

# 2400

LO-FI SCI-FI RPG • JASON TOCCI

# CODEBREAKERS



# RULES

**PLAY:** Players describe what their characters do. The GM advises when their action is impossible, requires extra steps, demands a cost, or presents a risk. Players only roll to avoid risks.

**ROLLING:** Roll a d6 *skill die* – higher with a relevant skill, or d4 if *hindered* by circumstances, injury, or carrying more than 1 bulky item. If *helped* by circumstances, roll an extra d6; if helped by an ally, they roll their skill die and share the risk. Take the highest die.

**1–2 Disaster.** Suffer the full risk. GM decides if you succeed at all. If risking death, you die.

**3–4 Setback.** A lesser consequence or partial success. If risking death, you're maimed.

**5+ Success.** The higher the roll, the better.

If success can't get you what you want (*you make the shot, but that's no soldier – it's a daemon!*), you still get useful info or set up an advantage.

**ADVANCEMENT:** After an op, increase a skill (*none* → d8 → d10 → d12) or gain a new *exploit*.

**DEFENSE:** If you have protective gear, declare it *broken* to turn a hit into a momentary *hindrance*. Broken gear is useless until repaired.

**HARM:** Just like in the real world, the worse the harm, the longer it takes to heal. If killed, make a new character to be introduced ASAP. Favor inclusion over realism. *Most codebreakers believe dying in this world means dying in the real world; others wonder if it's the only way to "escape."*

**GM:** Lead the group in setting lines not to cross in play. Fast-forward, pause, or rewind/redo for pacing and safety; invite players to do likewise. Present dilemmas you don't know how to solve. Move spotlight to give all time to shine. Test *luck* as needed (e.g., *Are there guards in there? Is the hideout breached today?*) – roll a die to check for (1–2) trouble now, (3–4) signs of trouble, or (5+) no trouble. Offer rulings to cover gaps in rules; on a break, revise unsatisfying rulings as a group.

# CHARACTERS

## ► Choose your background.

**BYSTANDER:** Ordinary person who learned The Truth by happenstance. Search online for "local job listings" and take a random, mundane job title; treat as a skill (d8) for anything remotely related, and describe a few personal items you took when you went on the run. *You're a relatively minor target; daemons won't recognize you at first.*

**INVESTIGATOR:** Detective, journalist, or conspiracy theorist who fell down a rabbit hole. Increase (d8) three skills from *Climbing, Deception, Hand-to-hand, Intimidation, Reading People, Running, Shooting, Stealth, or Tracking*. Take a go-bag with a handgun, first aid kit, flashlight, and battery-powered radio. *You're wanted; daemons recognize you, and passers-by might know you from posters.*

**PROGRAMMER:** Saw the code in the world around you. Increase (d10) skill in Hacking. Either raise it again (d12), increase *Simulation* (d8), or take an extra *exploit*. Take a bulky laptop and pay-as-you go flip phone. *You're a medium-priority target; daemons recognize you, but passers-by don't.*

## ► Choose your prior reputation.

**ACCOMPLISHED:** Apply 3 skill increases to any skills – *except Simulation*. Skills could include any of those you already have, and/or comparably narrow abilities like *Climbing, Deception, Driving, Electronics, Hand-to-hand, Intimidation, Labor, Medicine, Persuasion, Reading People, Running, Shooting, Sleight of Hand, Stealth, or Tracking*.

**ORDINARY:** Most who knew you can't believe you're a criminal. If you call on them for a favor (and don't act like a nutcase), your history *helps* (d6) convince them to be discreet. Increase 2 fairly ordinary, not-remotely-unnerving skills.

**WEIRD:** Your old acquaintances *will* call the cops on you. Increase skill in either *Intimidation, Stealth, or something weirdly specific*. Also increase *Simulation* (you always suspected...), and start with either an extra *exploit* or a sword.

# EXPLOITS

# DETAILS

► **Choose 1 exploit** – a way of manipulating the simulation to your will. To use an exploit, roll *Simulation* (d6 skill by default), at the risk of alerting daemons (1-2) nearby or (3-4) within a block.

**To enhance a risky action with an exploit** (e.g., *Shift bullets while Shooting; Move by Running on a wall*), roll *Simulation* and the other skill; use the higher die. If not already engaged by daemons, replace the roll's risk with "alerting daemons."

- ❑ **BREAK:** Strike with piercing force – shatter a tree trunk, punch through a car door, etc.
- ❑ **COPY:** Duplicate a small object. *Hinder* (d4) for something bigger than you, up to car-sized.
- ❑ **CHOWN:** An item you specify is recognized as yours, legally and in public opinion. (The previous owner might pretend otherwise.)
- ❑ **DELETE:** A small item you touch ceases to exist – a gun, a doorknob, a laptop, etc.
- ❑ **FIND:** Unerringly locate an item, either general ("a gun") or specific ("this door's key").
- ❑ **KILL:** Touch to induce cardiac arrest. No effect on daemons. Being seen using this will turn many principled codebreakers against you.
- ❑ **HIDE:** People ignore you as long as you can hold your breath. Daemons fooled only briefly.
- ❑ **MOVE:** Move with preternatural speed and grace – jump across rooftops, scale walls, etc.
- ❑ **PING:** Sense everything around you, as if by radar. *Helps* when someone sneaks up on you.
- ❑ **RESTORE:** Reveal an injury is not as bad as it looked, removing a *hindrance*.
- ❑ **SHIFT:** Momentarily exert invisible force on an object – bend a spoon, guide a bullet, etc.
- ❑ **SUDO:** Force an object to perform or cease its function – stall an engine, unlock a door, etc.
- ❑ **SUSPEND:** Gently pause someone a short while, as if entranced. No effect on daemons.

► **Choose a handle** rolled on or picked from this list, or make one up. Note pronouns.

1	Alias	6	Finder	11	Lossy	16	Salt
2	Beta	7	Gain	12	Meta	17	Trojan
3	Cable	8	Hazard	13	Nonce	18	Vuln
4	Dox	9	Image	14	Phish	19	Worm
5	Enter	10	JPEG	15	Query	20	O-day

► **Choose a link to another codebreaker** – either another player's character, or someone from another cell who might do, or ask for, a favor.

- 1 Your exploits unexpectedly activated at the same time, same place
- 2 One of you used to provide illegal goods or software to the other before going on the run
- 3 Kept bumping into each other "by chance," as if the simulation brought you together
- 4 Friend or colleague who discovered The Truth of the simulation with you
- 5 Escaped interrogation rooms at the same time, daemons hot in pursuit
- 6 Accidentally got you tangled up in one of their ops, leading to you learning The Truth
- 7 One turned on fellow law officers to help the other when it was clear something was weird
- 8 Intercepted you and provided a hiding place when they spotted you on the run
- 9 You're twins – or copies? – and each sensed when the other discovered The Truth
- 10 Offered cryptic invitations to learn The Truth – they "had a feeling you should know"

► **Choose a feature for your hideout.**

- 1 *Alarm*: your pager goes off if it's breached
- 2 *Armory*: a stock of guns and armored vests
- 3 *Backdoor*: secret exit, hidden on both sides
- 4 *Fallback*: another hideout elsewhere
- 5 *Guard*: a dedicated ally watches over it
- 6 *Meds*: enough supply to stock a small clinic
- 7 *Mobility*: it's in a van, bus, or trailer
- 8 *Surveillance*: see trouble coming from afar
- 9 *Traps*: rigged to blow on unauthorized entry
- 10 *Workshop*: engineering tools and materials

**REALITY IS A LIE.** It may look like late 20th century Earth, but you glimpsed The Truth: It's a simulation. Virtual reality. Code. And code can be broken. So you did – and all hell broke loose.

Now you're on the run, forced to work in secret with other isolated cells of codebreakers to find a way forward – to beat the daemons, liberate the masses, or maybe even find a way out.

## ► Contacts

- 1 Aero, reckless, idealistic codebreaker, loner
- 2 Biloxi, trustworthy dealer of illegal weapons
- 3 Claviger, can help you step through any door
- 4 Daedalus, leads a cell of would-be liberators
- 5 Eon, meek hacker, starting to suspect Truth
- 6 Faybelline, fabulous, can remake your face
- 7 Floppy, can "install" new skills, for a price
- 8 Grigori, cryptic, claims to be "rogue" daemon
- 9 Haque, chummy fence, stocks duped items
- 10 iMac, bubbly, uncannily skilled hacker
- 11 Mothman, paranoid, wide-eyed info broker
- 12 Norton, intense, offers to clear "viruses"
- 13 Peters, warm "coyote," helps folks disappear
- 14 Royce, mundane detective, unsure about you
- 15 The Seer, offers vague advice, baked goods
- 16 Tink, untrusting, lost cell to daemon betrayal
- 17 Umbra, tired, can point you to a safehouse
- 18 Vox, doped up, constantly hears thoughts
- 19 Whiteout, bald, stern, can erase your past
- 20 Xi, sells drug that unlocks 1 exploit for 1 day

## ► What is the simulation?

- 1 Aliens studying us to save their own species
- 2 Ancient game – bots gradually grew sentient
- 3 Corporate storage for risky but valuable staff
- 4 Dreams of a godlike machine
- 5 Grazing area so human livestock don't rebel
- 6 Illegal game – you're unwitting NPCs
- 7 Last refuge of humanity after the apocalypse
- 8 Live demo showcasing AI for sale
- 9 One of countless timelines run by PROPH3T
- 10 Prison meant to reform dangerous criminals
- 11 Procedure to extract intel from captives
- 12 Psych experiment you (maybe?) opted into
- 13 Recruitment test for secret defense initiative
- 14 Refugee camp for backed-up personalities
- 15 This *is* reality – it has always *been* an illusion
- 16 Trains combat AI on reusable human targets
- 17 Trash directory – or afterlife – for dead AI
- 18 Trauma ward for damaged minds
- 19 Trippy game – you're mind-wiped players
- 20 You think you escaped? That was level 1....

## ► Operations (and twists)

- 1 Daedalus asks for help rescuing a teammate from the feds (a trap by feds *and* daemons)
- 2 Escape detention (a sim within the sim – "codebreakers" help, ask to meet contacts)
- 3 Floppy offers a skill install each for help with a "delivery" (a crate of "suspended" people)
- 4 Get findings of proprietary study on lucid dreams (researchers keep "transcending")
- 5 Help (?) Daedalus install virus on network at Psychologic (127 devs would see The Truth)
- 6 Investigate rumored "door" out of the sim in Systronic HQ (leads to audience with "Root")
- 7 Mothman offers reward for data on C\*crecy onsite server (unlocks an exploit: *Exit*)
- 8 Rob local organized crime outfit for funds (they could be allies against authorities)
- 9 Save a newbie codebreaker from police (they're actually a plant by daemons)
- 10 The Seer says Eon will be important – guide and protect them (Eon's a hapless goof)

► **Daemons** are AI tasked to preserve the illusion that the simulation is real. They can effortlessly punch through concrete, dodge bullets, and shrug off being hit by a truck. No codebreaker is known to have killed one.

**When daemons are alerted**, they investigate. A second alert or odd behavior will trigger pursuit.

**When investigated by daemons**, codebreakers risk (1-2) being identified as hostiles or (3-4) being detained or surveilled indefinitely.

**When fleeing pursuing daemons**, codebreakers risk (1-2) getting caught and *hindered*, or just (3-4) getting caught. If caught, they can't attempt escape again until they create an opening.

**When resisting hostile daemons**, codebreakers can attempt to create an opening or use an opening to flee, at the risk of (1-2) death, or (3-4) grievous injury. Killing or harming daemons is not (ever?) feasible; the goal is to escape alive.