debt or drug addiction act as shackles, while in others it is the misguided love of the demon-blooded for the one abusing her. Young demon-blooded are especially vulnerable to abuse, but adults are not immune to it, either.

The Liberators are a network of demon-blooded who help these exploited Offspring and Fractals and deliver justice to their captors. Most Liberators were once victims of exploitation, and many of those they rescue join the network both to bring others out of captivity and for the mutual protection the Liberators provide one another. In many ways the network behaves like a large Free Agency — collecting and passing along information about worrisome situations and threats too large for the demon-blooded to eliminate. The Liberators can and do punish abusive demons — sometimes

by blowing their Covers and letting the God-Machine sort out the rest – but if faced with a veritable army of cultists that have rounded up a few Offspring, the Liberators are more likely to extract the victims if possible and warn the network to prevent further abductions.

GRiffin-BLACKBURN FAMILY FIRM

Mr. Blackburn and Ms. Griffin carved out a cheerful little Hell for themselves in a mid-sized city and settled down to raise a family. To support their lifestyle and maintain their Covers, the couple built a small family law firm specializing in everything from estate planning to divorces. They also offered some of their clients special services in the form of pacts, which the firm sold to Agencies elsewhere in the state. Once their Fractal children were old enough, the couple hired them to work for the firm in a variety of capacities – as stock brokers, real estate agents, and legal secretaries. When the children married, their spouses joined the firm too. It seemed the Offspring grandchildren would soon do the same, and Griffin and Blackburn looked forward to expanding the firm to encompass the next generation.

All is not well in the family, however. The eldest son has designs on the firm, and he knows that as long as his parents are in town it will never truly be his to run. A son-in-law has been using the firm's resources to run a Ponzi scheme, and those chickens will soon come home to roost. The youngest daughter has grown tired of the quiet life and the arguments with her thick-witted, if loyal, husband, and she already has a bag packed for when she leaves both. The second-eldest granddaughter has run up huge gambling debts, one of the teenage girls has let slip the family secret to her boyfriend (who has his own supernatural connections), and the youngest granddaughter is being watched by an organization that abducts Offspring for one of the Deva Corporation's divisions. Two grandsons have fallen in with dangerous crowds, and a third uses his powers far too carelessly in public. It is no longer a question of whether the firm will explode into disaster, but when and from which direction the problems will come.

STORY HOOKS STANDARDIZED TESTS

The characters discover that the standardized test administered at their school is connected to the God-Machine. All the students have become unwitting computer switches in a piece of Command and Control Infrastructure.

Background: Despite its limited understanding of humans, the God-Machine can predict statistically likely outcomes of projects involving humans. Humanity is not a static species, however, so the God-Machine must occasionally review its understanding of them and recalibrate itself to take any changes into consideration.

In this case, the calibration Infrastructure involves a battery of standardized tests given to children at designated schools.

Characters: The characters are students at the same grade school. They may all be the same age, or they might come from different grades.

Scenes: The principal announces that the characters' school has been included in the pilot program for a new kind of standardized test. These tests will determine the school's budget and will also help teachers decide which students are not yet ready for the next grade level. The tests will last for a week at the end of the quarter. Teachers will teach a special curriculum to help prepare students.

While many students take this announcement in stride, some worry that they'll be held back if they don't pass the test. Then the new curriculum begins. While mostly normal for a primary school, some of the lessons are oddly specific (an entire week spent teaching 3rd graders about the Prussian War, for example) or contain factually incorrect information (such as 5th graders being taught that the world is a cube). The characters can sense that all the textbooks and study aids used to teach the special curriculum have a connection to Infrastructure.

Most of the teachers keep their opinions about the curriculum and tests hidden from their students, but some let slip their frustration and dismay. Several are abruptly fired for refusing to teach the curriculum or for being too vocal in their opposition to it. Parents raise objections to the misinformation being disseminated by the school, and many of the children get caught in the middle.

Each day of the tests, about half a dozen questions reflect the special curriculum and another half dozen don't include the correct answer among the given options. These sets of questions have the greatest resonance with the God-Machine. At the end of each day of testing, the teachers collect the tests and deliver them to the principal's office, where a representative of the school board (actually a Psychopomp angel) feeds each test into an especially archaic-looking standardized grading machine (the Infrastructure's Linchpin).

Resolution: The characters can skew the test results to render them less useful to the God-Machine – possibly organizing a silent student protest. The characters can also destroy the grading machine if they can gain access to the principal's office. The characters might call on their demon parents for help, but the outcasts can do very little to interfere with the standardized test process without risking their Covers.

FIELD TRIP

A student disappears during a field trip and the characters are the only ones who remembers he exists.

Background: A piece of Infrastructure requires the blood of a human with a rare gene. An angel has set memetic snares in several high-traffic buildings in the city to identify anyone with the necessary trait so the God-Machine's cultists can abduct her. One of the characters' classmates has the gene.

A COMMON SENSE GUIDE TO HELLSPAWN

Characters: The characters are students on a class field trip. All of them are demon-blooded, although their other classmates are not.

Scenes: Forty children go on a field trip an art museum and theater downtown. The chaperones seem afraid that a child will wander off and be left behind, so they call roll every step of the way. The Storyteller should establish constant roll calls early and ensure the players notice that the first name on the list is Simon Adams.

At the art museum, Simon Adams asks why every portrait has the same face. To his embarrassment, everyone else sees different faces, and the adults soon dismiss it. As the class moves to another gallery, a custodian with a gear tattooed on his left cheek pulls Simon aside and whispers in his ear. Simon wordlessly follows the man through a door. The teacher takes this opportunity to call roll. When she does so, Simon's name is not on her list and no one finds this at all strange, as they have all completely forgotten he exists. Only the characters remember Simon – a consequence of their Unseen Sense.

Only the characters can see the door, so if they follow Simon and the tattooed custodian the adults will not be able to follow. Moreover, everyone forgets about the characters as soon as they pass through the door just as they forgot about Simon. If the characters don't act right away, they spot the custodian outside of the museum, smoking a cigarette. If they challenge or confront him, he flees through another door like the one Simon went through (and with the same effect). The characters have two more opportunities to follow their classmate through one of the invisible doors. The mall where the class eats lunch and the theater where they go afterward both have identical doors, as well as custodians, fast food workers, salespeople, or security guards with gears tattooed on their left cheeks.

Each door leads to a small room where Simon sits in a chair, his blood slowly filling a plastic bag through a tube in his arm. Two tattooed cultists monitor his progress, arguing over how much blood their master needs. They're convinced no one will come looking for Simon, but one of them clearly doesn't want to kill the boy.

Resolution: The characters can use force, trickery, or threats to rescue Simon from the cultists. The cultists' angelic master arrives as they're making good their escape, but it leaves if any of the characters exits one of the doors.

HOMING PIGEONS

The characters must make an important delivery to a demon without giving away his identity to the servants of the God-Machine who are tailing them.

Background: A recent God-Machine project allows its angels to demon-jack a captured outcast, stealing his Cover in order to infiltrate rings so the God-Machine's hunter angels can more easily eliminate them. It has already taken down three rings this way.

Characters: The characters are friends. At least one of them should be on friendly terms with her demon parent, and all of them should be reasonably hostile toward the God-Machine.

Scenes: Mr. Locke presses a thick envelope into one of the characters' hands and begs her to deliver it to her outcast parent. He has obviously suffered significant injury. The demon warns the characters that the God-Machine's agents will be watching them, so it is very important that they not give away the outcast parent's identity. Mr. Locke promises to buy the characters some time. He flees, and a burst of Aetheric resonance hints at some major confrontation not far away.

The characters meet potential servants of the God-Machine at every turn. Some attempt to steal the envelope. Others resort to threats or abduction in an attempt to force the characters to reveal the parent's identity. Most appear keen only on watching and following.

The envelope contains forty-nine photographs of abstract paintings – each treated with a Special Message that only reveals itself to whomever places the photographs in the correct 7x7 configuration. The message includes a map to the Elimination Infrastructure the infiltrator angel uses to steal a demon's Cover and a detailed account of the angel's capabilities, limitations, and Bane.

Once the characters give the majority of their pursuers the slip, Mr. Locke approaches them again. He explains that he escaped the hunter angels and will escort the characters to wherever they intend to meet their demon parent. Although he doesn't betray any outward nervousness, the characters will likely notice some suspicious behavior. Mr. Locke is, in fact, the infiltrator angel. It intends to follow the characters to the outcast parent and begin its infiltration of his ring.

Resolution: The characters might find a clever way to deliver the envelope of photographs to the demon parent without giving him away. Its contents will allow him to identify the infiltrator angel and either destroy it or, at the very least, alert other Unchained of the danger. They might instead assemble the message intended for the outcast parent and use it to confront and defeat the infiltrator angel.

CATTLE CALL

Servants of the God-Machine round up dozens of human sacrifices. The characters must work together with their fellow prisoners to escape before their blood greases the Gears.

Background: The God-Machine is attempting to summon a specialized hunter angel that can strip away a demon's Cover with a touch. The Infrastructure required to create this output involves the ritual sacrifice of eight stigmatics on eight consecutive nights. In preparation for these sacrifices, angels and cultists have collected likely candidates, including the players' characters.

Characters: While the God-Machine's servants focus on collecting stigmatics, they also know their master can reshape humans to fit. The players' characters can be any collection

of Fractals, Offspring, and Latents who live within a hundred miles of the heart of the Infrastructure.

Scenes: The characters wake up in what appears to be a large warehouse converted into a prison. A pillar of fire stands at the center of the warehouse, casting a hellish light on the eight prison cells that surround it. This artifact of the God-Machine is impressive enough to turn all the prisoners into stigmatics. The characters share a cell with a dozen people, including the other characters.

The characters quickly become acquainted with other prisoners, as well as with the cultists that act as jailors. A Psychopomp angel acts as overseer. No one knows why they've been captured, but on the night after the second full day of imprisonment, the angel chooses eight prisoners to send into the pillar of fire, where they have just enough time to scream before they are incinerated. If the characters haven't already started planning an escape by then, other prisoners start looking for a way out in earnest.

Among the cultists is an undercover demon who has collected significant intelligence on this project. He finds a way to communicate what he knows to some of the prisoners, including at least one of the characters (the information in Background above). The outcast's information is flawed. The angel appears in the facility after the fourth night and quickly identifies both demons hiding there, but it clearly can't leave yet.

The characters get their big escape chance on the fifth night. The prisoners riot and the cultists can't seem to contain them, forcing the angels to intervene. The characters escape, but most of the other prisoners do not.

Resolution: The characters could bolt. The God-Machine expected that some potential sacrifices would escape. It still has plenty left over to complete the occult matrix. They could go for help – notify a demon ally or the local Agency of the danger and let the Unchained handle this (possibly with the characters' help). They could also choose to take down the Infrastructure themselves. The disruption of any of the remaining sacrifices will banish the Cover-destroying angel and prevent it from being summoned again. This might mean preventing the sacrifices, but it could also mean sending too many people into the pillar of fire all in one night.

PARAPSYCHOLOGY

A local university advertises a research program seeking people who claim to possess psychic or occult abilities.

Background: An occult organization is seeking Offspring and Latents to recruit into their organization, although they would leap at the opportunity to convince a Fractal to join them. They also study psychic phenomena and other supernatural beings (when given the rare opportunity to do so), although this is not the primary goal of this particular research project. The exact nature of the recruiting group is up to the Storyteller. It could be one from this chapter or another organization entirely.

Characters: The character could come from many different backgrounds. Perhaps they are a team of occult investigators who wish to determine whether this advertisement is as suspicious as it sounds. Maybe some or all of them are orphans lured by the hope of learning about the strange powers they possess.

Scenes: The characters endure a battery of preliminary tests under the watchful eye of a student research assistant. They receive a small amount of cash for their time. Those who prove to possess remarkable abilities are invited back for a second set of tests. This involves a week-long retreat, but the university will pay the subjects handsomely.

At the retreat, subjects are presented with a complex test scenario intended to pinpoint their capabilities. It has the feel of some kind of undercover mission. The researchers assure the characters that all of it is merely a realistic simulation, but it should remain unclear whether they are, in fact, performing some task for an unknown organization.

Regardless of the outcome of the mission, the characters receive the agreed-upon payment upon their return to the university. The researchers then offer them an opportunity to test an experimental drug intended to unlock psychic potential. This mixture of Aether with hallucinogenic substances allows demon-blooded to charge Embeds (see Chapter Two) even if they lack the Merit: Ambient Aether. However, it greatly reduces the amount of control the character has over the way in which the charged Embed manifests.

While the characters are filling out exit interview forms (or are tripping on the experimental drug), a dozen armed commandos break into the research facility. They will gun down multiple researchers and seize files, but they appear not to notice the characters unless confronted by them. Even then, they don't use lethal force against the test subjects, although they might cause injuries that require medical attention.

Resolution: If the characters successfully stop the commandoes' rampage, the organization backing the researchers extends the offer to join the group. If the characters stand their ground but can't stop the bloodbath, the commandoes take them into custody and present them to their superiors (whoever they might be). If the characters flee but later investigate either the commandoes or the research group, they eventually collect enough information to attract the sponsoring organization's attention, which then seeks to recruit them.

SAND IN THE GEARS

In order to investigate Infrastructure as a potential target for sabotage, the characters must infiltrate a God-Machine cult.

Background: The God-Machine has established three small cults to maintain low-profile Infrastructure concealing and protecting a major project reaching completion. The Infrastructure in each cult's church works with the others. Together they hide the main project from human eyes and bend space, making it impossible for intruders to reach the project site.

Characters: The characters have a demon ally (preferably a Saboteur) for whom they sometimes investigate suspected God-Machine activity or sabotage Infrastructure.

Scenes: The Church of Progressive Rapture is not the most subtle of cults. Its congregation has been handing out pamphlets on street corners for the last year, promising ascension to Heaven without dying. Stigmatics can sense the presence of minor Infrastructure in the cult's small storefront church, but it has not been a high priority target for the local Unchained. The cult's aggressive recruitment indicates that is probably approaching its terminal stage: The God-Machine doesn't expect to need it for much longer, and so it is willing to sacrifice some subtlety in exchange for having more hands at its disposal in the short term. The characters' outcast ally asks them to infiltrate the cult and investigate the Infrastructure in the church to gauge the threat.

Infiltration is fairly easy, and the characters have a few opportunities to examine the Infrastructure in the church (Intelligence + Occult). They quickly realize the focus of its power is not on the church but on some other target to the north, although it is impossible to determine its full purpose. Disrupting, destroying, or suborning this Infrastructure might reveal how the church fits into the God-Machine's plans.

The characters soon discover the cultists are conducting a veritable scavenger hunt for esoteric materials, which they are bringing to a warehouse several miles away from the church. For those familiar with Infrastructure, this movement of materials is the first sign that the God-Machine is preparing to form an occult matrix. If the characters investigate further, they discover that two other cults are bringing items to the same warehouse. It is increasingly clear that the project is a lot bigger than the Infrastructure in the Church of Progressive Rapture. In a few weeks, some of the cultists will transport all the materials in the warehouse to the central project site to complete work on the Infrastructure there.

Resolution: If the characters sabotage the Infrastructure in any of the three cult churches, it reveals the central project before its Infrastructure is in place — offering an opportunity to disrupt the project. The characters might instead destroy or steal the materials in the warehouse, preventing the cultists from building the Infrastructure needed to complete the central project. Finally, the characters might sneak into the main project site by hijacking or stowing away on the trucks when they leave the warehouse. From there, they can sabotage the central project directly.

REROUTED

When the demon who is supposed to take delivery of valuable parcel is unable to keep his appointment, the characters have an opportunity to intercept the package.

Background: Mr. Finch recently hired a group of humans to steal a briefcase of innocuous-looking files that are of considerable value to the Unchained. A few days before the prearranged swap, a hunter angel came calling at his Cover's home. Several other demons covet the stolen files but have been unable to learn the details of the exchange because an angel is watching Mr. Finch's house.

Characters: The characters are a team of demon-blooded con artists and thieves who might be willing to betray a demon if the price was right. At least one of them should have contacts among the Unchained, preferably with a local Agency.

Scenes: A demon approaches the characters. She claims Mr. Finch is a friend of hers and offers a substantial reward if they can retrieve the time and place where he was to receive a package. She would go there herself, but an angel is monitoring the house for outcast activity.

The characters must slip into the house in spite of the surveillance of a minor Shield and several cultists watching from neighboring houses. Once inside, they will need to find out the location and time of the swap. This might involve hacking the demon's computer, picking a coded message out of the trash and finding a way to decrypt it, or employing Embeds to gather the details. They must then sneak out of the house and give any pursuers the slip.

On their way to deliver the information, the characters encounter the representative of another demon faction offering an even better price for their information. However, he refuses to show them a penny of it until the stolen files are safely in his hands, which would leave the characters open to betrayal. The characters find themselves at the heart of a bidding war between several factions of Unchained, and the best offer involves taking delivery of the files themselves and bringing them to a dead drop.

The thieves delivering the files have clearly suffered a number of hardships. The heist was considerably more difficult than they expected, and now they want to be paid triple what their mysterious client originally gave them. This figure is only slightly smaller than what the characters have been offered for the package.

Resolution: The characters could pick a side and keep their word. They might instead manipulate events so all the factions show up in the same place, allowing the characters to slip away with the goods during the resulting chaos. They may also choose to hold the precious files hostage to squeeze more concessions out of the job, as many are signed pacts.



When an angel Falls,
she defects to the human race,
and takes on everything
that comes with that choice.

All of the joy
and heartbreak
of humanity are hers,
and that includes family.

Heirs to Hell discusses the children of the Unchained, and presents system and setting information for including these demon-blooded in your chronicles. Some demon-blooded are completely unaware of their heritage, and some are very much inheritors of their demonic parents' power. But the God-Machine has plans for all of them



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