

THE DARK EPIC

Ages ago, humankind reached a tipping point in its development when it transcended laws and limits of flesh and bone. "Human" has become simply a concept, a feeling of relatedness between beings that were unique in their vast biotechnological diversity. Some defined themselves "human" even if they had nothing in common with their ancestors: some were more machine than living beings, and others were shapen in forms that no human would ever have imagined. At last, humanity reached a sort of peace.

A peace that was going to be challenged very soon. In their race for technological perfection, their ascent to godhood was noted by breeds belonging to other dimensions, who started seeing humans as potential competitors, and started a war to eliminate them.

The war seemed endless, and was fought on multiple planes of existence. In the aftermath, the Earth and all human civilizations had complete-

ly changed, by assimilating (sometimes forcefully, sometimes willingly) traits of their enemies. Humans changed once again.

In the aftermath, a truce was established among all the warring beings. Yet, such a feeble peace is threatened by discord among each breed. Planet Earth is on the brink of becoming again a battlefield for what could be the Last Battle.

Take a side, gear up and get ready for the fight.

Just like the characters you will play, this game is a weird hybrid. Originally, it was intended as a hack of "Lasers and Feelings", originally written by John Harper of **One-Seven Designs** (You can find the original game and his other work at onesevendesigns.com. This game is licensed under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>), but then it took a way of its own by combining elements from other games, such as "Trollbabe", "Apocalypse World", the "World of Darkness" games, elements from the Cthulhu Mythos by H.P. Lovecraft, the powerful biomechanical imagery of H.R. Giger and tropes of posthumanism and transhumanism.

This handbook also comprises the character sheets needed to play.

GAME PROCEDURES

- ❧ Gather around the table.
- ❧ The youngest player is the first narrator. The player at his/her left is the first protagonist.
- ❧ The narrator creates a scene and the protagonist plays as his/her character.
- ❧ After the situation is resolved, one way or another, the scene ends.
- ❧ When the scene ends, the narrator passes the turn to his/her protagonist, who now becomes a narrator.
- ❧ When all players get together for the first time, they all create a character.

AS A PROTAGONIST

- ❧ Choose your **BREED**: Nocturnal, Shifter, Undead, Sorcerer, Cyber, Scion.
- ❧ You have two **AXES**: Vice and Power. Assign 1d10 and 1d6 to each **AXIS**. Roll the assigned dice three times and pick the highest value.
- ❧ When you do something, choose an **AXIS** and roll the die you assigned to it after having chosen one of the three sides provided by your character sheet. If you do something fostering your Vice, your Ghost side or use a Power, you must roll higher than the value assigned to that **AXIS**. If you do something fostering your Humanity, you must roll lower than the value.
- ❧ Choose a character goal: Avenge a beloved one, find your real nature, end the truce, end discord, find a way out, tra-

scend reality.

- ❧ Choose a **POISON**: a mortal liason, an uncontrollable craving, a living time-bomb, a dangerous promise, a flawed body, haunted by visions, memories of a vile past.
- ❧ Assign one of your fellow players to either NIXLink, GhostLink or Fleshlink. NIXLinked characters are those you know through uncommon means of communication, Ghostlinked characters are characters who have an affinity (or enmity) towards you, Fleshlinked characters are members of your family.
- ❧ When **something threatens you**, choose a **COMPASS** and a side and roll the die. If you're **risking**, roll one more die. If you're **geared up**, roll one more die.
- ❧ If no dice roll correctly, something went very wrong. Your narrator describes how bad things get for you.
- ❧ If 1 die rolls correctly, you barely make it. Your narrator describes how you make it, but also he/she adds some complications.
- ❧ If 2 dice roll correctly, you make it! Your narrator describes how well you do it.
- ❧ If 3 dice roll correctly, you succeed in a spectacular way. Your narrator describes how well you do it, and adds special results.
- ❧ If all dice yield exactly the number of your **AXIS**, you get a **glimpse of the future**. Ask your narrator something about what is going to happen whether you win or lose, then re-roll the dice.
- ❧ You can help someone outside your turn. If you do it, describe how: those you help get one more die to roll and can choose the highest scores.
- ❧ You can hinder someone outside your turn. If you do it, de-

scribe how: those you hinder get one more die to roll but they need to pick the lowest scores.

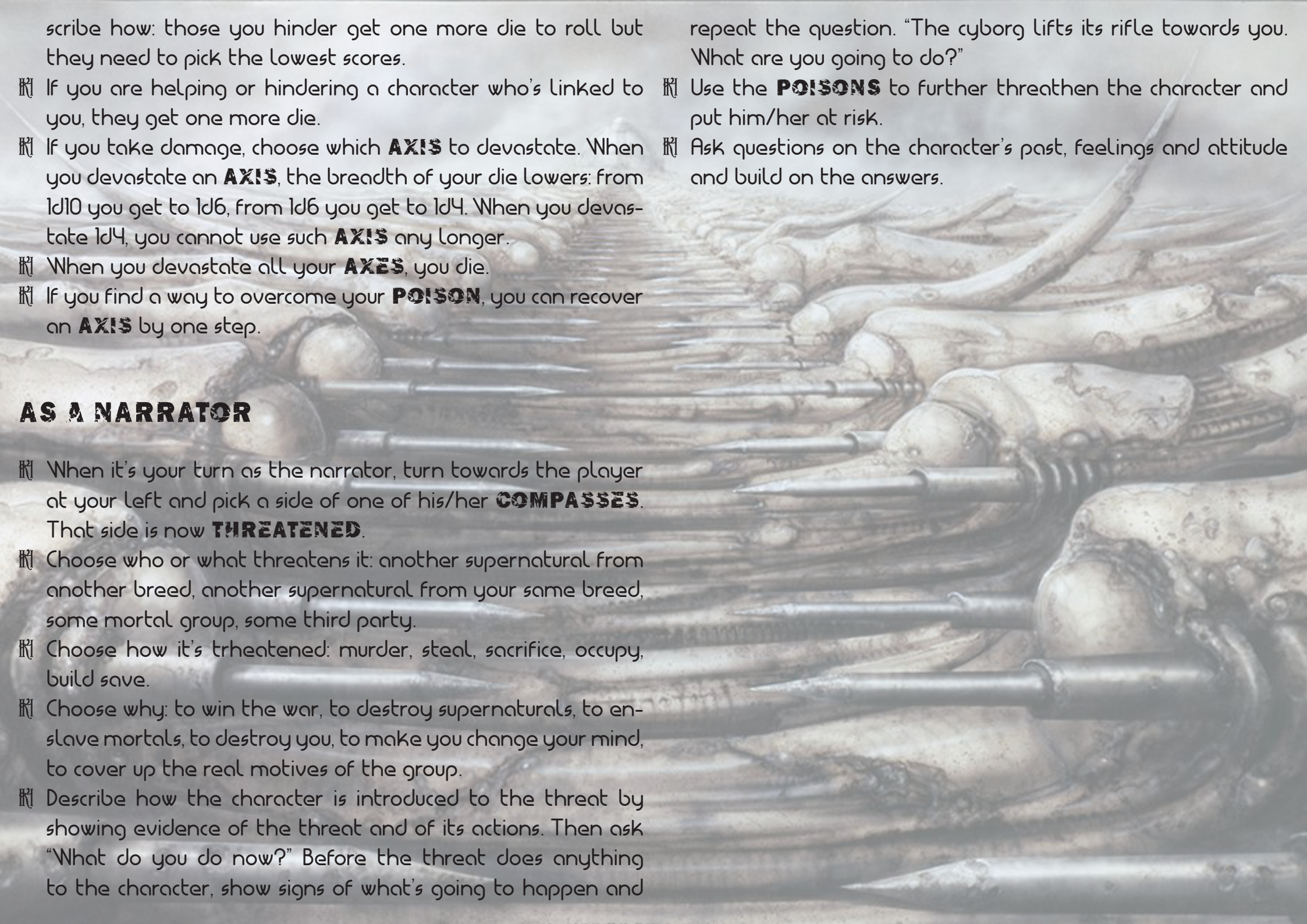
- ❧ If you are helping or hindering a character who's linked to you, they get one more die.
- ❧ If you take damage, choose which **AXIS** to devastate. When you devastate an **AXIS**, the breadth of your die lowers: from 1d10 you get to 1d6, from 1d6 you get to 1d4. When you devastate 1d4, you cannot use such **AXIS** any longer.
- ❧ When you devastate all your **AXES**, you die.
- ❧ If you find a way to overcome your **POISON**, you can recover an **AXIS** by one step.

AS A NARRATOR

- ❧ When it's your turn as the narrator, turn towards the player at your left and pick a side of one of his/her **COMPASSES**. That side is now **THREATENED**.
- ❧ Choose who or what threatens it: another supernatural from another breed, another supernatural from your same breed, some mortal group, some third party.
- ❧ Choose how it's threatened: murder, steal, sacrifice, occupy, build save.
- ❧ Choose why: to win the war, to destroy supernaturals, to enslave mortals, to destroy you, to make you change your mind, to cover up the real motives of the group.
- ❧ Describe how the character is introduced to the threat by showing evidence of the threat and of its actions. Then ask "What do you do now?" Before the threat does anything to the character, show signs of what's going to happen and

repeat the question. "The cyborg lifts its rifle towards you. What are you going to do?"

- ❧ Use the **POISONS** to further threaten the character and put him/her at risk.
- ❧ Ask questions on the character's past, feelings and attitude and build on the answers.



NOCTURNAL

Nocturnals were created as genetically-engineered troops, able to swiftly move in the darkness to attack and destroy the invasive breeds on their own grounds. Over time, they evolved specific traits and kinks, becoming a breed of their own.

NAME

POISON

VICE

Bloodlust
Hunger
Seduction

POWER

Fleshbend
Mindbend
Seed

HUMANITY

LINKS

NIXlink
Ghostlink
Fleshlink

SHIFTER

Shifters were born when an unnamed Elder God tried to cross humans and animals. In what it thought it could be a very funny experiment, it created a breed of shapeshifters who could turn from animal to human and back in the blink of an eye.

NAME

POISON

VICE

Hunger
Sex drive
Destruction

POWER

Shapeshift
Hypersense
Berserk

HUMANITY

LINKS

NIXlink
Ghostlink
Fleshlink

UNDEAD

Undeads were risen as a desperate countermeasure, in the hope to revive dead soldiers. Freed from the shackles of mortality, they still act as if they were alive.

NAME

POISON

HUMANITY

LINKS

NIXlink
Ghostlink
Fleshlink



VICE

Mindfeed
Control
Greed



POWER

Hyperstrength
Immortality
Painkilled

SORCERER

"Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic," Clarke used to say. Indeed, Sorcerers are just high-grade scientists who discovered how to tinker with reality, with the help of the Elder Gods.

NAME

POISON

HUMANITY

LINKS

NIXlink
Ghostlink
Fleshlink



VICE

Control
Greed
Hunger



POWER

Bend reality
Timesense
Shapeshift

CYBER

Cybers are beings that managed to eschew the flesh. They now live in a body reshaped by mechanics, sometimes as pure mind inside a machine.

NAME

POISON

HUMANITY

LINKS

NIXlink
Ghostlink
Fleshlink



VICE

Power
Greed
Seduction



POWER

Hyperconnect
Mind over bodies
Hypersense

SCION

Scions are the vile offspring of those humans who were forced to mate with an Elder God. Although they can easily pass for a regular human, they constantly wear a mask of some sort to hide their true, hideous features.

NAME

POISON

HUMANITY

LINKS

NIXlink
Ghostlink
Fleshlink



VICE

Power
Sex drive
Seduction



POWER

Timesense
Bend reality
Mind over bodies