



Abeo

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It's sad that this next part needs to be said, but it does. There is no conspiracy to hide anything even remotely like this from the populace. The authors of this are not bravely stepping forward with vital information cleverly disguised in the form of a roleplaying game. Not. Real. At all.

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Insomnium Games Presents:

Abeo

A modern game of dark wonder.



Beautiful, deadly things are waiting for you.

Introduction

The World of Fear and Wonder

The lever, the winch and the wheel are not the beginning and the end of the mechanisms of creation; they are only the simplest solution. Society, industry and interaction are poorly suited to deal with a world where cause and effect are not laws, but suggestions. In Abeo, this stranger, more fluid world is the truer one. There are no rules when the dreams we have with our eyes closed are just as real as the ones we share with them open. We are encouraged to forget the fey lands of our most private hopes and fears, paying attention instead to the monsters that lurk in alleyways, crackhouses, congress and corporate boardrooms. There are rules for dealing with these horrors, and though we groan under their weight, we can bear their finite power.

Unfortunately, there are monsters other than the mundane ones, and it doesn't take much to see them. Today, a woman was found gruesomely murdered in a room locked from the inside. Last week a man burst into flame in an enclosed office. There is no conspiracy to hide these facts from the average man on the street; he does enough of the job himself. Human torches and phantom murders just don't fit into the supremely defined cosmos of his belief.

Belief in the absence of proof is faith. Belief in direct contradiction to proof is dangerous. In Abeo, you play one of those remarkable people who have taken a mad step, removing themselves from the danger of ignorance and placing themselves squarely in danger of knowing entirely too much.

Reason defines the Phenomenal world, but emotion taps into the Noumenal world and breaks it. Love does indeed conquer all, but so does hate. And fear. Fervor does more than motivate, it directly affects the world, removing the veils of apathy and illusion; fueling the ghost in the machine of causality. The vehement see that the world operates by the rules of irony, poetry, and passion as much, if not more than it does by those of gravity, electromagnetism, and the nuclear forces. It is only through a lateral shift in perception that characters are able to do what they had previously thought impossible. One must become insane to become free; to walk on water, you have to jump out of your boat.

Characters in Abeo find themselves shuttling between a banal but safe world defined by its objectivity and predictability, and a beautiful but deadly one bound only by Passion. Faced with both Phenomenal and Noumenal challenges continuously, these individuals often find themselves sliding into a particular kind of adaptive madness—a madness that

simultaneously grants the character the power he needs to survive and drives him farther away from the relationships and identity that he spent his life forming. These characters are called Liminal in Abeo, and an endless number of other names within the world the game defines. Those few who know enough to call them anything may understand them to be sorcerers, angels, monsters, demons or simply family members slipping away, bit by impossible bit.

Abeo is a game. While not real, it contains many of the elements of the world as we know it. Or perhaps more accurately, as we think we know it. No longer able to content themselves with sitcoms, political speeches, and student loan bills, they find themselves thrust into a world where their every adversary is capable of breaking all the rules. Maybe, if he survives, he will learn how to break them, too.

Role-Playing

Abeo is a role-playing game; part of a genre that is equal parts interpretive theater, storytelling, and playing make-believe. In a role-playing game the players determine the actions of the heroes of the story they—you—tell together. At least two players are required to play, but four or five are ideal. One player is declared at the beginning as the Narrator. The Narrator is responsible for everything from setting mood and theme to determining the weather, to playing out every creature not controlled by one of the other players. The other players all make characters of their own or choose from a list of pre-made ones. The player of a character is solely responsible for the actions that character takes. The Narrator may declare, for example, that the characters find themselves locked in a slowly flooding basement. The players then state the actions their characters take. One may try to pick the lock while another looks for a window to break. The Narrator then decides what solutions, if any, may solve the problem.

Of course, not everything that a character attempts will succeed. Individuals are all differently skilled; one who is fully capable of taking care of himself in a bar fight may be completely out of his depth in a political debate, whereas an intellectually oriented character may have no clue how to react when Bruno the Bruiser comes after him with a broken pool cue. Both the limitations and strengths of each character are recorded on his character sheet, along with his vital statistics. More on the meaning and use of the values found on the character sheet can be found in “Crisis System” (Page 79).

Chapter Breakdowns

This book is divided into eight main sections. *Character Creation* describes the process by which a player creates a character for Abeo. *Character Advancement* explains the process by which a character grows and changes—becoming more powerful or dysfunctional over time. Possibly both. *Crisis System* gives all the details that a player or Narrator needs to resolve conflict, mystery and challenges within the game. *Magic* describes the ways that characters may use the forces of Passion and the unknown to impact the world. This section also gives more detail on the differences between the Noumenal and the Phenomenal—as well as the ways that these differences may affect characters. *Pathos* gives you a list of innate powers to select from throughout the course of the game. *St. Augustine* is a fully fleshed-out setting for characters to play in St. Augustine, Florida, the oldest permanent European settlement in America. The *Storyline Revelations* chapter should be kept off-limits to players—it's full of plot ideas, potential challenges, conspiracies, and NPC stats. Lastly, *Pre-Made Characters* gives ten ready-to-play characters for players to immediately begin playing with.

Lexicon

Armor Resilience: How well armor stands up to abuse.

"Feelings are not supposed to be logical. Dangerous is the man who has rationalized his emotions."

-David Borenstein

Burnout: The act of temporarily lowering a character's Qualities in order to receive a bonus to his roll. Burnout as a form of damage represents bruising and muscle strains that are quick to heal.

Cascading Dice: The ability to "bump up" what die a character is using to increase the character's range of performance. A higher die bought with Experience Points.

Consequences: Common side effects to having Pathos. Acquiring a Consequence with a Pathos will lower the purchasing cost.

Creation Points (CPs): The amount of points a character has to allocate while making their character. Starting characters begin with 150 of these points.

d4, d6, d8, d10: The abbreviation for the type of die used. A d4 is a four-sided die, a d6 a six-sided, and so forth.

Defense Rating: The rating that measures how well a piece of armor protects a character.

Emotion: Points placed under a Passion to increase the Passion rating. For every ten Emotion points in a particular Passion will increase it by one. Emotion points are what many Liminals feed on.

Ethos: A combination of Logos and Pathos, where the user retains a semblance of control over what they are attempting to accomplish through traditional forms of spellcasting. In doing so, they end up with an effect that is more powerful than Logos, while still being more predictable than Pathos. See Logos and Pathos.

Factors: Specific Quality traits used to further round out a character. They can be both Positive and Negative and may grant modifiers in certain situations.

Fade: How distanced your character is from the Phenomenal world. The more emotionally powerful a character becomes the more detached he is from the everyday world. The more Fade a character has the less he is remembered by the average people around him. See Noumenal.

Intensity: A level of emotional instability. The higher a character's rating in a particular Passion the higher his Intensity in that Passion. Used without reference to a particular Passion, Intensity refers to the rating of the character's highest Passion.

Logos: The subtle magic of the waking world, Logos relies on coincidence and faith for proof of its existence. New Age crystal-wavers, Wiccan high priestesses and devout Pentecostal Christians, among others, practice forms of it.

Mental Die: The die used when performing a task that uses Imagination, Perception, Retention, and SES.

Noumenal: A way of looking at the world exclusive to those with Passion. This is also a term for phenomena, creatures, and areas that can only be affected and perceived by those with Passion.

Passions: The four stats that measure a character's emotional intensity.

Anguish: The pain felt when depression and total hopelessness sets in.

Dread: Paranoia, panic and fear of what is out there or of what may happen.

Fury: A deep, irrational anger, often in response to humiliation, retaliation and loss.

Yearning: The desire and need to have something, whether that something is revenge, acceptance or material possessions.

Pathos: Supernatural powers that are one of the results of Passion.

Peaking: Completing a task in a time one level above its type while assuming the player rolled the highest number possible on the die used.

Phenomenal: The perspective, phenomena and creatures of the world as most understand it: regular, ordered, and without clear supernatural influence. This is the only perspective available to those without Passion.

*"The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing."
-Albert Einstein*

Physical Die: The die used when performing a task that uses Agility, Resilience or Strength.

Qualities: These ratings express a character's natural abilities and are separated into two categories: Mental and Physical. Mental Qualities are Imagination, Perception and Retention. Physical Qualities are Agility, Strength and Resilience.

Agility: A measure of a character's grace and speed.

Strength: The combination of brute force and the ability to wield it.

Imagination: How imaginative and creative a character is.

Perception: How aware the character is of his surroundings.

Resilience: Degree of physical exertion the character can withstand. Resilience also measures a character's resistance to diseases.

Retention: Ability to memorize and recall information.

SES (Socioeconomic Status): A measure of a character's wealth, social adroitness and status

Skill Categories: The measure of a character's broad understanding of a category of information: "book knowledge" as distinct from "practical knowledge." While a character does not add them to Qualities or die rolls, Skill Categories do define the *limits* of a character's practical knowledge. He can never have a rating in a Skill higher than his rating in the Skill Category under which it falls.

Skills: A measure of a character's learned abilities, usually added to a Quality and the result of a die roll to determine whether a character succeeds in a given task.

Target Number: A number a character has to match or exceed in order to successfully perform an action.

Trauma: Damage taken from bullets, knives, fires and chemical burns, among other things. This differs from Burnout in both its severity and the time it takes to heal a point of it back.

Trappings: The game term for items required to perform rituals. Individual characters may have a number of different terms for what these are actually called and are encouraged to use those, examples include "tools," "sacrifices," and "spell components."

"Everything you meet, good or bad, is literally a figment of your thought patterns."

*--Dolores Ashcroft-Norwick
Magical Use of Thought Form*

Chapter I: Character Creation

Dramatis Persona

All the myriad selves that I could have been grab at me while I sleep, pulling me down deeper as I struggle to get to the surface. Cold, clammy hands tighten around my throat while I beg for mercy from all around me. That's when I wake up with my hands wrapped around my own neck. Lately I've been leaving bruises; it won't be much longer now.

The character is the means by which a player acts upon the events of the story's world. When playing a character, the player temporarily leaves behind his own motivations and personality to assume a different role in order to explore the themes and situations the Narrator creates. A player determines everything a character does, from what shoes he wears to what he says.

A player creates a character by imagining a concept that he would like to play, then spending Creation Points (CPs) to describe and flesh out that concept's weaknesses and strengths. Starting characters are created with 150 points, divided among Qualities, Cascading Dice, Skills, Passion, and Pathos.

Though he may be skillfully designed, balanced and well played, a character without a concept is a soulless, unsatisfying thing to play. Decide on your character's main motivation. Is he devoted to his family, his job, his country? Himself? What makes him tick? What is his Passion? Don't assign any point values yet, but think about it. Is he a corporate climber with little regard for the well being of others? Yearning. Is he afraid of snakes? Heights? Being burned alive? Embarrassment? Dread. Does he have a secret that's eating him alive? A child he put up for adoption years ago that still haunts his memories? A quiet affair that went horribly wrong? Anguish. Think of how this character's daily life is affected by his Passion.

Players in Abeo also have to balance convincingly playing an unbalanced character and the needs of the game. While people who have stepped off of the edge of reason are fascinating and rich individuals to play, players should keep in mind their limitations. If your character is Yearning-centered and obsessed with money, what's keeping him from stealing everything that isn't nailed down? Something should keep the game from devolving into an endless series of minor robberies; unless that's what you're going for, of course. Anguished characters are depressed, true, but *something* is keeping them alive. What is it? Think about not only your character's fixations, but the limits of those obsessions as well.

Next, move into the details: is your character a Vietnam veteran? A tortured elementary school teacher? Is he tall? Fat? Does he stutter? What colors does he wear? Does he have

a family? Children? Does he like his job? Is he tidy, messy or in-between? Does he skip showers or wear a certain perfume or cologne? Does he have any hobbies?

Following is a list of questions to help you flesh out your character idea.

General

1. What is your character's name? Does he have any nicknames he likes or dislikes? Is he married, divorced or widowed?
2. Where did he grow up? Was he smothered with attention (whether he liked it or not) or was he regularly left all alone?
3. What are his fondest memories of growing up? What scars may remain?
4. Does he look like he works outdoors or does he dress to kill? Is there a thick or lingering accent from another region or country?

Relationships

1. What sort of relationship does he have with his living family members (or ones that have died or vanished for that matter)? Has he been adopted? Does he know who his real parents are?
2. Does he go to family reunions or spend the holidays with them? Does he still live, or keep in close contact, with certain members of his family?
3. Is he particularly protective toward a friend or family member? Has he taken charge of caring for someone? How do they feel about him doing so?
4. Does he have anyone he would consider an enemy? A prejudice toward a certain group of people, a vendetta against another family (or his own) or someone he believes is out to actively ruin his life?
5. Are his friendships few and far between or made with everyone he meets? Does he enjoy socializing or see it as an unbearable necessity?

Home and Finances

1. What does he do for a living? Does he enjoy or despise the work? Is it what he expected to do with his life?
2. How does he get along with his co-workers? Does he hang out with any of them outside of work? Do they secretly dislike him, or is he paranoid about whether they actually do?
3. Does he own anything he particularly cherishes? A pet, a family heirloom, a gift he was given by his first love? Does he collect newspaper clippings or dumpster dive for parts needed for his inventions?
4. Where does he live? How nice is the area? Do police regularly make arrests or have gangs fully taken over? What is his relationship with his landlord and/or neighbors?
5. Is his house a mess? Does he have any roommates? Is it devoid of any belongings or filled with clutter because of himself or others?

“Every author begins with a character sketch. The biggest mistake new writers make here is in fetishizing the sketch and refusing to evolve beyond that point in their conception of the people that populate their stories. They forget that the paper is not the whole of the character. A pyramid’s shape projected onto a sheet of paper is not the pyramid, though it describes its limitations and dimensions. Similarly, no synopsis of a character is the whole person, though it may telegraph that character’s history and talents.”

-Dan Morgan

Author’s Weekly December 18th, 2004

Mannerisms

1. What phrases, gestures or habits does he have? Examples: buying a lottery ticket every Friday night, ending sentences with "you know?" or playing with his wedding ring when nervous (or flirting with someone other than his spouse).
2. What is his personality like? Is he trustworthy? Does he fly off the handle or become quiet when frustrated? Is he bullheaded or willing to change his mind at the drop of a hat?
3. ABeo is a very emotion-centered game; while you may not have points in a specific Passion, it is assumed that your character still has fears, desires, dislikes and frustrations. What are they? Does he love painting or become upset over hearing about plight of third world workers? Does he always leave at least one light in his house on? Does he loathe drug dealers?
4. When approached with a problem, is he more physical or does he try to think his way around it? Does he actively try to intimidate others: physically, socially or financially?

Beliefs

1. What superstitions, if any, does the character have? How strongly does he believe these superstitions work? What caused him to believe and practice them in the first place?
2. Does the character practice any religion? Why does he believe in this religion above any other? Is it because of his family or because it was the prominent religion in the area he grew up?
3. How devout is he? Does he try to convert others? Is his faith obvious or does it take a while for someone to notice it?
4. What unexplainable events has the character come across in his life? How has he reacted to them? How has he attempted to explain them away?
5. What unexplainable things does he believe in, or want to believe are real? Is he a pessimist who wishes magic existed, or fanatical about uncovering a government conspiracy?

*"I do not envy people who think they have a complete explanation of the world for the simple reason that they are obviously wrong."
Salman Rushdie*

After you have a clear idea of your character in mind, spend the 150 CPs in a way that reflects your core concept. Qualities represent a character's raw ability: Strength, Agility, Resilience, Imagination, Retention, Perception, and Socioeconomic Status.

Cascading Dice determine a character's range of performance. Skill Categories and Skills represent a character's training and talent in specific areas. A character's Passion denotes how far he has gone down the paths of insanity, his disconnect with the Phenomenal, and his power within and over the Noumenal.

Examples of Groups

A group is the easiest way to get several players to interact with one another. By considering the players and the Narrator's storyline, a group can be formed for any number of reasons: survival, out of coincidence, for the accumulation of wealth, or collaboration toward a common goal. Liminals are not the only threat to someone with Intensity. Psychiatric wards, fanatics, political manipulations, and even family members might endanger a group.

Liminals, by their very nature, become beings consumed by Passion, feasting on the suffering of others. Family members, friends, and confidantes are all vulnerable to the

depredations of creatures more powerful than the characters. Often used as pawns or unwitting buffets for high-Intensity Liminals, many eventually end up as casualties, or perhaps worse, enemies of the character. In the mind of characters, at least at the beginning, that is exactly what Liminals consumed by Passion have become: creatures. This sort of mentality leads to further complications among characters. A botched attempt to destroy a target may not only endanger the group, but all those that they associate with. If a character has not Faded completely himself, the law may still apply. Mistakenly attacking the wrong person, or being caught in the act, will easily cast suspicion upon a character and his allies. Liminals, for all their power, can't be everywhere at the same time, and everywhere a character isn't looking is a place for danger to form.

Characters can never fully trust one another; Passion twists the psyche, virtues turn to vices, and purpose may soon fall to hunger. This amorality easily builds up the Emotions that in turn build Passion, and has been known to completely draw Liminals into Fade. For this reason, many groups will fall upon one another long before they have a chance to fall to outside threats.

These groups tend to be created among individuals out of necessity and circumstance, more than desire. Many are aware that at least some Liminals were, at one time, human. The ability to recognize and retaliate against such creatures, or other humans, in a manner beyond the Phenomenal is essential to survival. Ad-hoc groups rarely form because of compatible ideologies. Familiarity breeds contempt, and Liminal battles born from a common need for survival often burns hotter, and centuries longer, than merely animal fights for territory.

People relate to one another differently depending on their Intensity and their understanding, or interpretation, of the Phenomenal and the Noumenal. These are typically divided into those with Intensity one through four and individuals who are Fading away. Those with Intensity three are not necessarily aware of Noumenal feedings or able to relate to a Liminal that has reached Intensity ten and feeds upon the emotional mass of those he once knew. For the purpose of simplicity, Faded characters may be merged with the five and above groups.

Hunters

Hunters tend to be very physical in nature, acting on the Passion that consumes them most. Paranoia, vengeance, greed, and pity are all common drives; a hunter will often tell himself anything to justify his actions. Due to their determination and necessary isolation, hunters have a hard time with reliable funds, contacts, or even solid allies. Paranoia and foresight force prudent hunters to either drift from through cities they hunt or bunker down in their own neighborhoods, effectively cutting most human ties.

Murder is often regarded as a crime of Passion, and rightfully so. Soon as a character starts taking life without remorse, the line between those that feed and those merely staking out turf becomes blurred. Once violence is an option, it becomes progressively easier to justify and rationalize its use. Friends and loved ones can no longer be trusted; what happens when a character tells his wife that he was out killing the neighbor, or worse? Putting up a barrier between their Phenomenal existence and Noumenal habits causes a paradox that few can escape, or realize, until they themselves become the hunted. Destroying another Liminal that has Faded often leaves no traces of the crime and makes the world an arguably better place, but at what personal cost to the character?

Researchers

Researchers are often bands of intellectuals who try to decipher the Passions that form the pillars of Liminal society, such as it is (or often isn't). Many researchers become blinded to the consequences of their actions, attempting to define and isolate the Intensity they feel, as well as its effects. Researchers must be particularly careful to avoid Fade, as they

*"All that we see or seem
Is but a dream within a dream"*
-Edgar Allen Poe

may find their research suddenly missing, incomplete, or in laboratories to which they have lost access. More often than not, a researcher will unwittingly develop the very symptoms he is studying or trying to define.

Science is a jealous god, and is no more merciful when it refuses to follow rules. Driven to the edge by their lack of conclusions, researchers have been known to conduct tests on friends, family, and innocent passersby for no reason other than a character's driving need for results. Researchers are notorious for gambling with innocent people to better cope with their instability, while justifying their role as puppeteer with vague references to a "better tomorrow." Some bypass even the most vestigial remains of their ethics without a second glance, quickly coming to refer to once-loved ones by serial numbers.

Cults

If God is with us, who then can stand against us? The absolute certainty of the zealot blends dangerously easily with the unthinking zeal of the Liminal. Human society has long dealt with the unknown by painting it in religious tones. If one scratches the surface of even the most jaded New Yorker, there might be a frightened, barely civilized soul debasing himself before a god he barely understands in order to gain protection from a more immediate threat. Cults, with all of their attendant problems (authoritarian features, the potential for violence, groupthink, and control) are probably the most common form of Liminal group. They can take the form of secret societies, organizations within mainstream religions, small congregations of heretics, magical working groups, or whackjob millionaires who believe that one can reach godhood by overcoming past-life memories of invasion by extraterrestrials.

*"The imagination without reason brings forth impossible monsters. But joined to it is the mother of the arts, and the source of marvels."
-Goya in Bordeaux*

Search and Rescue Groups

Probably the most rounded group, search and rescue teams have to be prepared for a variety of situations. These groups seem to go out of their way to find any other Liminals that share a connection with them. Many have forced other members into their midst without regard for the true nature of those they encounter. Drawing in the lost and ailing, characters often deny common sense and go to any extreme to save one another. Search and rescue groups don't tend to survive long.

Aiding serial killers, kidnapping the institutionalized, even raiding installations for targets they barely know, a search-and-rescue group operates on the instinct to survive and rehabilitate. Nearly destroying themselves and those around them to complete an objective, it is easy for these characters to fall prey to their own Passions. Resentment, apathy, terror, and desire can lead to the misuse or destruction of those that relied on or trusted a rescued character. When those the group protects are lost or prove beyond the group's ability to control, how does it justify the cost?

Character Sheet Breakdown

Name: The name of the player.

S.E.S.: The character's Socioeconomic Status.

Character: The name of the character.

Factors: This area gives room for Mental, S.E.S. and Physical Factors.

Mental Die: The kind of Mental Die the character uses is placed.

Intensity: The rating showing how Intense a character is. Intensity is equal to the rating of the highest Passion.

Initiative Base: The character's Initiative is his Agility plus the Initiative Skill (if purchased).

Mental Qualities: Imagination, Perception and Retention are all found here. The lower boxes are for Burnout.

Liminal Appearance: How the character is perceived Noumenally. Once there are Liminal peculiarities they will be placed here.

Consequences: Any Consequences a character receives.

Skills: Write in each Skill Category with the applicable Skills in each of these boxes. Make sure each Skill Category has its own set.

The form is titled 'Abeo' and includes the following sections:

- Name:** _____
- Character:** _____
- Experience:** _____
- Session:** _____
- Mental Die:** _____
- Physical Die:** _____
- S.E.S.:** _____
- Natural Defense:** _____
- Initiative Base:** _____
- Factors:** _____
- Agility:** _____
- Strength:** _____
- Resilience:** _____
- Magic:** _____
- Intensity:** _____
- Anguish:** _____
- Dread:** _____
- Fury:** _____
- Yearning:** _____
- Liminal Appearance:** _____
- Consequences:** _____
- Skills:** _____

Experience: List how much Experience has been acquired for the character here. Keeping track of how much Experience has been received in total and how much has been spent is encouraged.

Session: The name of the story this character is a part of.

Physical Qualities: Agility, Resilience and Strength are listed here. The grey boxes below each are for Burnout and Trauma.

Physical Die: List the die that is used for Physical actions here.

Natural Defense: Natural Defense is the character's Agility plus Resilience. It is listed here.

Magic: List Ethos, Logos and Pathos that the character has here.

Passions: The first set of boxes is for the Passions themselves. The shaded column is for the fluctuating Emotion ratings.

Cascading Dice

Simply put, some people just have a greater range of performance than others. Some people will forget their own names one day only to dazzle you with a brilliant insight into quantum physics or human nature the next. They may not be especially bright, but they're prone to "eureka" moments of which the others can only be jealous. This is a cascading effect.

Players have the option of allocating points to "Cascading Dice." A character that has purchased a Cascading Die rolls either a d8 or d10 instead of the usual d6 for Physical tasks, Mental tasks or both. Cascading dice cost 20 points per level. Note that the Mental Die and the Physical Die must be purchased separately.

Qualities

The Qualities are divided into two categories: Mental and Physical. The Mental Qualities are Retention: the ability to remember and manipulate information, Imagination: the ability to create ideas and to come up with innovative solutions to problems, and Perception: the ability to notice and make sense of the world around them.

The Physical Qualities are Strength: the brute ability to lift, throw, jump, hit and push, Resiliency: the capacity to persevere through strenuous activity, and Agility: the measure of a character's speed and precision in movement.

Socioeconomic status is a special Quality. Abbreviated SES, it is a measure of the amalgam of money, career, and friends that separates the "haves" from the "have-nots." It determines everything from where and how you live to how many friends you have. SES can be burned out like any other Quality, but recovers at a rate of one point per in-game year, cannot be burned out through damage, and does not ever take Trauma.

Commonly accepted Qualities range from 1-6. Most people fit comfortably within the 1-6 range, with 3-4 being strictly average. Ones are the classic 98 pound weakling or woman with all thumbs. Sixes are the truly remarkable; local celebrities at least, national figures easily. Stephen Hawking would be rated at six in both Retention and Imagination. Six is, quite simply, the absolute best a human being can achieve in either Qualities or Skills. Anything higher than that is reserved for those supernaturally adept in a field of endeavor. Either they're not people or they've made a deal with something inhuman.

On the other end of the scale, with an SES rating of one, an individual is dirt-poor, without a home or even the money or credit rating to afford a soft drink. At six, a character is almost incomprehensibly wealthy: A-list movie stars sometimes reach this level. While a rating of seven or higher is theoretically possible, most people believe the stories regarding the wealth of King Midas, Nicholas Flamel, and the king of El Dorado to be myths.

Decide what your character's Quality ratings should be. Each character begins with one point in each Quality for free; Qualities cost five CPs each.

Quality Scale

Imagination

1. One is the bare minimum of Imagination someone can have and still be considered human. Characters with Imagination at this level are easy to recognize: they have entire closets full of the same outfit, they listen to the same song on repeat for hours (if they listen to music at all), and they lack the ability to make out even an original grocery list. They may function in day-to-day life with repetitive, monotonous jobs. Anything that

"Dreaming permits each and every one of us to be quietly and safely insane every night of our lives."
-William Demen

requires creativity, problem solving abilities, or more personality than a wet cardboard toilet paper roll is utterly beyond them.

2. This is the point of below average, but still serviceable, Imagination. At this level, characters can function reasonably well most of the time. Their personalities, aesthetic sense and social calendar are all the cookie-cutter average, if even that original. They've never seen a movie that didn't have an actor or actress they recognized, and they have no intention of ever doing so.

3. Three is the average person's Imagination. Characters with this level of Imagination usually have hobbies, idiosyncrasies, and reasonably fleshed-out wardrobes. They've occasionally done something crazy or different that no one else in a room has done, but at the same time, they're unlikely to make waves. They may have seen one or two art house flicks, or may read a book every couple of months or two.

4. Above-average, but not stunning; creative but not artistic people tend to fit at this level of Imagination. The average member in a pack of coffee house Bohemians probably has an imagination of four. These people often work in semi-creative endeavors: reporters, advertising executives, politicians or local business owners. They begin to think out of the box, but they still keep a foot inside, just in case.

5. An exceptional amount of Imagination; eccentric but small-time artists, actors, art teachers, and college professors usually have at least this level of Imagination. The character has probably read a book or two that no one else they know has read, may watch art-house movies, and has one or two traits that make their less creative friends cringe.

6. Six is as creative as a person can get. When a character has this level of Imagination, it becomes difficult for them to interact enjoyably with people on the bottom half of the scale; they simply can't comprehend how someone *wouldn't* think of the things they do. Nationally and internationally known writers, poets, actors, directors and other truly exceptional artistic types tend to have Imaginations of six.

*"The interpretation of dreams
is the royal road to a
knowledge of the unconscious
activities of the mind."
-Sigmund Freud*

Perception

1. This is the lowest level of conscious Perception possible. The character may be blind, deaf, or simply easily distracted, but he will fail to notice even the most obvious details, events and objects. This type of person walks into walls (and traffic) if he's not careful.

2. Still below average, this is the lowest level of perception that a person can have and still operate normally in the real world. Colloquially, he still lacks the good sense to bring an umbrella with him out into the rain, and someone has to tap him on the shoulder to get his attention.

3. The average person on the street will have a Perception at this level. He may still occasionally miss details, but for the most part, he's pretty plugged into the world. Unless someone is hiding from him, he'll know who's in a room, and if something is particularly off, he'll probably notice.

4. This is the level of Perception at which a person starts to become exceptional. Not only will he know who is in a room with him, he'll probably also notice if they've gotten a haircut or are wearing a new perfume. They habitually process the world around them, and even minor details begin to stand out if something's wrong.

5. Truly exceptionally Perceptive characters usually tend to gravitate toward particularly detail-oriented fields; they make fantastic private investigators, musicians, computer programmers, editors and police. Fives have a radar-like sense of their surroundings, with

every snapping twig, opening door and change in air pressure providing them clues to what's happening.

6. At a Perception level of six, a character has a nearly supernatural awareness. Not only will he notice the footprint in the soil in front of him, but also he'll be able to identify what kind of shoe it came from. With high enough levels of Retention, he may even remember that the bike messenger that nearly ran him over earlier in the day was wearing similar shoes and was covered in mud. There are few mysteries that a character with a Perception can't Sherlock into solution before lunch.

Retention

1. IQ: 84 and below. A character has to think before being able to tell someone what their astrological sign is, if he ever knew what it was. While he can usually function, he's slow and usually has to look things up. In information- or education-intensive fields he usually flounders and drowns. Formal logic is, if not impossible, prohibitively difficult. $A=B$ and $B=C$, but he still has the hardest time figuring out what else A equals.

2. IQ: 85-99. Still below average, the individuals at this level of Retention are, with sufficient work, able to function normally in society. Though not particularly intelligent by most definitions, he's still able to remember important dates and facts, and is able to synthesize information into other facts. Algebra and formal logic functions are difficult, but not impossible.

3. IQ: 100-114. This is the average level of Retention. They're not spectacular, though at this point, characters are able to put two and two together with reasonable facility. They can read most instruction manuals and utilize them; and they rarely have to be walked through the steps of a simple task twice.

4. IQ: 115-129. An individual at this level of Retention is bright, but not brilliant. He often surprises those around him with insights or ideas that others wouldn't have considered. Here a character easily understands information level with Boolean logic, and basic statistical understanding comes intuitively.

5. IQ: 130-144. If a character at this level of Retention isn't a genius, he's pushing the limits. Formal logic and most advanced mathematical concepts are easy for these characters to understand. He's occasionally prone to truly brilliant insights into whatever he happens to be studying at the time. Characters will have difficulty carrying on a meaningful conversation with an "average" person, as there's simply no possibility for an exchange of ideas. They're skilled at generalizing data, and given half an opportunity, they can usually teach themselves around the edges of virtually any field of study. This level of Retention does not, however, mean the character is necessarily successful or driven.

6. IQ: 145-160+. To place this level of Retention in perspective, Einstein was considered by some experts to "only" have an IQ of 160 (this is, of course an estimate; Einstein was never formally tested). This is the level of the true genius. Others can only scratch their heads in bewilderment at this kind of character's intelligence. These people are beyond brilliant and well into the realm of incomprehensibility. They characters can analyze, manipulate, and synthesize data easier than most can look it up on a computer.

*"Man is the only creature that
refuses to be what he is."
-Albert Camus*

Socioeconomic Status

SES is a special case; it can be burned, just like any other Quality, which in this case represents liquidating assets, taking out loans or leaning on influential friends; but it returns at a rate of one point of SES per in-game year, if the character doesn't burn out again over the course of that year. The benefits gained from SES are always relative. In

large cities such as New York, Chicago or Boston, characters whose level of SES would allow them to own a home in a smaller area will instead have larger, better-appointed apartments. Similarly, characters with even a low SES in a small town are likely to know at least one community mover and shaker, though such a contact's utility is severely limited by scale. The mayor of a town of 300, for example, would have less power than the mayor of a metropolis of a million or more. Cost of living and wages also vary wildly from location to location, and such differences, if important in your game, should be accounted for. Consequently, all of the benefits and drawbacks associated with a particular level of SES should be viewed as general guidelines, subject to change according to the needs of a particular game or group, and always filtered through common sense.

Also note that each level's discretionary income represents a theoretical upper limit. Characters at the referenced SES *can* spend that amount of money per week—to do so regularly, however, is financial suicide. Characters who routinely spend up to their limit should be required to burn out their SES or otherwise explain why they're blowing their money so irresponsibly. A character's refinement is similarly dependent on how the player makes his character behave. A character with a high SES who routinely assaults people at a party or wolf whistles at passersby will still get responses appropriate to his actions. A character that *continuously* acts in a situationally inappropriate manner should probably be forced to take Burnout to his SES.

1. Poor: Nearly homeless, a character with an SES of one struggles from check to check or job to job. Barely managing (and occasionally failing) to stay afloat, he probably has roommates and more unpaid bills than paid ones. At this level the character works at a fast food restaurant if he's lucky. He has a few unimportant people who'd be willing to give him a ride someplace or bum him a cigarette. A character hovering at this level of SES doesn't have enough disposable income to buy a small package of French fries without cringing. Even with his employee discount.

Money: The character has access to no discretionary income. Any purchases that the character makes must be made with money that he has gained in game.

Friends: The character knows no one of any importance, though some of his friends may have a couch on which he can sleep a few times before totally alienating them.

Housing: The character almost certainly both lives with family members or roommates, and has to deal with all of the attendant inconveniences. In all likelihood, he lives in an apartment or squalid slum. The pipes are likely rusted, the roof might leak, and some of the doors or windows might not open (or, for a little bit of security risk, shut).

Possessions: The character likely does not own a computer or any significant electronic devices. He might own a TV and VCR. A DVD player is unlikely, but possible. He's lucky if he has a landline—a cell phone is out of the question at this level.

Status/Refinement: The character is poor, and he looks poor. He acts poor, which is to say without understanding of the social rules of a given situation. He might be loud, contentiously opinionated or prone to causing a scene. He also might smell like occasionally dirty laundry, have holes in his clothes, or have a dialect that tags him as lacking money.

2. Lower Middle Class: A character at this level has finally managed to reach a point of stability in his finances. He may work as a secretary or in retail or manufacturing work. Alternately, he may be a small-time crook. The character has a few good friends who usually manage to make ends meet. At this level and higher, taking time off of a job becomes progressively more difficult, which may cause difficulty for characters in a game.

"Be careful what you pretend to be because you are what you pretend to be."
-Kurt Vonnegut

Money: The character has access to as much as 75 dollars a week without burning out his SES.

Friends: He might be a part of a small religious group, or have a few hunting buddies. In dire straights, the character may be able to borrow as much as fifty dollars from his friends.

Housing: The character may be able to live in a small apartment on his own, or in a very small house.

Possessions: If the character has a car, it will be prone to breakdowns and will probably have quite a few mechanical malfunctions (windows that don't open, doors that don't lock, head- or dashboard lights burned out or missing). Keeping the car insured and gassed is an almost constant worry for the character. He probably has an obsolete computer, and may have a cell phone, though at this level he must pay attention to how much time he spends talking on it. He probably has a TV, stereo and DVD player, though all are of poor quality.

Status/Refinement: A character at this level of SES is able to interact relatively smoothly with most people. While he's not a community leader or role model, he manages to get by without making too many people cringe. He's clean and usually knows when to be quiet.

*"I, a stranger and afraid in a
world I never made."
-A.E. Housman*

3. Middle Class: A character at this level may be a supervisor, small business owner or mid-level clerical worker. He has many acquaintances and could probably get a tow truck in the middle of the night. At this level, a character could probably afford to spend three hundred dollars a week without cutting the household budget too tightly.

Money: The character is able to spend as much as 300 dollars a week without burning out.

Friends: The character has quite a few friends, some of whom may be scattered in different places across the country. He is probably able to, if necessary, borrow a couple hundred dollars, though a loan from a bank would probably be less socially damaging.

Housing: The character may own a small home (though he probably still owes the bank quite a bit for it).

Possessions: The character likely owns a reasonably reliable vehicle, an up-to-date computer, a cell phone, well-stocked entertainment center, washing machine, dryer, and a few assorted household gadgets (bread machine, ice-cream maker, etc.). He may even drink bottled water instead of tap water and have a few status items, such as an SUV, digital music player, or handheld computer.

Status/Refinement: The character is middle class; significant portions of Western culture are devoted to the edification of people at approximately this level of SES. He is unlikely to offend anyone, and while those at either extreme of the scale are likely to view him as either uncouth or snobbish, such individuals are few, far-between, and unlikely to be people with whom the character interacts much.

4. Upper Middle Class: A character at this level could be a doctor, local politician, lawyer, or mid-size business owner. He has many acquaintances, and a few friends, some of whom are somewhat influential.

Money: The character is now able to spend up to one thousand dollars a week on nonessentials.

Friends: The character may play golf with a city council member, go to church with a high-ranking member of the police force, or be in Christmas-card contact with a congressman. He could probably approach his friends for a personal loan of a few

thousand dollars, but at this point, having to ask for a personal loan from a friend is a bit *gauche*.

Housing: The character probably owns a large home, and in all likelihood has part of a timeshare. He almost certainly has a maid who cleans for him regularly, and possibly someone that he keeps up with his yard work as well.

Possessions: The character either owns or can easily get most common items of practical value. He almost certainly owns either a sports car or some other ostentatious symbol of wealth. He's probably fairly adept at "keeping up with the Joneses" and may own a collection (coins, paintings, pottery) of some value.

Status/Refinement: This is the point at which a character begins losing the ability to meaningfully interact with those at the lower end of the spectrum. He may be perceived as arrogant or condescending, but he is unlikely to cause any offense with his mannerisms, conversation, or odor.

5. Rich: A character at this level of SES could be a big business CEO, a politician at the national level, an in-demand medical specialist or a highly successful professional. Characters with an SES of six have a staggering number of acquaintances, and in a pinch could probably affect statewide political processes. At this level, disposable income jumps enormously.

Money: A character at this level can spend ten thousand dollars a week without feeling a burn.

Friends: Getting a loan from a bank and from a friend amount to essentially the same thing. He may routinely have lunch with governors and the mayors of large cities, as well as the occasional A-list celebrity. It is a relatively easy thing for the character to find out at least a little about what's going on behind the scenes of any public scandal, and his opinion may carry some weight with some of his politician friends. Of course, they're always looking out for themselves as well, so any propositions that work against the interests of the character's acquaintance, or even fail to directly help the acquaintance's goal, may be rejected out of hand without some very skillful manipulation on the part of the character.

Housing: The character's house is probably more properly called an "estate." He almost certainly has a number of servants, a few of which probably live in his home. In extremely large cities, a character of this level of SES may live in an extravagantly appointed apartment building if he chooses to stay within the city. The Real Estate Positive Factor is extremely common at this level, as characters at SES five almost always have a vacation home. At this point, characters often have security staff patrolling their homes.

Possessions: If the character wants something, he has it, provided it's available for purchase and doesn't cost more than a couple hundred thousand dollars. A player can assume his character has any device in which his character would be interested, though more exotic possessions, such as mass spectrometers or hydroelectric cars, depend entirely upon how generous the Narrator is feeling. Still, even if a character doesn't already have something at this level, odds are he can come up with some way of getting it.

Status/Refinement: A character at this level of SES almost never has trouble remembering which fork to use, and can effortlessly blend in to almost any high-class function. His considerable economic clout does come through in his interactions however, and, while people may be eager to please and easy to manipulate for a character of this level, he can still easily leave a bad taste in the mouth if he's not careful.

6. Unhappily Wealthy: This character doesn't really "work" in any normal sense unless he

"Crazy people who are productive are geniuses. Crazy people who are rich are eccentric. Crazy people who are neither productive nor rich are just plain crazy. Geniuses and crazy people are both out in the middle of a deep ocean; geniuses swim, crazy people drown. Most of us are sitting safely on the shore. Take a chance and get your feet wet."
-Michael J. Gelb

wants to. World-famous celebrities, members of an old money family, and hugely successful entrepreneurs languish away at an SES of six. These characters don't so much have acquaintances as servants, and they don't have as many friends as they do people who owe them favors. Fairly large favors.

Money: At this level a character can spend one hundred thousand dollars a week or more.

Friends: While a character at this level may have friends, the acquaintance is to some degree either sycophantic (with those of a significantly lower SES) or brittle and guarded (with those of equal SES). When two characters of this level of SES come together, the financially or politically impossible rapidly becomes possible, as the connections and money implicit in the coming together of two such financial and social giants is world-shaking. Unfortunately, two such spheres of fortune and influence are certain to collide at some point, and their interests *will* eventually put them at opposite ends of a deal. For this reason, characters of this SES are guarded, often secretive individuals.

Housing: Sprawling, palatial mansions are *de rigueur* for a character at this level of SES. At this point, the Real Estate Positive Factor is almost assumed for most. Vacation homes scattered across the globe are not only not out of the question, but are common, or even expected in some circles. Dozens of servants, a few themselves probably well paid enough to be of SES four, populate a character of this SES's estate. Security is more numerous and well armed at a character of this SES's home than the police forces of many small towns.

Possessions: If he wants it, he probably already has it. If he doesn't already have it, it's because it can't be had or he's in the process of getting it. Legality and rarity is almost never an issue for a character of this SES's ambition, though there are many things (F-14 jets, particle accelerators, and the paintings of certain masters, to name a few) that simply aren't available to *any* single person.

Status/Refinement: At this point, a character's social advantage becomes nearly overwhelming, ameliorated somewhat by the disconnect that comes with this level of wealth and prestige. Every interaction can be tainted with paranoia; the character knows that everyone has their price, and that price would probably fit comfortably in his bank accounts. Blackmail from his closest confidantes becomes a concern, and kidnapping attempts are almost assured. Even the most trusted friends, employees and, sometimes family members, are viewed with continuous suspicion. There is no safety for a character of this SES.

Agility

1. Beyond klutzy, this character can barely move without bucking his shins on desks, chairs, and people. Objects seem to lunge toward him, and even typing is a feat of manual dexterity that he can rarely manage. If he strains, this character may be able to safely jump up to six inches.

2. Two left feet and all thumbs, this character still usually manages to get around without too much damage to himself and those around him. It's unlikely that he's going to make much of a living as a waiter, but he can usually manage to function without too much difficulty. He can safely jump up to a foot from a standing start.

3. An average character has an Agility of three. He's not particularly coordinated or quick, but not poor at tasks requiring finesse. He can safely jump up to eighteen inches from a standing start.

4. Characters at this level have usually taken some sort of dancing, gymnastics or martial arts class. What's more, they were *good*. Even when not engaged in highly physical activity, they move with an easy, feline grace. A character with an Agility of four has

"That is the truest sign of insanity – insane people are always sure they are fine. It is only the sane people that are willing to admit that they are crazy."

-Nora Ephron

sufficient muscular control and understanding of his weight to jump up to two feet from a standing position.

5. With an Agility of five, a character is astoundingly graceful. He could probably make a decent living as a dancer, acrobat, or professional cat burglar. Even his most casual movement reflects his extreme control over his body. He can jump up to a stunning three feet from a standing position.

6. At Agility six, a character's body is an obedient extension of his mind; he makes shopping for groceries look choreographed. He rarely misses anything thrown at or to him, and he can make a roll to catch anything slower than an arrow without penalty. He can also jump up to five feet from a standing position.

Resilience

1. Pitiful, puling, sickly: a character with Resilience one has set up shop on Death's door. He flinches every time someone sneezes in his presence, and an overly firm handshake can leave a bruise. He can't eat spicy or greasy food; rare steaks are dangerous. At this level, the character probably also has at least one common food allergy (lactose, gluten, peanuts). Strenuous activity lasting longer than a few minutes requires taking a breather, and he must sleep for at least nine hours a night or take Burnout from exhaustion.

2. Certainly not stout, a character at this level is still able to weather the rigors of the common cold with relative impunity. He may call in to work a little more often than his bosses would like, and his trash can may be full of Kleenex, but he usually manages to function. He no longer bruises quite so easily, but someone knocking into him in the hall will still leave a mark, and he still has to carry around a roll of antacid tablets. A character at this level may engage in strenuous activity for up to fifteen minutes without needing a break, and need only sleep for eight hours a night.

3. The average individual has a Resilience of three. He still gets sick occasionally. but can eat, run, jump and play just like anyone else. He can engage in strenuous activity for up to an hour without needing a breather. He needs to sleep seven hours a night or he will take Burnout from exhaustion.

4. A character at this level of Resilience is impressive. He may exercise or just be blessed by a strong constitution. He's rarely if ever ill, and can eat food that lower Resilience characters would have thrown out long ago. He can engage in strenuous activity for up to three hours without breaking, and he only needs to sleep six hours per night.

5. At five, a character is a machine. No one remembers the last time he even heard him complain about so much as a sniffle, and he's not afraid to eat at the greasy spoon down the street that's rumored to be on the edge of being shut down by the health department. He endures up to eight hours of strenuous activity without burning out or resting, and he can sleep five hours a night with no difficulty.

6. A character with a Resilience of six could be hit by a car and still have a better-than-even chance of walking away from it. He's probably never been sick, and doesn't understand why people are so worried about what they eat. He can engage in up to twelve hours of strenuous activity without burning out or resting, and he only sleeps for four hours a night.

Strength

1. Nearly disabled, a character at this level of Strength is barely able to heave himself out

*"The crux is that the vast majority of the mass of the universe seems to be missing."
-William J Broad*

of bed in the morning. Whether due to disease, injury or inactivity, he can lift and carry, at most, 25 pounds. A character at this level of Strength makes Charles Atlas spin in his grave as even complete strangers offer to help him carry things; if he's less well liked, the character may undergo harassment from his stouter peers.

2. Still weak, but functional, a character with a Strength of two is able to lift and carry up to 50 pounds without burning out. He still gets kicked to the ground occasionally and is unlikely to be a gym buff, but his bearing and frame are healthier than it would have been at Strength one; his infirmity isn't broadcast quite the same way.

3. An average character has Strength three; he is able to lift and carry 100 pounds without burning out. A character at this level rarely has trouble with most physical activities.

4. At Strength four a character is impressively strong. He may be a bodybuilder or laborer, and may lift and carry up to 200 pounds without burning out. He can also pick up and throw objects of up to 50 pounds four yards. At this level and higher, characters usually begin to bulk up and become more physically intimidating.

5. With a Strength of five, a character is truly, prodigiously strong. He may lift and carry up to 400 pounds without burning out, and can pick up and throw objects of up to 100 pounds up to five yards. Even the most belligerent barroom brawler thinks twice before starting a fight with a character of this Strength.

6. A character at this level of Strength is a world-class weightlifter, whether he does so professionally or not. Most suspect or assume that the character is on steroids, and strangers begin to flinch when he makes sudden moves. He can lift and carry up to 800 pounds without burning out, and can pick up and throw objects of up to 200 pounds up to six yards.

Factors

Two similar things are seldom identical. Two characters may be able to lift, push, think or run precisely as well as each other, but they will still be fundamentally different in temperament and skill. To account for these differences, players take Factors during character creation or pay for them later with Experience Points. Factors are the tiny differences in talent or training that make the difference between a generically agile individual and a gymnast; they either provide additional abilities, such as fluency in foreign languages, or grant a bonus to existing abilities, such as with Sprinter. *A character receives a number of Factor points equal to the number of Quality points he has.* A character with high ratings in several Qualities will therefore have a large number of Factor points. A character can generally take a Factor up to three times, allowing him to be particularly good at a single task. He could also take a number of different Factors, representing a broad range of talent.

Alternately, a character can take Negative Factors. These are Factors that represent particular ineptitudes; leveling penalties upon characters who attempt to perform certain tasks. Rather than costing Factor points, characters with Negative Factors gain a number of CPs equal to the value of the Negative Factor they take. As with Factors, a character can take a Negative Factor up to three times.

Factors are based on the Quality to which they're attached. Most Factors relate to a Skill or type of Skill; but some grant entirely new abilities, or take away common ones. Players and Narrators should feel free to create new Factors or disallow existing ones based on the needs of the game.

Factors usually grant a bonus to an existing Skill. This bonus is always plus one and can be

*"A human being is a part of the whole, called by us Universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest – a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free from this prison by widening our circle of compassion and embrace all living creatures and the whole nature in its beauty."
-Max Frisch*

purchased up to three times, granting a total bonus of plus three.

Factor points may only be spent on Factors. Any Factor points left over at the end of character creation are simply lost. At the Narrator's discretion, these points may be converted into Experience Points.

Factor List

Imagination

Positive Wildcard (Variable Positive Factor) The character has one or more Positive Factors, worth a number of points equal to the total the character spent on this Factor. The character may have a rich aunt who dies and leaves him millions, a previously unknown talent for magic, or stumble on a perfect hiding place over the course of a game. The player should have no idea what the Factor is, and the Narrator is encouraged to keep his plans for Wildcard secret until such time as it becomes an issue in the game.

"The universe is made of stories, not atoms."

-Roger Penrose

The Emperor's New Mind

Artist (1 pt. Positive Factor) The character receives a plus one bonus to creating works of visual art: paint, sculpture, drawing, architecture, or even set design.

Engineer (1 pt. Positive Factor) The character is skilled at creating particularly enduring works. Anything the character builds or designs has a Resilience of one greater than it would have otherwise had. Of course, the design or object may not be elegant or attractive, but it *is* strong.

Rhythm (1 pt. Positive Factor) The character receives a plus one bonus to instrumental, vocal, and computerized musical endeavors: composition, performance and criticism, to name a few. He also has a natural feel for words, gaining a one-point bonus to write poetry or song lyrics.

Bullheaded (3pt. Positive Factor) Characters attempting to make the character act against his normal inclination, whether through debate, emotional appeal, or Pathos, do so at a one-point penalty.

Mimicry (3 pt. Positive Factor) The character is able to imitate the behavior and speech of a specific individual. While, by itself, this isn't enough to fool anyone, this Factor grants a plus one bonus to Disguise rolls, and may also provide a bonus during the use of certain Ethos and Pathos.

Ventriloquism (3 pt. Positive Factor) The character is able to speak without moving his lips, and is also able to make it sound as though his voice is coming from somewhere else. Note that his voice will still be recognizable as his own unless the character has also taken the Mimicry Factor. Each time the character takes this Factor, anyone attempting to locate the source of the sound the character makes is subject to a one point penalty to do so.

Designer (5 pt. Positive Factor) The character's Imagination is considered to be one higher for purposes of designing the practical aspect of devices, strategies, and even situations. This bonus can "stack" with the bonus for Innovator.

Adept (7 pt. Positive Factor) The character is particularly magically talented. He receives a plus one bonus to all rolls to use Logos, Pathos or Ethos. This Factor goes extremely well thematically with the Negative Factor Mad Eyes.

Innovator (10 pt. Positive Factor) The character's Imagination is considered to be one higher for purposes of coming up with unique solutions to problems, whether those problems relate to strategy, lying, building a device, or artistic endeavors. The character's

flexibility and ability to think out of the box may unbalance the game in certain respects; the Narrator should feel free to disallow this Factor if he fears its effect on the game. This not only gives the character a one-point bonus to a significant proportion of his Imagination rolls, it also allows the character to come up with solutions that a character of his level of imagination may not have. For that matter, it may allow a character to come up with solutions his *player* may not have. If a Narrator wishes to drop characters hints, this Factor is a great way to do it.

Negative Wildcard (Variable Negative Factor) The character has one or more Negative Factors, or will in the very near future, worth a number of points equal to the total number of points he gained from this Factor. The player should have no idea what the Factor or Factors is/are, and the Narrator is encouraged to keep his plans for Wildcard secret until such time as it becomes an issue in the game. Additionally, the problems that the character faces, since they are introduced during the story, are even more at the forefront than with normal Negative Factors. The character may find out that he has been confused with a criminal, that he is being hunted by a Liminal or that he is a test tube baby.

*"We are an impossibility in an impossible universe."
-Ray Bradbury*

Liminal Buffet (2 pt. Negative Factor) Whenever a Liminal causes a character with this Factor to behave in a way that nets them Emotion points, that Liminal receives an *additional* Emotion point for each time the character takes this Factor. Characters with this Factor are highly-sought-after meal tickets for many Liminals. Whether the character is happy or even remotely sane when a Liminal is done feeding on him is a question of, at best, tertiary importance for the kind of creature this character is likely to attract.

Mad Eyes (3 pt. Negative Factor) Normal people (those without Intensity) react to the character as though his Intensity were one higher than it actually is, giving him a penalty to virtually all social interactions. At lower levels, there is little system effect other than mild discomfort. At higher levels of Intensity, life becomes more difficult for the character. His dysfunction broadcasts itself in his weirdly intense gaze, his carriage, and his speech patterns. While few would be able to pinpoint exactly what it is about him that makes it unsettling to be around, the effect is there nonetheless. This does not increase a character's Intensity for purposes of Pathos and Fade.

Nightmares (3 pt. Negative Factor) Any time the character is in a stressful situation (which is to say, most of the time while involved in stories) he must succeed in an Imagination+Meditation+Mental Die roll with a Target Number equal to his Imagination+five+the number of times he has taken this Factor. If he does not succeed the roll, he is tormented with nightmares, insomnia, or some other sleep-stealer and receives no rest of any worth that night, making him subject to exhaustion rules. See "Sleep" on page 87.

Speech Impediment (3 pt. Negative Factor) The character has a major speech impediment that prevents him from being understood or taken seriously. All interactions involving speech, including Logos, Pathos, and Ethos, occur with a one-point penalty. If taken three times, this Factor indicates that a character is totally mute. He simply may not communicate verbally or use any Logos, Pathos or Ethos that require speech. He may still, however, communicate normally using sign language, writing or typing.

Bigot (5 pt. Negative Factor) The character receives a one point penalty on all rolls where he is forced to act in the presence of a certain hated group. With *each purchase* of this Factor, the character must choose a group of people: a racial group, a sexual minority, or a religion. Whenever the character is forced to interact with people in that group, he takes a penalty equal to the number of times he has taken this Factor to all rolls. This means that if a character chooses to hate immigrants, homosexuals and Wiccans, he will take a three-point penalty to any and all actions not only done toward homosexuals, immigrants and Wiccans, but all rolls *in their presence*. His hatred is such that it distracts him from even

normally-easy tasks. This is a particularly nasty Negative Factor, and Narrators are encouraged to heavily involve the hated group. This Factor is not appropriate for all games, and is *especially* inappropriate for certain players. Discretion is advised.

Flustered (5 pt. Negative Factor) If this Factor is taken once, the character takes a one-point penalty to any roll that follows a failed roll. A roll that fails due to this penalty also counts as a "failed roll" for purposes of this Factor. Taken twice, the character takes a two-point penalty to all rolls for the rest of the scene if he fails. Taken three times, the character takes a one-point penalty for the remainder of the scene for *each roll* that he fails. For example, if a character fails one roll, his next roll is made with a one-point penalty. If he fails that roll as well, his next roll is made with a two-point penalty. If he fails that third roll, his next roll is made with a three point penalty, and so on. As the character becomes increasingly flustered, he becomes unable to perform even previously easy tasks with any success.

Perception

Sharp-Nosed (1 pt. Positive Factor) The character has an extremely sharp sense of smell; he receives a plus one bonus to all Perception rolls involving scent for each time he has taken this Factor. Taken once, the character is able to distinguish between similar scents easily, though the range of smells he has access to is strictly normal. Taken twice, the character is as skilled as a professional wine taster, able to identify the recipe of a dish simply by smelling it, and can distinguish between vintages of wine by sniffing the cork. If this Factor is taken three times, in addition to the plus three bonus granted to olfactory rolls, the character is able to recognize individuals by scent, even from one or two yards away, and in some cases may be able to identify animals and people by the smells they leave behind.

*"Pain is real when you get
other people to believe in it. If
no one believes in it but you,
your pain is madness or
hysteria."
-Naomi Wolf*

Tactile (1 pt. Positive Factor) The character has an excellent sense of touch and receives a plus one bonus to all Perception rolls involving that sense for each time he takes this Factor. Taken once, the character can distinguish between even subtle gradations of texture and material. Taken twice, the character is able to distinguish between blank paper and paper that has been printed upon even while blindfolded. Taken three times, in addition to the plus three bonus, the character is able to recognize vague printed shapes by touch, and at the Narrator's discretion, may even be able to "read" particularly large and bold fonts entirely by touching the page.

Long Ears (3 pt. Positive Factor) The character receives a plus one bonus to all Perception rolls involving hearing. This Factor cannot be taken with Hard of Hearing.

Kinesic (3 pt. Positive Factor) The character receives a plus one bonus to all uses of the Kinesics Skill within the Social Skill Category; he has a nearly supernatural awareness of the body language and tone of others.

Surveyor (3 pt. Positive Factor) The character gains a one point bonus when attempting to spot small changes in his environment. He can easily identify objects that have been moved, added, tampered with, or are missing from an area. This Factor works equally well with photographs and videotape, provided the character has been to or otherwise observed the area he is surveying. The character receives a one-point bonus to all Perception rolls involving changes that have occurred in his environment.

Integrated Memory (5 pt. Positive Factor) Where Photographic Memory and Phonographic Memory allow a character to remember and recognize things relating to sight and sound, Integrated Memory represents a character's talent for remembering things that relate to touch, taste and smell. The character receives a plus one bonus to all rolls that involve recognizing or remembering things that relate to these three senses. While the

senses themselves may not be that acute, the character is extremely plugged into the memories associated with them. He might be able to recognize a person by their scent (if he's close enough to smell them), recall the texture of a shirt, or remember the unique flavors characteristic of a particular chef's cooking.

Sixth Sense (5 pt. Positive Factor) The character receives a plus one bonus to all rolls involving the Sensitivity Skill within the Arcane Skill Category. Additionally, the Narrator may make a Perception+Sensitivity+Mental Die roll before a character enters into a dangerous situation. This roll receives a plus one bonus for every time the player took this Factor for his player. If the roll succeeds, the character feels a vague sense of unease. Note that this Factor doesn't convey any information, other than discomfort, and it only applies when the character is himself in direct, physical danger. This isn't a "power," but a broad-based anxiety based on a character's connection to his subconscious. Characters with this Factor also often feel uneasy, even when perfectly safe; there is nothing precise or scientific about Sixth Sense.

No Sense of Smell (2 pt. Negative Factor) The character simply cannot smell; he automatically fails all rolls involving his olfactory sense. He will not notice the scent of petroleum from a leaky engine, and food tastes bland and unappealing. This Factor may only be taken once.

Distracted (3 pt. Negative Factor) The character takes a one point penalty to all rolls relating to Perception when he finds himself in a conversation or confrontation with three or more people. Each time this Factor is taken it adds another point to this penalty.

Dyslexic (3 pt. Negative Factor) The character sees letters, numbers, and symbols backwards. He cannot take the Speed Reader Factor, and he takes a penalty of one in any task that involves reading or comprehending the written word. Learning to read a new language is also prohibitively difficult; attempts to read another language that the character has purchased less than three times have any penalties assessed against the roll doubled.

Hard of Hearing (5 pt. Negative Factor) The character takes a penalty of one to any roll involving his sense of hearing for each time he takes this Factor. In many cases, this is dangerous, as it will be more difficult for a character to notice any number of important details; warning sirens, oncoming trains, traffic, and the angry mutter of a crowd. If this Factor is taken three times, the character is entirely deaf. At this level he simply fails any rolls that involve hearing.

Poor Eyesight (5 pt. Negative Factor) The character takes a penalty of one on any roll involving his sense of sight for each time he takes this Factor. Note that most rolls involve sight in one way or another. Certain equipment (such as braille books) and Skills and Factors (such as Long Ears) may offset this penalty to some degree, but for the most part, a character with this Negative Factor will have a hard time of things. A character cannot bypass this penalty with glasses, contacts, or surgery; this lack of acuity is permanent, and represents his vision *after* all corrective measures have been taken.

A character who takes this Negative Factor three times is blind. He simply fails any rolls that involve sight. He may attempt many tasks using different senses, but in most cases, he will simply never be as good at some tasks as people who can see. In combat, he always operates as though he is in complete darkness. See page 95.

Retention

Mathematical Savant (1 pt. Positive Factor) The character receives a plus one bonus to rolls directly involving mathematics and arithmetic. The character is able to perform

*"He wore his passion for his woman like a thorny crown. He said Dolores, I live in fear. My love for you's so overpowering, I'm afraid I will disappear."
-Simon and Garfunkel
Slip Sliding Away*

differential equations in his head, and is able to gauge shopping lists to the penny (including coupons and tax). Note that this doesn't confer any bonus to the *application* of this math. The character is no better at ballistics, pool, or golf than anyone else.

Teflon Skin (1 pt. Positive Factor) The character can argue, rationalize, and plead his way out of quite a few sticky legal situations. He gains a one-point bonus to rolls involving defending himself and/or another legally. If ever caught—the character gains this bonus in situations ranging from trying to weasel his way out of a speeding ticket on the side of the highway to defending himself in court against charges of first degree murder.

Analyst (3 pt. Positive Factor) The character is able to analyze complex situations and come up with a solution with greater facility than most. He receives a plus one bonus to rolls involving ciphers, puzzles, and logical conundrums. He can do cryptograms upside-down and in pen, should he be so inclined.

Focus (3 pt. Positive Factor) The character receives a plus one bonus to all rolls to resist being distracted from the task at hand. Note that this bonus only applies when the character is actively engaged in a task and there is some sort of distracting factor (noise, stress, combat, another person attempting to distract the character).

Loophole (3 pt. Positive Factor) The character has a gift for understanding the legal system, and a one-point bonus to rolls involving the use of the Law Skill. A character with this Skill needn't necessarily be an attorney, or even have a rating in the Skill. In this latter case, however, this Factor, even if taken three times, can only partially offset the four-point penalty for using a Skill using the Mental Die without a rating in the Skill. With that being said, a character who has this Factor and *isn't* a lawyer would likely be madly pursued by any number of law schools if he ever got around to taking the LSAT.

Mapper (3 pt. Positive Factor) This character has an excellent sense of spatial orientation. He is almost never lost, and can usually give an approximate distance between any two points with which he is familiar. He receives a plus one bonus to all rolls involving location, including remembering exits, identifying the quickest route to a location, and finding his way around a room in the dark. In this last case, the bonus from Mapper stacks with the bonus from Photographic Memory.

Trivialist (3 pt. Positive Factor) The character with this Factor is a master of minutiae. He makes rolls to remember a specific fact (name, date, location, definition) with a plus one bonus. Note that this doesn't necessarily allow him to come up with solutions any easier than anyone else. A character with this Factor and a low Retention is essentially an encyclopedia; he has access to reams of information, but no real facility at using it.

Language (5 pt. Positive Factor) The character knows another language. Purchased once, this allows a character to communicate basic ideas in a language ("Where can I buy food?" "That man is chasing us."). Purchased twice, the character is able to get across and understand technical and complex information, such as multi-step instructions and abstract ideas, though the discussion lacks elegance and may take an extended amount of time. Purchased three times, the character is as fluent in the chosen language as a native speaker; he is able to argue, persuade and compose works of art in this language as easily as in his own. Note that in order to use Pathos or Ethos that require a subject to understand the statements a character makes, he must purchase the language at least twice.

This Factor can be purchased up to three times for each languages the character wishes to know, though the character can be unevenly fluent in a number of languages.

"What do you do when you want to be the creatures you're trying to kill?."
-Jake Lanni

Phonographic Memory (5 pt. Positive Factor) The character's auditory recall is amazing. He receives a plus one bonus to remember anything he's overheard, even specific words in languages, although he may not understand, numbers, and the pitches of unfamiliar sounds. Note that this Factor doesn't help a character remember anything relating to any of the other four senses.

Speed Reader (7 pt. Positive Factor) The character is able to read at least twice as fast as the average person. He can easily get through a thick novel (800 pages) in four hours, including breaks. If this Factor is purchased more than once, this speed is doubled again. Taken three times, this Factor allows a character to read and comprehend even dense technical manuals (if he would be able to understand them anyway) in under an hour. Taken with Photographic Memory, this Factor can allow a character to spend less time studying a Skill. Instead of spending a full day studying, a character who has taken this Factor once need only spend eight hours studying. If he's taken it twice, he only needs to spend four hours, and taken three times, this Factor reduces the necessary study time to two hours. This does not decrease purchasing costs for Experience Points.

Photographic Memory (10 pt. Positive Factor) The character has fantastic visual recall. He receives a plus one bonus to all rolls involving remembering something he's seen, whether that's the location of people in a room, the clothing someone was wearing, or specific phrases on a printed page, billboard, or napkin. At the Narrator's discretion, certain easy-to-remember information (such as the color of a person's shirt) may not require a roll at all. Note that this Factor does nothing to help a character remember anything relating to any of the other four senses.

Reading and memorizing a textbook with this Factor can allow a character to temporarily gain a Skill. If he reads and studies, uninterrupted, for a day, he is able to perform that Skill for a number of days equal to the number of times he took this Factor without taking the four- or two-point penalty usually associated with attempting a Skill without a rating. Thus, if a character who purchased this Factor twice has no Skill in mechanics, but spends a day studying a repair manual, he can spend the next two days fixing his vehicle without taking the four-point penalty he would usually take in this case. If he had purchased the Factor only once, he would only be able to work for a day before having to hit the book again. In order to use this Factor, however, study material does need to be available. No amount of navel-gazing will allow a character to learn anything about a Skill, though certain Pathos may bypass this rule.

*"The most beautiful things are
those that madness prompts
and reason writes."
-Andre Gide*

The character doesn't need to have a rating in the Skill Category under which the studied Skill falls, as he isn't really gaining a rating, just an ability to lurch through the basics of the Skill. Gaining a Skill permanently still requires the expenditure of Experience Points, but this Factor provides an excellent justification for doing so.

Innumerate (3 pt. Negative Factor) The character is absolutely *stupid* when it comes to math. If this Factor is taken once, he is unable to perform important functions like figuring out the tip on a check without the use of a calculator. When he has to perform a task involving numbers, he takes a one-point penalty on rolls relating to that task. If this Negative Factor is taken twice, the character is unable to do even simple arithmetic without at least a sheet of paper. While he may be able to pull off 2+2, much beyond that just *won't happen* without some sort of tool. The character takes a four-point penalty to rolls involving math, even when he's using a calculator or piece of scrap paper. Taken three times, the character just doesn't get numbers. He may be brain damaged, developmentally disabled, or just really *really* lazy when it comes to thinking, but for whatever reason, if something involves numbers, he'll likely get it wrong. This includes things like reading speed limit signs and knowing how much things cost. The character probably has a decent idea of approximate values based on context (highways, for example, usually have speed limits of between 50-70 miles per hour, and hamburgers rarely cost more than twelve dollars), but approximate value is

about the best he can manage. The character who has taken this Factor three times simply fails any rolls involving numbers. A character who has taken this Negative Factor may Burnout a point of Imagination to ignore the effects of this Factor for a single task. Note he gets no bonus for Burnout in this case—it simply represents the character overcoming his intellectual inertia in order to manage numerical work.

Retrograde Amnesiac (3 pt. Negative Factor) The character's memory is damaged; he is unable to remember anything that happened prior to a relatively recent point in his history. Taken once, the character has had time to rebuild his life—he knows his name, address and job, though this knowledge may only be because of documents in his wallet. He knows those who knew him before, but despite this, remembers nothing of their prior relationship. Though he may have reached a point of stability, he never knows when an unpleasant secret from his past may surface. Taken twice, the character is uncertain of his name, address, or any information about the person he was before. He knows no one who knew him, and has no way of finding anyone. He can only go on and hope that blind luck will give him some revelation. Despite this, he has new friends, possibly a new name, and the beginnings of a new life. Taken three times, the character has just awakened from his past. He has no name, no identification, and no idea who or where he is. In all cases, the character retains his Skills and knowledge (languages, city names, history, etc.) though he has no memory of ever *learning* any of it. A particularly introspective character may glean some vague idea of his past from an inventory of his skill and knowledge, but will be unable to gain precise details.

Narrators are encouraged to use this Negative Factor to the fullest—what is an unpleasant surprise for the character should be a surprise for the player as well.

Scatterbrained (3 pt. Negative Factor) The character takes a penalty of one to any action that takes longer than a single round to complete. He is unable to focus well enough to maintain concentration for any extended period of time. This Negative Factor cannot be taken with Focus.

Rut (5 pt. Negative Factor) Whenever the character is confronted with a situation or outcome he didn't expect, it takes him an additional round to react. The first round after the surprise is spent in shock as the character attempts to process. If this Factor is taken more than once, the gap in time becomes one round greater for each time Rut is taken. If the character is surprised by an attack, he is *still* unable to take action, even defensive action, until his designated processing time is over.

Anterograde Amnesiac (7 pt. Negative Factor) The character's memory is fundamentally flawed; he is unable to retain information gained after character creation. Taken once, this is surmountable—the character is able to remember some names, vague circumstances and details. With great effort, he is even able to learn new Skills, though the Experience Point costs to learn anything except Pathos is doubled. Taken twice, the character is unable to learn anything other than Pathos, though he is still occasionally able to remember important names, faces and circumstances. Taken three times, the character is nearly unplayable: permanently locked into how he began the game and unable to learn or grow in any way except Pathos, which itself continuously surprises the character as much or more than those around him. At this level, the character is unaware even that he is amnesiac. While he is himself locked into a continuously repeating and erasing loop of memory, the world around him moves on. It is highly recommended that only NPCs should take this Factor more than once. This Factor can not be taken with Photographic Memory, Phonographic Memory or Integrated Memory.

Illiterate (7 pt. Negative Factor) A character with this Negative Factor is unable to read with any fluency. Taken once, this Negative Factor means that the character (barely)

"All great deeds and all great thoughts have a ridiculous beginning. Great works are often born on a street corner or in a restaurant's revolving door."
-Albert Camus

knows enough words to survive at the bottom of society; he can understand a bus schedule, get a drivers license, and can pick things off a menu without pictures. If this Negative Factor is taken twice, the character can still compare written words to each other with some facility (allowing him to find an address if someone wrote it down for him) and can probably both write and recognize his name. Taken three times, this Negative Factor indicates a character who is completely unfamiliar with writing and numbers. He cannot write or recognize his own name, and everything written looks like everything else written. He just lacks the familiarity with letters to distinguish them from each other. The character may have never learned to read, or have some sort of disability. Alternately, the character may be a fresh immigrant from another country that uses a totally different set of symbols from the Roman Alphabet: China, Japan, the former Soviet Union or virtually anywhere in the Middle East.

SES

Gadgets (2 pt. Positive Factor) The character has gadgets and *things*; he is wired beyond the ultimate edges of his SES. A character with this Factor is considered to have an SES of one higher for purposes of determining what things he has; they may be stolen goods, things cheaply purchased off of an Internet auction, or gifts from affluent family members. A character with an SES of one could, for example, have a cell phone and brand-new computer if he took this Factor twice. A character with an SES of two could have a Palm Pilot, bleeding edge laptop, and combination satellite radio/GPS in his 1989 El Camino. At higher levels of SES, a character could have automated household processes and plasma-screen monitors mounted in every room in his house, all wired to a central computer activated by voice. The Narrator should ultimately make the call on how appropriate any given gadget is for the SES and the number of times this Factor has been taken. While things such as computers, phones, cars and appliances can be purchased using this Factor, other things, such as weapons or houses cannot. Also, though a character may own things through this Factor, replacing these them should they wear out or become damaged is almost impossible.

Low on Capital (2 pt. Negative Factor) The character's SES is considered to be one lower for determining the availability of funds. While he still has all the other trappings of a higher SES (friends, refinement, living arrangements and gadgets), he is living unsustainably: on the edge of financial breakdown. He may be hounded by persistent debt (and debt collectors), plunging stock values or recent unemployment.

Offputting (2 pt. Negative Factor) The character's SES is considered to be one lower when SES is applied to social interaction. The character may have regrettable taste in clothes, hygiene and vocabulary, or he may be actively obnoxious: loud, abrasive and opinionated. Alternately, the character may revel in his unrefinement, being the comfortable "millionaire next door," happily mingling several rungs below himself on the financial ladder.

Secret Hideout (2 pt. Positive Factor) The character has a hidey-hole. There isn't any guarantee of security, plumbing, electricity or sanitation, but it's someplace the character is relatively sure only he knows about. Taken once, this represents a small nook: an alley with an entrance obscured by the surrounding buildings or a cave out in the woods. Taken twice, it could be a back office in a building that has had the front entrance boarded up or a shack in the middle of nowhere. At this level, the hiding place has a door and a lock. Taken three times, it could represent an underground room with lighting and plumbing or a fully functioning cabin. Further purchases of this Factor may represent other bolt holes (on a one-for-one basis) or a better hideout (again, on a one-for-one basis). When additional locations are purchased, they start at the first level of comfort. Additional purchases of this Factor must be allocated to comfort for each individual location. Note that the precise location and nature of each hideout must be determined at the time of purchasing this

“Our society is run by insane people for insane objectives. I think we're being run by maniacs for maniacal ends and I think I'm liable to be put away as insane for expressing that. That's what's insane about it”.

-John Lennon

Factor. This Factor can be purchased as many times as the player likes, though only three purchases can be allocated to any single location.

Easy on the Eyes (4 pt. Positive Factor) A character with this Factor just looks *good*. Whether it's because of the character's natural elegance, gym-perfect body, or the fortuitous convergence of some really great genes is irrelevant. For whatever reason, this character is a knockout. Whenever making a roll that *directly* relates to the character's appearance, the character takes a one-point bonus. Note that the character's appearance must *directly* relate to the roll. Seduction and flirting information out of a secretary would be affected by this Positive Factor. A character trying to lie himself into a party would not. The Golden Tongue Positive Factor would be required for that.

Influential Friends (3 pt. Positive Factor) The character's SES is considered one point higher when determining who he knows. This can be used for networking, calling in favors, or knowing what names to drop and when. On a less mechanical note, the character knows one person with an SES of one higher than his. If a character takes this Factor multiple times, he may allocate additional purchases to either higher SES of his "friend" (on a one-for-one basis) or additional friends (on a one for one basis). Note that each purchase must be used for *either* additional friends or additional SES. Additional "friends" start with a default SES of one higher than the character. The character may know this person through a professional organization, his family, or he may have gone to high school or college with him. In any case, while the character and the friend have some degree of friendliness, no one likes to be used. Characters who abuse this Factor may find that their "friend" wants nothing to do with them. When buying this Factor, players should determine the exact nature of the friend and relationship all of which is, of course, subject to the Narrator's permission.

*"...Much Madness is divinest
Sense to a discerning Eye
much Sense the Starkest
Madness..."
-Emily Dickinson*

Labeled (3 pt. Negative Factor) The character has a bad reputation, deserved or not. Taken once, this represents a bad credit rating and poor job references or a history with all the wrong people in all the wrong ways. No one has taken action yet, but it can still make things inconvenient. Taken twice, the character has some outstanding debts and/or a criminal record. Taken three times, the character is actively hunted by someone; whether that's the police, mafia or even less savory characters is up to the Narrator.

Real Estate (3 pt. Positive Factor) The character either has a "vacation home" one SES step down from his usual dwelling, or his usual dwelling is one SES step up from what it would be. Thus a character with an SES of three could have a large house, rather than a small one, or an apartment in another town. If he took this Factor twice, he could have both. Furnishings and minimum household stocks are included. In the case of larger houses, however, the staff necessary to maintain such an establishment is not.

Characters with additional houses or apartments must decide the location and layout of these homes upon purchasing this Factor. Note that a character with more than one home must spend at least some time there and make sure that all the appropriate bills are paid. A character with a low SES can easily be driven into abject poverty by the expenses associated with a mansion or a series of smaller residences. Any combination of "extra residences" and "larger residences" can be taken. This Factor can be taken as many times as the player likes, but particularly expensive houses or large numbers of locations may require a great deal of explanation on the part of the player.

Money to Burn (4 pt. Positive Factor) The character's SES is considered to be one point higher when determining his "cash on hand." He isn't able to buy a larger home, doesn't know any additional people, and doesn't have any of the additional detritus of affluence, but he does have a little extra pocket change. Note that while equipment, dinners, and tanks of gas can be purchased with this, all gains that a character obtains with this Factor are temporary. Additional homes, friends, or particular kinds of equipment must be

purchased using the appropriate Factor, or better, additional SES.

Golden Tongue (5 pt. Positive Factor) The character's tongue is sharpened to a razor's edge; he is an artist, and words are his medium. Any SES rolls that he makes involving social interaction, whether for flattery, intimidation or misdirection, are made with a plus one bonus.

Safety Net (7 pt. Positive Factor) The character has a fallback option—things are almost never as bad as they seem. Most of the time, this represents a character with a family of a higher SES than his. It may, however, represent a particularly close group of friends, someone on whom the character has blackmail or illegal access to a set of resources. Whatever the reason for the character's access, the SES of his “safety net” is one higher than his for each time he purchases this Factor. For example, if the character is SES two, and he takes this Positive Factor three times, representing his rich grandparents, the grandparents would have an SES of five. The character is able to use *one single benefit* of this higher SES at any given time. Thus, he could live with them in a large manor rather than an apartment, but while living with them, still only has access to the money that comes with SES level one. If he were to move out, he would then be able to ask for money (functionally having the “Money to Burn” Positive Factor) but would have to live on his own, and the money would never be a certain thing. He could also borrow the family car (when using the “possessions” benefit of SES) but then could not ask for money or live with his “safety net.” The “status/refinement” and social benefits of SES cannot be “borrowed” in this way.

Keep in mind that these benefits aren't just the characters' by right of birth. If gained through family, the character must cultivate a relationship with the family member or members on whom he occasionally depends. Further, whenever the character asks for something, he is *asking a favor*. If he's the black sheep of a rich family, having to ask for money will be an embarrassing and uncertain endeavor—the safety net, after all, always has the option of saying “no.” No one likes to feel used. A character who uses or abuses this Factor too often may find himself left to his own devices (or worse). This is even more true if the character's means of getting these benefits is anything other than family or close friends. A blackmailed character may finally decide to go to the police if the cost becomes too high, or the character might be caught skimming off of the top of whatever business he's stealing from. It is important for characters who take this Positive Factor to determine *how exactly* they receive these benefits, and how exactly he is treated when he asks for them/takes them. It's also important for the character to determine what aid is available from this source, and what form this aid takes. For example, while it is entirely reasonable for a crooked used-car salesman to have access to cars and some cash, he would not be likely to have access to any housing benefits from this Positive Factor. As always, common sense and Narrator approval should be all-important with this Factor.

Agility

Double-Jointed (1 pt. Positive Factor) The character is extremely limber; when attempting to escape bonds such as rope or chain, the character receives a plus one bonus to the action. Note that some bonds, such as straight jackets and handcuffs circumvent this bonus. At the Narrator's discretion, certain attempts to escape may not receive the bonus.

Sprinter (1 pt. Positive Factor) The character's Agility is considered to be one higher when determining how quickly he can move. Note that other Factors such as Marathoner can be added to this Factor for truly impressive runners.

Ambidextrous (2 pt. Positive Factor) This Factor represents a character with impressive control of his non-dominant hand. Each time this Factor is taken, the penalty for using a one-handed device or weapon with the non-dominant hand is reduced by one. Taken three

*"Sanity calms, but madness is more interesting."
-John Russel*

times, the character is really and truly ambidextrous: able to use both hands with equal facility. There is no penalty for such a character to use his non-dominant hand. Note however, that attempting properly two-handed tasks with one hand still incurs a penalty.

Dodging (3 pt. Positive Factor) The character has got a knack for getting out of the way of trouble. Whenever attempting to dodge using Evasive, the character gets a one-point bonus for each time this Factor has been taken.

Hip Shot (3 pt. Positive Factor) The character can draw a weapon freely at the beginning of a round, without needing to spend an action to do so. Note that if he needs to put away another weapon to draw, he must still spend an action putting away the first weapon. Each additional purchase of this Factor allows a character to draw an additional weapon without having to take an action.

Ranged Weapon Bonus (3 pt. Positive Factor) A character with this Factor is extremely familiar with a certain ranged weapon. Not a certain type of weapon, but one particular weapon; like grandfather's Colt or the bow he made on a camping trip. He knows its curves and its idiosyncrasies like the insides of his own eyelids. Whenever trying to shoot that weapon (and only that weapon) the character receives a one-point bonus for each time the Factor is taken.

Crack Shot (4 pt. Positive Factor) A character with this Factor has an intuitive feel for difficult shots. Whenever the character is attempting a shot that would normally have a penalty, he is able to ignore one point of that penalty for each time he has taken this Positive Factor.

Accuracy (5 pt. Positive Factor) The character receives a plus one bonus when attempting to throw, shoot, or sling an object at another; darts, bullets, arrows and baseballs are all covered by this Factor.

Bad Driver (1 pt. Negative Factor) The character is a terrible driver. He may be distracted, nervous, or easily lost; in any event, whenever the character drives, he takes a one-point penalty to the action. In certain highly-urban campaigns where driving is unlikely to be an issue, the Narrator should feel free to disallow this Factor.

Easy Target (2 pt. Negative Factor) For whatever reason, a character with this Factor seems to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Whenever rolling to dodge or otherwise avoid trouble by moving out of the way, the character receives a one-point penalty to that roll each time purchased.

Slow (2 pt. Negative Factor) The character's Agility is considered to be one lower for purposes of determining how quickly he can move, and in some cases, how quickly he can perform a task, when not in combat. The character can have "smoker's lung," a weak ankle, or just generally plodding. In any event, the character is unlikely to be winning any races.

Obvious (3 pt. Negative Factor) Try though he might, a character with this Factor just can't seem to keep from being seen and heard. The character suffers a one-point penalty to any roll involving trying to stay out of sight, keep quiet, or avoid drawing attention to himself.

Resilience

Bellows Lungs (1 pt. Positive Factor) The character has an impressive lung capacity. In addition to having to inhale less often when speaking, when determining how long he can hold his breath, the character's Resilience is considered to be one higher.

Liver of Steel (3 pt. Positive Factor) The character's Resilience is considered to be one

*"What is madness? To have erroneous perceptions and to reason correctly from them."
-Voltaire*

higher when determining his resistance to any drug or poison. Note that this applies equally well to lifesaving drugs, poisons, painkillers, and alcohol. A character with this Positive Factor may be able to drink platoons of Marines under the table, but he'll be less than thrilled the next day when no amount of aspirin will help.

Resist Torture (3 pt. Positive Factor) Whether because he enjoys it or because he just doesn't feel pain the same way, the character's Resilience is considered to be one higher when determining how well he can hold out against torture or discomfort. Additionally, any penalties that the character would incur because of distraction from pain or discomfort are lowered by one each time this Factor is taken.

Ascetic (5 pt Positive Factor) The character's Resilience is considered to be one higher when determining how long he can stay without food. While he may still feel the pangs of hunger or the irritability from an inadequate diet, he is still able to function.

Catnapper (5 pt. Positive Factor) The character's Resilience is considered to be one higher when determining how much sleep he needs per night and how long he can go without sleep. Note that this doesn't necessarily mean that the character is *comfortable* with the amount of sleep he gets, but that he can function optimally on it. When this Factor is purchased two or three times, the character no longer has to get sleep in unbroken increments; he is able to survive on a multitude of naps, provided the total time sleeping equals or exceeds the required number of hours. See sleeping rules on Page 87.

Marathoner (5 pt. Positive Factor) The character's Resilience is considered to be one higher when determining how long he can maintain maximum effort. This applies equally well to all physical tasks: running, lifting, carrying, swimming and climbing.

Stout Frame (7 pt. Positive Factor) The character is able to take a hit remarkably well. He receives an additional point for damage, both Trauma and Burnout. This point cannot be burned out in any circumstance other than being damaged. However, taking a hit to this additional damage Quality does not affect his performance in any way. The damage "pool" thus gained does not add to Natural Defense and must be healed at the normal rate, but a character with this Factor can survive what would otherwise be killing blows.

Allergy (5 pt. Negative Factor) The character takes Burnout in the presence of a particular substance. In all cases, the character takes a single point of Burnout each round he is in direct contact with the substance. Taken once, the character is allergic to something he's unlikely to run across often: certain industrial cleaners, obscure plants, or exotic animals. Taken twice, the character is allergic to something more common: cat/dog dander, cigarette smoke or food allergies. Taken three times, the character must take constant care; he is highly allergic to things like fabric softeners, dust and mold. "Contact" in this context can be as innocent as being in the same room as large amounts of the allergen. This Factor is not intended for characters who are made uncomfortable in the presence of certain allergens; while a certain character concept may demand that he be vulnerable in this way, the game effects are minor enough that a Factor isn't warranted.

Sickly (2 pt. Negative Factor) The character's immune system is often not up to the task of protecting the character. When attempting to resist drugs, disease, or infection, the character's Resilience is considered to be one lower. Taken more than once, this represents a character particularly prone to illness, as his Resilience is lowered even further. Such characters are encouraged to explain their weakness through background.

Diseased (6 pt. Negative Factor) The character has a physical condition: taken once, the character has a chronic but manageable disease that nonetheless affects his health. He loses one point from a Physical Quality. Examples of this level of Diseased include diabetes, severe asthma, mild fibromyalgia, hypoglycemia, and anemia. Taken twice the character has a potentially life-threatening condition that has reached a stable state. He loses two

*"What we fear comes to pass
more speedily than what we
hope."
-Publius Syrus,
Moral Sayings
(1st Century B.C.E.)*

points from Physical Qualities. Examples of this level of disease include cancers in remission, severe fibromyalgia, and emphysema. Taken three times the character has a disease that will almost certainly kill him: AIDS, metastasized cancers and severe strokes are examples of this level of Diseased. The character loses three points from Physical Qualities, and is in danger of being laid low at virtually any time.

Strength

Deceptive Strength (1 pt. Positive Factor) The character simply doesn't appear to be as strong as he is. This can either represent a character who looks weaker than he is, and whose opponents thus underestimate him, or a character who looks stronger than he is. In the second case, the character is likely able to get out of some potentially sticky situations simply by bluffing. Each purchase of this Factor makes the character look roughly like someone one point different from actual Strength. Thus, purchased twice, this Factor could make a Strength three character look like a Strength five bruiser or a Strength one weakling. There is no mechanical effect to this Factor; the Narrator should determine what, if any, effect it has under any given circumstances.

Heft (2 pt. Positive Factor) The character's Strength is considered one higher when determining what weapons he can use without penalty. The character is able to balance the weapon in a way that compensates for his relative lack of Strength. He may look odd doing it, but he can use whatever implement he's got as well as those better naturally equipped for the task.

Power Lifter (2 pt. Positive Factor) The character's Strength is considered one higher when determining the weight of objects he can lift and carry.

Bruiser (3 pt. Positive Factor) Violence doesn't need to be refined, and a character with this Positive Factor knows it. He receives a one-point bonus to rolls to hit someone with his fist or feet. This does not apply when the character is using other attacks, such as clawing, biting, or even refined techniques such as aimed shots. This Factor is the crowning jewel of the character who has struggled to the nadir of human evolution.

Juggernaut (3 pt. Positive Factor) Once the character decides to go after something, he becomes a powerhouse. He gets a one-point bonus to overcoming physical barriers—doors, walls, dressers, windows, bars, and people. Note that in this last case, the character does not get a bonus to *attack* the individual standing in his way, just to roll over him like a force of nature.

Pitcher (3 pt. Positive Factor) The character's Strength is considered one higher when determining the weight of objects he can throw, the distance he can throw them, and the speed at which said objects are thrown. Note that this Factor doesn't apply a bonus to actually *hitting* anything. That requires the Agility Factor Accuracy. See pages 23-24 for Agility rules.

Intimidating Appearance (3 pt. Positive Factor) Whether because of tattoos, piercings, or just a naturally scary mien, the character receives a plus one bonus to all rolls involving intimidation, even if those rolls do not involve the character's Strength Quality. His sheer physical presence is enough to invoke dread, even in the most refined of surroundings.

Athletic (7 pt. Positive Factor) The character receives a plus one bonus to all rolls involving athletic ability; running, jumping swimming, and climbing to name a few. This Factor specifically *does not* apply to hitting people, dodging, taking a hit, throwing things, or lifting things. Other Factors must be purchased for a bonus on these actions.

*"Fear is a tyrant and a despot,
more terrible than the rack,
more potent than the snake."
-Edgar Wallace
The Clue of the Twisted Candle*

Bad Back (1 pt. Negative Factor) The character's Strength is considered to be one less when determining what he can lift and carry.

Glass Jaw (3 pt. Negative Factor) The character suffers from a one-point penalty whenever attempting to bite someone or something. Additionally the character receives an additional point of damage if the source of the damage is some sort of impact to the mouth (usually a punch). A character may have this Negative Factor for any number of reasons: poor dental hygiene, braces, inadequate calcium intake, or just an unfortunately brittle smile.

Palsied Limb (4 pt. Negative Factor) There is something wrong with one of the character's limbs. When performing actions that require two hands (and most actions do, one way or another), the character takes a one point penalty. Alternately, the character may have a palsied leg. In that case, all actions that require mobility take a one-point penalty. Taken three times, the character is simply missing the limb in question. He automatically fails most tasks that require having a matched set. Those tasks that he doesn't automatically fail take twice as long and still have the three-point penalty associated with taking this Factor three times.

Shrinking Violet (5 pt. Negative Factor) The character fights the way a snowball tans; this Negative Factor reduces the character's die when attempting or defending against an act of violence, whether armed or unarmed. If, for example, a character with the standard d6 takes this Factor, he rolls a d4 when engaging in combat. If he began with a d8, taking this Factor would reduce him to a d6, while taking it twice would reduce him to a d4. A character with a d8 or higher may take this Factor three times, though reducing a die to less than a d4 means the character simply receives no die roll. Characters who tend to take this Factor include, but are not limited to, those with high Dread, pacifist characters and ones who react poorly to pressure.

Skill Categories and Skills

Training is separated into two classifications: Skill Categories and Skills. The Skill Category represents basic "book knowledge" of a wide subject; broad brush strokes of understanding. Everything from a general understanding of art to familiarity with technical skills are represented. Underneath each Skill Category is a set of Skills. The Skill, not the Skill Category is used for determining die rolls. A character without a rating in a Skill may attempt to do something covered by it anyway, though he will operate at a four-point penalty if the task he's attempting uses the Mental Die or a two-point penalty if the task uses the Physical Die.

Both Skills and Skill Categories run along the same basic scale as Qualities: ones represent little understanding; the armchair quarterback or the man who changes his own oil. Sixes are at the top of their fields: doctors with thriving practices, lawyers who argue before the Supreme Court, and college athletes with full-ride scholarships.

Points in Skill Categories cost two CPs apiece; points in Skills cost one CP apiece.

The Skill Category determines the *maximum rating* a character can have in any given Skill. This means a character's rating in a Skill can never exceed the rating in the Skill Category under which it falls. A character never adds his rating in a Skill Category when rolling dice.

On the other hand, a Skill Category may have a higher rating than any Skill beneath. Vague understanding often comes before skilled experience, but it doesn't work as well the other way around.

*"There are only three sins –
causing pain, causing fear,
and causing anguish. The rest
is window dressing."
-Roger Caras*

Skill Categories and Skills Scale

The scale for Skill Categories and Skills is similar to the scale for Qualities in that it uses the same number of intervals to represent the range from atrocious to remarkable. The primary difference is that Skill Categories and Skills represent progress along a trained spectrum. A player needn't buy Driving or any other everyday activity unless he wants his character to have been formally trained in that Skill or Skill Category (if he wanted his character to be a chef, butler, or race car driver, for example). A high rating represents a tremendous amount of talent and technical skill, in all likelihood it will be combined with either Savant or Certification, if not both.

1. This is the bare minimum of training one can have and still be considered at all trained in a task. Beginning students or hobbyists generally have this level of Skill.
2. When a character hits this level in a Skill or a Skill Category, he's begun exploring some of the deeper aspects of the field. He's not good enough to begin practicing with any notable proficiency within the category, but he's getting there making strides.
3. High-level students and truly talented amateurs are usually at this level of understanding. At this point, a character is conversant with most of the central ideas and theories of a field, and is reasonably proficient at a few tasks.
4. Beginning professionals are usually at this level. They can identify most problems relating to their field quickly and efficiently, and are locally well known within professional circles.
5. Experienced, talented professionals are usually level five. A character at this level is astonishingly good at what he does, whether that's driving, painting, writing, teaching, or surgery. While not infallible, there are few situations within his field that the character is not familiar enough with to dissolve, fix, or create. This is the point at which a character becomes known as an "expert."
6. Nobel Laureates, Pulitzer Prize Winners, Academy Award Winners and other nationally/internationally known or respected experts fall into this level of Skill. This is it; the top of the natural pile.

Skill List

Arcane

Arcane Skills are those that relate to religion, parapsychology or the unknown. Characters with high ratings in this category tend to be professional psychics, religious leaders, nut job conspiracy theorists, or some combination thereof. The use of both Logos and Ethos are dependent on Skills falling under this Skill Category. Arcane contains the following Skills:

Conspiracies is the collection of theories, speculation, and little-known facts that provide a patchwork explanation for the incongruities that characters may find themselves faced with in "straight" history, or even their daily lives.

Cryptozoology is the study and knowledge of creatures commonly regarded as extinct or imaginary, covering everything from Bigfoot to vampires, ghosts, and, until recently, the coelacanth.

Eldritch covers understanding of the beliefs, history, holidays and big names of the major world religions. It also provides less detailed but accurate information about lesser known sects, cults, and religions with smaller followings. While this Skill doesn't convey

Passion has little to do with euphoria and everything to do with patience. It is not about feeling good. It is about edurance. Like patience, passion comes from the same Latin root: pati. It does not mean to flow with exuberance. It means to suffer."
-Mark Danielewski
House of Leaves

knowledge of a language, it grants a basic familiarity with most symbolic or pictographic symbol sets. More obscure meanings or symbols may warrant truly astronomical Target Numbers, requiring many hours of research to decipher. Included within Eldritch is the study of cross-cultural religious and magical rites. A character's rating in a Logos spell is limited by his rating in this Skill.

Meditation is the use of combined deep breathing, visualization, and/or positioning to reach a state of calm reflection or increased sensitivity. While individual methods may vary, the basics remain the same across the board, though circumstances may make a certain varieties of meditation impossible.

Parapsychology is the study of the untapped forces of the mind and unexplained forces of the universe. This skill covers understanding of all kinds of Fortean and psychic phenomena.

Sensitivity is more of a knack or a feeling than a Skill; with it, characters are able to sense the presence of phenomena relating to Passion, Fade, and, to a lesser degree, Logos. A character will never get detailed information from this Skill, though he may get hunches about the general nature and location of what he's feeling at the Narrator's discretion.

Art

Characters with a rating in the Art Skill Category tend to be proficient with music, visual art, sculpture, performance, or some other form of creating works of beauty, entertainment, or occasional utility. Artists, writers, ad executives and eccentrics often have Skills within this Skill Category.

Music: Characters skilled in Music and trained (or perhaps talented) in the performance, composition and appreciation of music. This includes both instrumental and vocal varieties.

Industrial covers the ability to create. Characters with this Skill can sew, knit, work with lumber, metal, stone, pottery, or ceramics, and, in short *create*. This Skill works equally well for artist characters who tend to work with durable materials and engineers or machinists.

Theater: A rating in Theater denotes the ability to engage in and appreciate performance, including film, live theater and radio. Characters skilled in Theater are also skilled in dance, including ballroom, tap, modern, jazz, and "club" dancing.

Visual Art represents training or talent in the creation and appreciation of two-dimensional works of art. This includes drawing, sketching and painting. Additionally, this Skill covers lighting, the aesthetics of design and photography, including development techniques.

Writing covers the ability to write poignant, evocative material within the demands of the occasion. Journalism, poetry, fiction and even particularly creative conversation fit under this Skill.

Collegiate

General academic knowledge falls into the Collegiate Skill Category. In addition to topics like History, Science and Sociology, this Skill Category includes Skills relating to Finance and Research. At least some familiarity with Skills in this category is essential for office-type professional characters of any stripe.

Science is nothing but perception."
-Plato

Business is the Skill of the financier, the banker, the lawyer, and the small business owner. It covers everything from familiarity with compound-complex interest and investment strategies, to the basics of contract negotiation. Creative investment, personal savings, and business etiquette are all included within this Skill – a must have for any character wanting to climb the SES ladder.

Law represents familiarity with the ins and outs of civil and criminal law, as well as the particular rules of police and courts. While lawyers and law officials always have this Skill, any character who violates the law, or who draws the attention of the police for whatever reason, would do well to invest in it.

Logic represents familiarity and skill with the techniques of formal logic, ciphers, and cryptography. If there's a riddle to be solved, Logic likely provides the tools to solve it. A basic understanding of this Skill also allows characters to avoid logical pitfalls and see to the core of an argument. Note that Logic also provides formal training in fallacies; an unethical or desperate character can easily use a few well-placed bits of manipulation to turn any argument in his favor. Few can stand against a master of Logic in a formal debate; the persuasive power of this Skill is such that by the end, few would *want* to.

History covers understanding of the major movements, dates, individuals and thoughts of the past. It also provides a basic understanding of the politics and culture of different regions and time periods. This Skill is an excellent addition to a character with the Language Factor, as it allows him to more completely understand the culture whose language he speaks.

Research is arguably one of the most common Skills in Abeo. A rating in this Skill represents familiarity with a wide variety of research methods and tools, from the Internet to books to interview techniques. Monster hunters, academics, and trivia hounds all tend to have ratings in this Skill.

Science at the lower levels of understanding conveys understanding of the terminology, and to a lesser degree, the theories of "hard" scientific thought and advanced mathematics. A character needn't have a rating in this Skill to add, subtract, multiply, or divide, but algebraic functions, calculus, and formula work are utterly beyond the comprehension of a character without this Skill. This Skill also conveys understanding of the practical elements of chemistry, biology, physics and the other physical sciences; a rating is essential for characters in medical fields. At the higher levels, Science also provides a working knowledge of the cutting-edge theories of quantum mechanics, string theory, and other theoretical but world-shattering ideas.

Sociology covers and understanding of the behavior and beliefs of large groups of people, including buying behavior, politics, and the psychology of particular groups. Would-be politicians, psychologists, and advertising executives all tend to have ratings in this Skill.

Computer

The Computer Skill Category covers knowledge of building, repairing, using, and modifying computers. Any character can point, click, type, and surf the 'net, but a rating in Skills within the Computer Skill Category is needed to go any further. Programmers, technicians, webmasters, and Internet junkies are all likely to have ratings in Computer Skills.

Devices: a rating in this Skill denotes an ability to operate, maintain, repair, modify, and build computerized devices that are not computers themselves but interface with them. In the case of creating computerized devices, unless the character is using an existing device, he must also have all of the materials to build the gadget, along with an understanding of

*"No passion so effectively robs
the mind of all its powers of
acting and reasoning as fear."
-Edmond Burke*

Electronics from within the Technical Skill Category. Building devices is a multi-stage process, requiring rolls for design, construction (often several rolls for the different components) and a final roll the first time the device is used. Note that this Skill only allows characters to build variants on existing devices. Creating entirely new gadgets requires the Invention Skill from within the Technical Skill Category.

Hardware covers virtually all uses of computer the physical components of computers: modification, construction, and repair. Computerized devices that are not computers themselves (Palm Pilots, GPS systems) require the use of the Devices Skill.

Networks represents an understanding of the process of connecting two devices for the purpose of exchanging information, and all its attendant issues. Security, wireless processes, and hacking are all covered by this Skill.

Programming represents a broad proficiency with all forms of computer programming and program maintenance including, but not limited to databases, web site design, video games, decryption, design, compatibility, and troubleshooting.

Criminal

The Criminal Skill Category covers a wide range of illegal behavior as well as techniques used in law enforcement. Criminals, juvenile delinquents, intelligence operatives, government agents and police are just a few of the types who may have a rating in Criminal Skills. Remember that these activities are highly illegal and usually immoral; no matter how good a character is at these Skills, if he keeps them up long enough, he will get caught.

Auto Theft covers the process of stealing cars, motorcycles, and, if a character is feeling particularly lucky, airplanes. This includes the entire process, from casing the vehicle to bypassing security, hotwiring, and finally, selling or altering the car enough to avoid jail time. Stealing a car often requires multiple rolls, one for each stage. Target Numbers can vary wildly, from the standard eight for an old Accord in a parking lot, to 20 or higher for high-end sports cars with sophisticated security devices. Other vehicles, such as personal aircraft, or, for suicidal characters, military aircraft, can easily break the 40 mark.

Disguise covers understanding and use of makeup, posture, research, clothing and speech necessary to assume someone's identity. Trying to appear to be "someone" is relatively easy; characters without extremely distinguishing characteristics should, under normal circumstances, be able to do so with the standard Target Number of eight within a few minutes, provided they have the proper materials. Attempting to appear as a specific *type* of person, such as a security guard in a particular office building, is more difficult, often requiring hours of research and preparation. Target Numbers for this kind of disguise can range from 12 in easy cases to 20 or more for especially difficult types (bank security, military personnel). Trying to appear to be a specific *individual* is almost always near to impossible. Characters may attempt it and succeed in dealings with people who have never met, seen or heard the individual they're imitating, but any interaction with anyone at all familiar with the person being imitated will reveal the imposture, usually with devastating results. Note, some Pathos or Ethos powers may bypass this rule, but supernatural means are the only ones that will work effectively to imitate a specific person.

Forgery represents the ability to fake documents and documentation, not just with signatures, paper and ink, but more modern electronic means as well. Characters with a rating in this Skill can create or falsify identification, money, or documentation. More creative uses are also possible; with a few minutes of research, lots of good luck and a thin magnet or black marker, a character might be able to alter UPC and security codes.

*"From freedom, Deborah Blau
smashed headlong into the
collision of the two worlds. As
always before it was a weirdly
silent shattering. In the world
where she was most alive, the
sun split in the sky, the earth
erupted, her body was torn to
pieces, her teeth and bones
grazed and broken to
fragments. In the other place,
where the ghosts and shadows
lived, a car turned into a side
drive and down a road to where
an old red-brick building
stood."*

*-Joanne Greenberg
I Never Promised You a Rose
Garden*

Interrogation is used when a character needs to get information out of someone. It's rarely subtle, and runs the spectrum from straightforward knee breaking to the more sophisticated methods of psychological torture. This Skill also includes a talent for getting answers that reveal more than the subject intended and other similar tricks of information gathering. When using this Skill, remember that information gained under duress is always suspect; often the *threat* of torture is far more effective than its actual use. Police and mobsters especially tend to have ratings in this Skill.

Security: Breaking and entering just isn't as simple as it used to be. A modern thief needs to know how to bypass locks (both electronic and key-types), shut down and bypass security systems, poison, knock out or befriend guard animals. This Skill covers all of those techniques.

Sleight of Hand denotes the ability to use misdirection, stealth and fast moves to hide activity. Everything from picking pockets and palming objects, to stealthily drawing a weapon is covered by this Skill. These Skills can be just as effectively used to perform magic tricks (after making an entire *wallet* disappear, coins should be a breeze), but few stage or birthday party magicians have the personality or inclination to become petty thieves.

Urban Stealth is the process of remaining unseen in civilization. The specifics of tailing (on foot and in vehicles), hiding and sneaking are covered, as well as the more complex methods of removing paper trails.

Urban Survival covers the etiquette of the criminal element, knowledge of gangs, and more general street smarts. A character attempting to obtain contraband, whether drugs, weapons, or information, usually uses this Skill.

Health

Mental and physical health are both covered by this Skill Category. Doctors, veterinarians, psychiatrists, emergency personnel, and firefighters are all going to have spent at least a few points within Health.

Alternative Medicine includes knowledge of acupuncture, chiropractic practice, reflexology, and herbal medicine, as well as less commonly accepted remedies such as *chi gung*, aromatherapy, and folk cures. These methods are rarely as effective as the more straightforward methods of the General Practitioner Skill. The Narrator should add a plus two to plus four penalty to all Target Numbers when a character attempts to use Alternative Medicine alone; some ailments simply *cannot* be effectively treated by this method at all. It is entirely up to the Narrator what health problems can and cannot be ameliorated by this Skill.

However, this Skill can be used in conjunction with General Practitioner or Psychology. At the Narrator's discretion, treating an ailing character with Alternative Medicine techniques (at the standard Target Number of eight) may provide a plus one bonus to the General Practitioner or Psychology treatment roll, with additional Degrees of Success adding further bonuses (plus one for each Degree of Success).

General Practitioner: doctors, emergency personnel, and those with a basic knowledge of first aid all likely have at least a few points in this Skill. Covering everything from treating traumatic injuries to lingering illnesses, General Practitioner conveys familiarity with diagnosis, treatment, and the practical use of the tools of the trade. A character who purchases Certification in this Skill is qualified to be a doctor, with all of the attendant SES and status benefits.

"I want to stand as close to the edge as I can without going over. Out on the edge you can see all kinds of things you can't see from the center."
-Kurt Vonnegut

Psychology: characters with a rating in this Skill are familiar with the major names and movements within psychology, as well as the basics of how of therapeutic practice. Psychological treatment (whether through medication or therapy) is the only reliable method of removing Intensity, making this Skill a potent (if time-consuming) method of self-preservation. Note that in order to remain above-board as a therapist, a character must be Certified in this Skill. In order to prescribe drugs, the character must also be a Certified General Practitioner.

Veterinary: a rating in this Skill denotes the ability to heal and work with animals, wild, domestic, and farm. This covers basic biology, especially as relates to fauna, techniques for healing animals, and also an understanding of how to affect animal behavior.

Outdoors

While an ability to survive outside of the city isn't as practical as it used to be, many still cultivate the Skills within this Category, and some, such as Navigation and Exertion, are useful under many circumstances under which characters may find themselves. Park rangers, tour guides, survivalists and most branches of any nation's armed services will have at least a few points in Skills in this Skill Category.

Animal Care includes training, proper technique, and care of animals, including pets, load-bearing animals (horses, donkeys, camels) and hunting animals (dogs, falcons).

Boating is the ability to sail, row, and drift effectively on the water. Everything from knot and ropework to proper boat maintenance is included in this Skill. Note that most sailboats cannot be effectively used by only one person, no matter how skilled he is. However, a character with a rating in this Skill can easily organize a ship of inexperienced people into motion ("Here. Hold this rope and don't move until I tell you to.").

Exertion includes all forms of strenuous activity: climbing, running, jumping, and even organized sports. In situations involving physical activity that isn't covered by another Skill (fighting, for example, will *always* be covered by the Basic Combat Skill Category) the character rolls a Physical Quality+Exertion+Mental Die.

Foraging is the ability to survive in the wilderness. This Skill includes identification of roots, plants, berries, and fruits for both nutrition and medicinal value. Properly using medicinal herbs still requires the Alternative Medicine Skill.

Hunting covers killing, skinning, and preserving animals in all climates. It also includes knowledge of tracking and the behavior of animals. While hides can be tanned with this Skill, to do anything more would require the Industrial Skill Category.

Navigation is the ability to move around without getting lost. It includes a character's ability to orient himself in darkness, as well as basic use of landmarks, compasses, stars, and the growth patterns of plant life.

Outdoor Stealth covers all attempts to move without trace in a wilderness environment, including camouflage, removing tracks, stalking and prowling silently, and hiding campsites.

Social

The Social Skill Category is unique in that it rarely takes training to become proficient in virtually any Skill within it. Essential Skills such as flattery, lying, and the ability to read others are available to everyone, though few bother to cultivate them. Those with high ratings in Social Skills tend to be political lobbyists, CEOs, small-business owners, and

*"Beware the fury of a patient
man."
-John Dryden*

con men.

Intimidation is to manipulation what brute force is to finesse. Not every use of this Skill involves a direct physical threat, but such threats are definitely within its domain. The subtler uses of Intimidation include veiled threats, poisonous looks, and carefully calculated snubbing. Intimidated characters are more likely to go along with the character who intimidated them, make mistakes, or give information away. This Skill is often used with Strength, Imagination, and SES for physical, social and financial intimidating or manipulating.

Kinesics: at least half of a conversation is listening, and at least half of listening is knowing what the other person *isn't* saying. Kinesics covers the ability to determine an individual's emotional state, such as whether he's lying, dangerous, or uncomfortable. This Skill is *vital* for those characters who regularly interact with others.

Lying: maybe it's unethical, but it works. There are few, if any, characters that are able to get away with telling the truth all the time. This Skill covers faking competency, flattery, manipulation, fast talk, and garden-variety dishonesty. Without a rating in this Skill a character is painfully obvious in his motives and actions; given most people's reaction to the truth, he's also probably wildly unpopular.

Networking represents skill in knowing and cultivating relationships with all the right people. It also denotes the ability to make sure all the right people know each other--and remember who introduced them. With a high SES, a few well-placed calls and a couple of introductions, a master of Networking can move millions of dollars, affect the decisions of entire legislative bodies, or ruin a rival's career. Characters usually roll SES+Networking+Mental Die to accomplish a task; rarely is any other Quality used with this Skill. Note that Networking doesn't do much for those looking for instant gratification. While this Skill is powerful, it almost always takes days at least for any actions a character takes to have any effect whatsoever.

Observation is to the world as a whole what Research is to the sphere of information. It delineates a character's ability to actively engage in his surroundings, and is rolled to determine everything from spontaneously noticing a hidden detail to meticulous scrutiny of an area.

Tenacity: no matter how much control a character has over others, if he himself is easily manipulated or shaken, it won't do him an ounce of good. Tenacity denotes a character's composure and ability to resist outside influence. As an instinctive action, the character can roll Imagination+Tenacity+Mental Die to resist manipulation (natural or supernatural) or to avoid acting on an emotional impulse. Secondarily, this Skill represents a character's ability to focus on tasks and observations, even under distracting circumstances. Most observation occurs using a Perception+Tenacity+Mental Die roll, with a Target Number based on the obviousness of the "goal" information and any distracting conditions.

Technical

Probably the single broadest Skill Category, Technical covers everything from Auto Repair and Plumbing to Architecture. Though usually professionals maintain a monopoly on the higher levels, even a weekend handyman is likely to have a few points scattered in this category.

Construction covers the ability to design and construct buildings. It includes contract negotiation, blueprints, building codes, and zoning regulations as well as more practical elements: the proper uses of the money, manpower, and equipment necessary to get a building off of the ground and keep it there.

*"The absolute yearning of one human body for another particular body and its indifference to substitutes is one of life's major mysteries."
-Jean "Iris" Murdoch*

Electronics: if it has wires, odds are, a character with a rating in this Skill can do *something* to it. This Skill provides knowledge of how currents, voltage and circuits work, as well as knowledge of how to build, maintain and modify these devices. Computers still require Skills from within the Computer Skill Category, but with knowledge of this Skill, a character can work from the ground up. This Skill also includes knowledge of wiring appliances and houses.

Inventions: it's good to know how to work with other people's work, but some characters want to know how to build *new* things. Knowledge of this Skill allows a character to design entirely new devices, electronic or mechanical. It also includes the ability to jury-rig existing gadgets without the proper tools or equipment; such a character's knowledge of the nuts and bolts of machinery allows him to bypass the usual routes of repair. A roll to jury-rig a device will have a higher Target Number than a usual repair roll, and will usually only work for a limited number of uses, but sometimes, when you don't have a garage or even a wrench, you have to make do.

Actually *creating* new devices requires three rolls: one to design the device, one to build it, and a final roll when the device is used the first time. If the character wishes, he can create a "single-use" device, thus lowering the Target Number to design and build the gadget, and eliminating the need for the final roll in the process.

Mechanics: a rating in this Skill shows that a character is proficient in the modification, repair and maintenance of mechanized devices: engines, elevators, cars, and lifts. It also includes elements of proper engineering and manufacture of the tools involved in machinery. With the proper materials and months of time, a character can build anything from ultralite planes to cars. Building these devices "from scratch," however, almost always also requires high levels of Metalworking, Textiles, and/or Woodworking from the Art Skill Category.

Basic Combat

Basic Combat covers hurting people, from punches to gunshots. Few make a living in the field of professionalized violence, but those that do would be wise to invest in Skills within this Skill Category. Police officers, mob enforcers, federal agents, martial artists, and members of any nation's armed services will have ratings in Skills within Combat.

Armed Strike covers all rolls attempting to hit someone with a non-projectile weapon, such as swords, pipes, axes and knives.

Block/Parry: a rating in this Skill denotes a character's ability to successfully stop an attack using a weapon or shield. A character may attempt to block or parry an attack without any sort of protection, but even if he succeeds, he will still take the weapon's Damage Rating in Trauma, though he doesn't take damage from the opponent's Degrees of Success or Strength.

Evasive: getting out of the way of a punch is oftentimes more important than being able to throw one. Evasive covers all attempts to move out of the way of an oncoming attack.

Initiative is the character's ability to get in the first hit. Characters roll their Agility+Initiative+Physical Die to determine who goes first in a combat. Without a rating in this Skill, a character makes the roll using only his Agility+Physical Die. Additionally, he also makes the roll at the two-point penalty assessed for making a roll with the Physical Die without the proper Skill.

Projectile Strike is rolled when a character attempts to attack using a projectile or thrown weapon. This includes guns, bows, throwing knives, shuriken, spears, Molotov cocktails and, if the need arises, rocks.

"Yearning is not only a good way to go crazy but also a pretty good place to hide out from hard truth."
-Claude T. Bissell

Unarmed Strike: punches, kicks, bites and headbutts all fall under the purview of this Skill. If the character is attempting to harm someone without the use of a weapon, this is the Skill he uses to do so. Certain weapons, such as brass knuckles and tiger claws may still use the "Unarmed Strike" rules; weapons that can be used in this manner are so noted in their descriptions.

Savant

Characters may purchase Savant for a Skill Category; characters with Savant may roll any Skill within the affected Skill Category without the penalty for attempting a task without Skill. A character with a Savant in Social, for example, could use Lying without having a four-point penalty, even if he had no rating in the Skill.

Savant costs ten CPs per Skill Category.

Certification

Characters may also purchase a Certification for a Skill in which they have a rating of four or higher. Characters who are Certified in a Skill have all the requirements to practice the Skill in which they are certified professionally. In the case of the medical field, the character is a doctor, in law, the character is an attorney and member of the local bar association. Certain Skills, such as those within the Criminal Skill Category, don't have licensing requirements. In such cases, the character has the reputation and credibility to practice said Skill.

In addition to the credibility and legal benefits of Certification, a character who is Certified in a Skill rolls a die one higher than he normally would when attempting to use the Skill in which he is Certified, representing the additional practice and skill (or luck) that a character must have in order to be Certified.

Certification costs five CPs per Skill.

Passion

Passion covers the type of emotion each character draws their power from: Anguish, Dread, Fury, and Yearning. Using one of the four Passions available a character will alter the world about them. The character's Intensity rating is equivalent to the rating of his highest Passion and is a representation of how skewed his beliefs and perceptions are of the world. For more information see page 64.

Determine your character's primary Passion and decide what your character's Intensity in that Passion should be. Characters start with a rating of one in their primary Passion for free. Before purchasing additional Intensity in any Passion, remember that an individual can live with a Passion of one relatively easily, but greater degrees of Passion usually represent years of unhealthy behavior; they are correspondingly difficult to both gain and live with. A character's rating in a Passion is also called his Intensity in that Passion.

Characters also receive a single Pathos in their Primary Passion for free. If a character purchases a higher rating in his Passion with CPs, he may choose to have his free Pathos be of whatever rating he has purchased the Passion to have. This means that a character can begin with a free Pathos of up to level four.

"I don't need no arms around me. And I don't need no drugs to calm me. I have seen the writing on the wall. Don't think I need anything at all. No, don't think I need anything at all. All in all it was all just bricks in the wall. All in all you were all just bricks in the wall."
-Pink Floyd
Another Brick in the Wall

Characters can also have ratings in more than one Passion. Additional points in Passion cost ten points apiece. Characters are limited to an initial rating of no higher than four in any one Passion at character creation.

Pathos and Ethos

Passion by itself grants a character an increased ability to perceive the Noumenal, but it's Pathos (the untrained powers that come with Passion) and Ethos (directed magical manipulation of Passion) that give characters in Abeo the ability to move mountains. Characters start with one Pathos in their primary Passion, up to the level of their Intensity for free. Additional Pathos cost five points each. A character cannot have any Pathos of a rating higher than his Intensity in the Passion under which the Pathos falls.

Ethos mimics the effect of a Pathos power, but has no Intensity limitation associated with it. A character can, with no more than a rating of one, purchase a Pathos power of any level for any Passion, though purchase of powers rated higher than level four must occur after character creation. Pathos of higher levels are prohibitively expensive to purchase and use as Ethos; while it is powerful, the investment of time, Imagination and preparation makes it less flexible, spontaneous and effective than simple Pathos. Characters may purchase powers of up to level four at character creation. The cost is five CPs per Ethos, regardless of level.

It is recommended that players not be allowed to start with Ethos higher than level four. If it is allowed, Narrators are encouraged to require that characters spend ten points *per level* of the Pathos to be purchased as Ethos. Ethos is already massively powerful and should for this reason, if no other, be rare.

Logos

Logos is a function of logic, though it seems to bypass it. Essentially it is the manipulation of symbols of cause and effect. As such the laws of the waking world bind it. Miraculous coincidences can occur, and do. But they do not occur quickly, obviously or reliably. At the same time, it can be a valuable resource when nothing else will work. Additionally, even those without Intensity can use Logos.

Each "spell" must be purchased as a Skill, like any other. A character may not purchase more points in that spell than he has in the Eldritch Skill. In order to purchase a Skill at all, a character must be a Savant in the Arcane Skill Category. Logos spells require a ritual that must be determined by the player at the time of purchase (and approved by the Narrator). Additionally, Logos must be keyed to a certain Quality to which it will always apply. In order to learn a Logos spell, the character must either research the spell as he would any other Skill, or be taught it by another Magus. Logos is far from common, but it's not all that rare, either.

"I have now reigned about 50 years in victory or peace, beloved by my subjects, dreaded by my enemies, and respected by my allies. Riches and honors, power and pleasure, have diligently numbered the days of pure and genuine happiness which have fallen to my lot. They amount to fourteen."

-Abd Er-Rahman II

Compiled Character Creation

Derived Values

Once you've determined all of a character's Qualities, Skill Categories, Skills, Cascading Dice, Factors, Passion, Pathos and Ethos, determine the character's derived values: Natural Defense, Intensity, and Initiative. Derived values are subject to frequent change; writing them in pencil on the character sheet is recommended.

- The character's Natural Defense is the sum of his Resilience and Agility.
- Intensity is equal to the character's highest rating in his highest rated Passion.
- Initiative is the sum of the character's Agility and Initiative Skill.

Compiled Character Creation Costs

- Qualities: Five CPs each.
- Either Die: 20 CPs each.
- Skill Categories: Two CPs each.
- Skills: One CP each.
- Savant: Ten CPs each.
- Certification: Five CPs each.
- Passion: Ten CPs each.
- Ethos: Five CPs each.
- Logos: Two CPs each.
- Pathos: Five CPs each.

Skill Categories and Skills

- *Arcane*: Conspiracies, Cryptozology, Eldritch, Meditation, Parapsychology, Sensitivity
- *Art*: 3-D, Computer Art, Instrument, Metalcrafting, Textiles, Visual Arts, Vocals, Woodworking, Writing
- *Collegiate*: Business, Law, Logic, History, Research, Science
- *Computer*: Devices, Hardware, Networks, Programming
- *Criminal*: Auto Theft, Disguise, Forgery, Interrogation, Security, Sleight of Hand, Urban Stealth, Urban Survival
- *Health*: Alternative Medicine, General Practitioner, Psychology, Veterinary
- *Social*: Intimidation, Kinesics, Lying, Networking, Observation, Tenacity
- *Outdoors*: Animal Care, Boating, Exertion, Foraging, Hunting, Navigation, Outdoor Stealth
- *Technical*: Construction, Electronics, Inventions, Mechanics
- *Basic Combat*: Armed Strike, Block/Parry, Evasive, Initiative, Projectile Strike, Unarmed Strike

Passions and Intensity

- Anguish
- Dread
- Fury
- Yearning

Receive a single Pathos of any level, maximum of the character's starting Intensity, for free. Also receive the first point in Intensity for free.

Chapter II Character Advancement: Hard Lessons in a Hard World

Lacy watched the crib from the shadows in the corner. The only light in the room came from a relentlessly cheerful night light shaped like an interlocked moon and stars. It was almost time for the Keeper to show. Lacy huddled back against the wall and remembered herself. I am glass on a mountain. I am a whisper in an earthquake. Hours passed, and when the Care Bear clock on the bedstand clicked to two a.m., something stepped out of the closet that would have looked like night itself, if someone managed to coat the night in a layer of oil and malice. The thing, alluring and genderless, slunk to the crib and stood for a moment.

A handful of seconds later, the baby cried once--a choked-short bleat that seemed more animal than human. Almost at the same time, something under the crib began to rattle. As the newborn thing skittered out from under the crib, the creature gathered it up in a smooth motion with one hand and swept off his hat with the other before dumping the one into the other with practiced aplomb.

Captivated in spite of herself, Lacy didn't realize how much danger she was in until she tried to spring out of the corner with her knife. She could smell her own shock and fear when she realized that her muscles wouldn't respond. The creature turned and looked at her then, smiling demoniacally. It was reaching into the hat again when the light came on. The creature swept back almost faster than Lacy could see as the door flew open. The baby's mother stood in the doorway, concern written all over her face. Lacy cursed under her breath and concentrated again on her own quiet insignificance as she slipped out the window.

Character Advancement

As characters are played, they become more skilled. There are two separate measures of a character's evolution: Experience Points, which represent a character's knowledge and personal development, and Passion. Where Experience Points measure how a character has grown and dealt with the problems life has sent him, Passion is a measure of how much a character is enslaved to the irrational parts of his psyche.

Experience

Characters can receive as little as one Experience Point per session and as many as twelve, with the average being roughly four to six. Twelve Experience Points should be a rare occurrence—entirely aside from the fact that granting loads of Experience Points ultimately rewards mediocrity and discourages really good role-playing, Experience Points are valuable, at least in part, because of their rarity. Because of this, both Experience Points and the changes they create in characters are worth more to the players. Ultimately though, it's up to the Narrator what kind of game he wants to run.

Experience in Abeo is awarded at the end of each session according to four criteria: the personal goals or development of the individual character, how much that character advanced (or at least affected the storyline), the amount of danger that character faced, and out of character Experience. This last criterion is a bit trickier than the others. Out of character Experience is reserved for those players who helped either the Narrator or the game in some way, such as playing NPCs and helping a new player along. This *does not* obligate the Narrator to give Experience to players who decide to go the “fawning sycophant” route. Again, it's up to the Narrator to decide what does and does not merit this Experience.

Within each category, Experience Points are assigned on a zero to three scale. If a character faces extreme personal danger in a given session, for example, the Narrator may grant him three Experience Points based on that. If that same player didn't personally contribute to the game, or significantly advance either the storyline or his character's personal development, he may not be granted any points in those, despite the three points he was given for Danger. His total for that session would be three points.

Experience Points may be spent at the beginning of any session to raise any Quality, Skill or Skill Category. Any given Quality, Skill, or Skill Category can only be raised by a single point at a time. There are no “training times” listed here—they're largely an unnecessary complication if players keep common sense in mind. No one goes from janitor at the hospital to brain surgeon in a week.

While Experience cannot be used to buy Passion or Emotion, it can be used to buy Pathos, Ethos and Logos. Further, a character may only buy Pathos for which he has an appropriate level of Passion. If a character's rating in a Passion is less than the level of the Pathos, he can't purchase it until his Passion is at the appropriate level.

Characters may choose to take a Consequence along with their Pathos. Though the character gains a potentially crippling limitation, his Pathos come at a significantly reduced price in Experience. A more in-depth discussion of Consequences will appear later in this chapter.

The level of an Ethos power is equal to the level of the Pathos that it imitates. The character is in no way limited by the level of his Passion when purchasing Ethos except that he must, at all times, have at least a rating of one in at least one Passion. If he ever becomes completely without Passion, he loses all ability to use both Ethos and Pathos.

Ethos may also be purchased with Consequences—the human mind is not built to bend the way that these rituals force it to, and such mental strain often expresses itself in these strange compulsions, addictions, psychosomatic allergies and phobias.

A character may choose to take an existing Pathos and construct an Ethos ritual that imitates its effects. A character may only attempt this if he fulfills all the requirements of learning Ethos in the first place. If he is successful—an outcome determined more by discussion with the Narrator than by system, the character is able to teach this Ethos to

"When childhood dies, its corpses are called adults and they enter society, one of the politer names of hell. That is why we dread children, even if we love them, they show us the state of our decay."
-Brian Aldiss

others who use a similar kind of magic. Further, if the character's Passion ever drops to below the level of one of his Pathos, he is still able to use the power, albeit in an altered form—that of Ethos.

Experience may also be used to buy a Positive Factor, buy off a Negative Factor, or buy a Positive Factor additional times. As at character creation, characters are limited to taking any given Factor a maximum of three times, unless otherwise stated. Factors cost in Experience Points exactly what they cost in CPs, or alternately, exactly the amount of CPs they gave the character. Common sense applies here as well. While a character could reasonably buy off poor eyesight with the proper explanation, he cannot buy off having only one leg. Absent supernatural intervention, he will always only have one leg, and no amount of Experience Points can fix that.

Finally, Experience Points can be used to provide a bonus to any roll; God watches over drunks, children and madmen, after all. Experience Points may be spent, one for one, to give a single roll a bonus. The character may spend a number of Experience Points on a single roll equal to his Intensity. This does not require an action, though the character does need to decide whether he is spending Experience Points *before* he makes the roll. The bonus can be provided to any roll the character makes. At higher Intensities, the character may have mind-bogglingly good luck or sudden bursts of supernatural strength through use of this ability.

As the number of Experience Points that can be spent is limited by Intensity, obviously, only those characters with Intensity can use it.

"The vast majority of human beings dislike and even dread all notions with which they are not familiar. Hence it comes about that their first appearance innovators have always been divided as fools and madmen."
-Aldous Leonard Huxley

Experience Cost Chart

Quality

1-2 = 5 Experience Points each.
3-4 = 10 Experience Points each.
5-6 = 20 Experience Points each.
7+ = 40 Experience Points each.

Skill Category

1-2 = 6 Experience Points each.
3-4 = 3 Experience Points each.
5-6 = 6 Experience Points each.
7+ = 12 Experience Points each.

Skill

1-2 = 3 Experience Points each.
3-4 = 2 Experience Points each.
5-6 = 4 Experience Points each.
7+ = 8 Experience Points each.

Mental or Physical Die = 20 Experience Points per die, per tier (d6 to d8, d8 to d10). A character must purchase intervening tiers. To go from a d6 to a d10 would thus cost 40 Experience Points total. Going from a d4 to a d10 would cost 60 total.

Certification = 5 Experience Points per Skill.

Savant = 20 Experience Points per Skill Category.

Logos

Level 1-2 = 3 Experience Points each.
Level 3-4 = 2 Experience Points each.
Level 5-6 = 4 Experience Points each.
Level 7+ = 8 Experience Points each.

Pathos

Level 1-2 = 5 Experience Points each.
Level 3-4 = 10 Experience Points each.
Level 5-6 = 15 Experience Points each.
Level 7-8 = 20 Experience Points each.
Level 9-10 = 25 Experience Points each.

Pathos (with purchase of a Consequence)

Level 1-2 = 2 Experience Points each.
Level 3-4 = 4 Experience Points each.
Level 5-6 = 8 Experience Points each.
Level 7-8 = 12 Experience Points each.
Level 9-10 = 16 Experience Points each.

Ethos

Level 1-2 = 7 Experience Points each.
Level 3-4 = 13 Experience Points each.
Level 5-6 = 18 Experience Points each.
Level 7-8 = 25 Experience Points each.
Level 9-10 = 30 Experience Points each.

Ethos (with purchase of a Consequence)

Level 1-2 = 3 Experience Points each.
Level 3-4 = 6 Experience Points each.
Level 5-6 = 9 Experience Points each.
Level 7-8 = 14 Experience Points each.
Level 9-10 = 20 Experience Points each.

Pathos to Ethos conversion

Level 1-2 = 3 Experience Points per conversion.
Level 3-4 = 4 Experience Points per conversion.
Level 5-6 = 5 Experience Points per conversion.
Level 7-8 = 6 Experience Points per conversion.
Level 9-10 = 7 Experience Points per conversion.

Passion

Emotion and Passion are central to Abeo; they determine not only the powers that a character develops, but also how he relates to the world around him. Each Passion is given a rating between 0-10. Most people maintain a zero in any given Passion over the course of their lives.

Of course, this doesn't mean that they don't feel or act much like a Passionate person at times. Whenever a character acts in a way consistent with a Passion, they receive a number of points of Emotion equal to the rating of that action. This is represented on a character sheet by marks underneath the Passion rating. For example, Barron gets into a fight in a parking lot. This is a level three action on the Fury scale, so he would make three marks beneath the Fury meter. Should he later see someone and start a fight with them, a Fury four action, he would make another four marks underneath Fury, bringing his total up to seven.

These points, called "Emotion Points," disappear at a rate of one point per Passion per in-game day.

Should a character reach ten Emotion Points beneath a Passion, their rating in that Passion increases by one, and they would receive all the benefits and drawbacks of an increased or first rating in Passion. From that time on, any actions that are taken that would give the character points in that Passion have the Passion rating subtracted from them.

If Barron, for example, reached a rating of one in Fury and then started a fight again, he would only get three Emotion Points. (The Emotion Point rating of the action is four and his rating in the Passion is one. $4-1=3$). This means that unless Barron lowers his Fury, he will not ever get Emotion Points for a verbal outburst with provocation, for example, shouting back at someone who insulted him. If, however, he stole from a stranger to buy a pack of cigarettes, (a Yearning four action) he would still get four Emotion Points in Yearning, since that particular Passion is still at zero.

As with everything else in Abeo, common sense should rule the day. If the character behaves in a manner that screams "Anguish" but his action doesn't appear on the scale, the Narrator should make a quick judgment call on what level of action it would be if it appeared on the scale and grant Emotion Points according to that. These lists are not complete catalogs of the behavior of human beings under emotional duress; they are guidelines.

Passion ratings do not ever fade on their own. Specific action, usually psychological intervention, must be taken to lower them. Emotion and Passion cannot be purchased with Experience Points. They must be gained through role-playing. If characters enter the full-time care of mental-health professionals, their Passions disappear one at a time at a rate of one point per full week in such care. If the character enters outpatient care, his Passions disappear, one by one, at a rate of one point per *month*. If the character

does not regularly go to his appointments, therapy has no effect. These effects are in *addition* to the effects of any drugs on which the character may be put. It's a good idea to keep track of which points were lost due to therapy and which were lost due to medication.

When a character's Passion drops below the level of any given Pathos, he loses the use of that Pathos until he regains at least that level again. If the character purchased the power as an Ethos, he can use it as an Ethos again. The Pathos does *not* disappear—it merely becomes inactive (or changed to Ethos).

Unlike drugs, when a character stops going to therapy, his Passions do not begin coming back on their own; he must build them up again through normal means.

*"Our quaint metaphysical
opinions, in an hour of anguish,
are like playthings by the
bedside of a child deathly sick."
-Samuel Taylor Coleridge*

Anguish

Beyond depression, disappointment, and despair, Anguish is total emotional pain. Anguish is what a man feels when he holds his dying wife. Anguish is complete, utter hopelessness. Beauty, truth and kindness are all lies. At times, it's hard for an Anguished character to see life as anything other than an unbearable farce. Emotion Points in Anguish are granted on the following scale.

1. Apologizing to a close friend for harm that the character may or may not have caused. Writing, speaking or performing expressions of depression.
2. Apologizing to an acquaintance for harm that the character may or may not have caused. Avoiding previously enjoyable activities.
3. Apologizing to a stranger for harm that the character may or may not have caused. Avoiding the company of close friends or family.
4. Working to make reparations to a close friend for a wrong, real or perceived, done to them.
5. Working to make reparations to an acquaintance for a wrong, real or perceived, done to them.
6. Working to make reparations to a stranger for a wrong, real or perceived, done to them. Causing someone to take a first-rank action on this Anguish scale or an equivalent action.
7. Harming oneself in the process of making amends for actions against a close friend. Deliberately causing harm to oneself without any reason, other than one's own self-loathing. "Harming oneself" can take the form of putting oneself in harm's way, cutting, burning, depriving oneself of food, water, shelter and/or heat, donations or gifts to the point of financial harm, or any of the other myriad ways people have of making their own lives miserable. Causing someone to take a second-rank action on this Anguish scale or an equivalent action.
8. Harming oneself in the process of making amends for actions against an acquaintance. Causing someone to take a third-rank action on this Anguish scale or an equivalent action.
9. Harming oneself in the process of making amends for actions against a complete stranger. Causing someone to take a fourth-rank action on this Anguish scale or an equivalent action.
10. Harming oneself in attempt at reparation for something that was definitely not the character's fault. Engaging in any act likely to result in the character's death, solely for the danger involved. Causing someone to take a fifth-rank or higher action on this Anguish scale or equivalent.

Dread

Fear. Utter bone-chilling terror. This isn't simply a fear of the dark, this is the fear a person feels when he has a loaded gun held to his forehead. The character can be afraid of nearly anything--failure, ridicule, snakes or heights, but remember, the character can fear this to a degree that most people have never felt. This Passion is also reflective of paranoia, post-traumatic stress disorder, and agoraphobia (though this last would make a terribly uninteresting player character). Dread Emotion Points are awarded according to the following scale.

1. Avoiding a dangerous situation or reacting wildly-out-of-proportion where avoiding the situation or reacting inappropriately engenders no risk to the character's dignity,

*"...for no one is primarily afraid of what a ghost may do to him, but of the mere fact that it is a ghost. It is "uncanny" rather than dangerous, and the special kind of fear it excites may be called Dread. With the Uncanny one has reached the fringes of the Numinous."
-C.S. Lewis
The Problem of Pain*

health, or well being. Both the Narrator and the social rules of the situation define acting "inappropriately" or "out-of-proportion". Screaming in fear and ducking into an alley is a socially acceptable response to a gunfight or drive-by-shooting. It is *not* an acceptable response to, say, cats. (Example: a character ducking and hiding every time he hears garbage settle when walking in a dangerous neighborhood.)

2. Avoiding a dangerous situation or reacting inappropriately where doing so risks the character's well being or social standing. (Example: a character ducking and hiding every time he hears the door open when at a party in a dangerous neighborhood.)

3. Avoiding a dangerous situation or reacting inappropriately where doing so risks the character's health or life. (Example: a character running away from a mugger with a gun.)

4. Avoiding a volatile but safe situation (usually social) or acting inappropriately afraid in said situation when doing so is without risk. (Example: a character refusing to sit with his back to the door when meeting with his probation officer.)

5. Avoiding a volatile but safe situation where avoiding the situation risks the character's well being or social standing. (Example: running away or trying to hide from his probation officer when he's done nothing illegal or against his probation.)

6. Avoiding a volatile but safe situation where avoiding the situation risks the character's life or health. (Example: a character refusing to meet his probation officer because the officer is clearly under "their" control.) Causing someone to take a first-rank action on this Dread scale or an equivalent action.

7. Avoiding a safe situation or reacting inappropriately in fear of it turning dangerous; again without risk to the character's dignity, health or well being. (Example: a character walking by a restaurant and refusing to eat there because the hostess looked suspicious

or making someone else take the first bite of his food because he's afraid it might be poisoned.) Causing someone to take a second-rank action on this Dread scale or an equivalent action.

8. Avoiding a safe situation or reacting inappropriately in fear of it turning dangerous, where doing so places the character's well being or social standing at risk. (Example: a character punching the hostess of a high-class party "before she had a chance to put the poison in [his] drink.") Causing someone to take a third-rank action on this Dread scale or an equivalent action.

9. Avoiding a safe situation or acting inappropriately in fear of it turning dangerous where doing so directly endangers the character's life. (Example: a character attacking a police officer because he thinks that the officer is really an Illuminati spy.) Causing someone to take a fourth-rank action on this Dread scale or an equivalent action.

10. Avoiding anything other than certain previously determined activities on the basis of their potential danger or taking continuous inappropriate action. Note that the character only receives points for this activity one time. (Example: a character refusing to ever sit next to windows, setting up traps in his home, or insisting on an identifying code word being included in phone conversations.) Causing someone to take a fifth-rank or higher action on this Dread scale or an equivalent action.

Fury

Physical and emotional violence aren't just an option for some furious characters; they're a necessity. Fury can be righteous indignation, blind, stupid bigotry, or just a reaction to the world as they see it. Furious characters keep themselves from flying off the handle only with effort, and in a world without consequences, their tempers would destroy themselves and everyone around them. Fury also includes jealousy, hatred, bigotry,

*"One of the things which
danger does to you after a time
is -, well, to kill emotion. I
don't think I shall ever feel
anything again except fear.
None of us can hate anymore –
or love."
-Graham Greene
-The Confidential Agent*

vengeance and social aggression. Fury Emotion Points are awarded according to the following scale.

1. A verbal outburst or subtle insult with provocation.
2. A verbal outburst without provocation or a blatant insult.
3. Engaging in a fight or planning an elaborate, though ultimately harmless, revenge.
4. *Starting* a fight or an act of blatant, pointless bigotry.
5. Seriously injuring someone or planning an elaborate revenge that could potentially result in serious social, economic or legal harm.
6. Attacking someone and accidentally killing him. Plotting elaborately to cause someone severe physical harm. Taking potentially embarrassing or hurtful, but ultimately harmless, action against those *associated* with the target of the character's ire *exclusively* because of that association. Causing someone to take a first-rank action on this Fury scale or an equivalent action.
7. Torture. Taking potentially socially, legally, financially or physically harmful action against those associated with the target of the character's ire *exclusively* because of that association. Causing someone to take a second-rank action on this Fury scale or an equivalent action.
8. Attacking someone and deliberately killing him. Plotting someone's death. Causing someone to take a third-rank action on this Fury scale or an equivalent action.
9. Torture followed by murder. Taking fatal action against those associated with the target of the character's ire *exclusively* because of that association. Causing someone to take a fourth-rank action on this Fury scale or an equivalent action.
10. Multiple murders, heinous acts of brutality. Torturing, murdering or otherwise totally destroying everyone and everything associated with the target of the character's ire *exclusively* because of that association. Causing someone to take a fifth-rank or higher action on this Fury scale or an equivalent action.

Yearning

Have you ever wanted something so badly that it seemed like there was nothing left to you but the wanting? Did it consume you, utterly, totally and endlessly? If so, you've felt around the edges of Yearning. The way a heroin junkie yearns for their fix--that full-body, all-soul, physical need...that is how your character wants their object. A Yearning character can want many things, money, power, success, sex, clothing, or video games. He can want one of those things, or he can want many of them, it doesn't matter. What does matter is that he wants completely.

1. Lying to a complete stranger in order to get something.
2. Lying to an acquaintance in order to get something.
3. Lying to a close friend in order to get something.
4. Stealing from a complete stranger in order to get something.
5. Stealing from an acquaintance to get something.
6. Stealing from a close friend in order to get something. Causing someone to take a first-rank action on this Yearning scale or an equivalent.
7. Attacking a complete stranger to get something. Causing someone to take a second-

*"What potions have I drunk of
Siren tears, Distill'd from
limbecks foul as hell within,
Applying fears to hopes, and
hopes to fears, Still losing
when I saw myself to win."*

*-William Shakespeare
Sonnet 119*

rank action on this Yearning scale or an equivalent.

8. Attacking an acquaintance to get something. Causing someone to take a third-rank action on this Yearning scale or an equivalent.

9. Attacking a close friend to get something. Causing someone to take a fourth-rank action on this Yearning scale or an equivalent.

10. Murder, taking of the desired thing without any regard for any consequences. Causing someone to take a fifth-rank or higher action on this Yearning scale or an equivalent.

Intensity

The Deranged

As characters grow in Passion, it shows in the way that they relate to the world around them. Never forget that Passion is essentially a rating that measures how intensely and often a character feels a certain emotion: sadness, fear, desire, hatred. Characters at a given ranking in a Passion behave, for the most part, according to the following rules. Narrators are encouraged to reward characters who consistently play out their Passions and to punish characters who routinely disregard them.

1. When a character has a Passion with a rating of one, he is almost always habitually in the throes of that Passion. A Yearning character always seems to want something, and an Anguished character never really manages to cheer up.

2. At two, the Passion is much more noticeable. The character begins to experience surges of the Passion regularly. Yearning characters may go on shopping (or shoplifting) sprees, Dread-filled characters can flee from even the most innocuous situations without warning, Anguished characters may burst into tears, and Furious characters may start shouting matches with complete strangers. Though the character settles back into his default state relatively quickly, the next emotional volley isn't too far off.

3. When a character reaches a rating of three in a Passion, it has become an overwhelming focus in his life. Once an outburst of a Passion has started, it may take hours or even days of work to mellow out. After one or two crying jags, outbursts or other expressions of dysfunction, loved ones may begin suggesting that the character see a psychological professional. At this level of Passion, few of a character's relationships (even, and perhaps especially, professional ones) can survive long.

4. The idea of harming someone to get what he wants, or even to satisfy an urge, seems fully reasonable to a character with a Passion rated this highly. In Anguished characters, this may take the form of the character harming himself or placing himself squarely in harm's way. When filled with Fury, attacking the object of rage becomes inescapable. The only question is whether the character will practice the self-control necessary to hold off until he can do the most damage. A character at this level of Passion isn't an animal; he's still able to plan, maneuver and hold off gratification in pursuit of his goals. A character's single-minded drive at this level, however, is terrifying. Holding a job becomes more difficult for a character as his co-workers and supervisors are made progressively more uncomfortable by his instability. At this level, a character can, without too much effort, be involuntarily committed. Most mental health facilities will almost immediately put the character on some form of psychoactive medication.

5. At this level, very little will bring a character out of the sustained emotional outburst that his life has become. The character is on a nearly constant high that almost totally prevents him interacting normally with others. Holding a job or maintaining a family usually becomes totally impossible at this level, though some characters may be able to take "medical leave," or a similar euphemism, from their responsibilities.

"The epistemology of the house remains entirely commensurate with its size. After all, one always approaches the unknown with greater caution the first time around. Thus it appears far more expansive than it literally is. Knowledge of the terrain on a second visit dramatically contracts this sense of distance. Who has never gone for a walk through some unfamiliar park and felt that it was huge, only to return a second time to discover that the park is in fact much smaller than initially perceived?"
-Mark Danielewski
House of Leaves

The Psychotic

At levels 6-10, the character begins to settle back down into something approximating normal behavior. The emotion has seemingly peaked and broken. It's not that the character feels any less passionately. He is just better able to control the Passion and turn it inward. While a character can likely be released from institutions once he has reached this level, he may have some unpleasant surprises upon rejoining the world. While a character can parrot normal behavior, he is anything but normal. The process of Fade has begun. While the progression of emotional Intensity continues as before, with the level of Passion being representative of the explosive Intensity of the character's Anguish, Fury, Dread or Yearning, externally, the character appears much the same as he did at level one or two no matter how high his Passions get past level five. He has learned to control the outward *expression* of his inner state. At the same time, he has crested the hill of what made him a human being. At levels 6-10, characters begin to develop appearances that reflect their nature. As the character's Intensity increases, the player chooses more (and more severe) ways that his character begins to appear different to those who can see the Noumenal. Upon reaching this level of Intensity, the character chooses some way that his character becomes markedly unusual. This appearance should reflect something about the character or about the cultural expectations surrounding his behavior—a corrupt attorney with a high Yearning, for example, might develop horns and hooves. As the character grows in Intensity, the character's appearance changes are not replaced by the more severe appearance trait—the more intense trait is added. By the time a character reaches Intensity ten, he is clearly inhuman in a number of ways to any who can see their strangeness. Several examples and an explanation of the system effect of this appearance change follow.

6. At Intensity six, a character develops a barely noticeable sign of otherworldliness. He may seem to move with a predatory, sinuous grace; he has an unnatural-looking scar, or his fingernails are strangely thick and hooked. The Narrator may make a Perception+Sensitivity+Intensity+Mental Die roll with a Target Number of 11 to see if a character notices the strange quality of the Liminal. The Narrator might also wish to make several rolls over the course of a long interaction with a Liminal at this Intensity if the characters fail—there's nothing quite as jarring as realizing that you've been having coffee and discussing finances for the past hour and a half with someone who may, in fact, be the devil. This roll is a unique one, in that it combines Intensity, a Quality, and a Skill, as well as a Mental Die roll. Narrators should remember to include all of the variables. At this point, a character also begins to take penalties to social interactions. Any rolls that the character makes to cajole, seduce, or otherwise interact with another character who is not a Liminal in a way that requires the other character to be comfortable take a one-point penalty.

7. At Intensity seven, a character's appearance has at least one definitely supernatural quality to it. He may have unnaturally-colored or shaped eyes (red, silver, solid black, slitted like a cat's, two pupils, no pupils), his hair—all of it—may grow in an unnatural

color (blue, green, purple), his bodily fluids (saliva, sweat, tears) may be some strange material such as milk, blood, or vodka, or he might have cloven hooves instead of feet. At this point, the Target Number of the character's Perception+Sensitivity+Intensity+Mental Die roll becomes 10. The character's social penalty is increased to two points.

8. At Intensity eight, the Liminal's appearance changes become obvious. His hair or eyes may shift colors over the course of a conversation, his skin might appear to consist of very small interlocking scales, he may have an open, visible wound that doesn't bleed or abnormally large, predatory-appearing canine teeth that show when he speaks. The Target Number of the roll to notice the character's strangeness at this time becomes nine, and the character's social penalty becomes three.

9. At Intensity nine, the character's deformity or difference is blatant. He may have small

"Nobody realizes that some people expend tremendous energy merely to be normal."
-Albert Camus

horns on his forehead, a tail or wings that never seem to stay entirely hidden. He may always seem to be dripping wet (even in the driest weather), or he could be covered in open, festering, clearly life-threatening (if not fatal) wounds. The Target Number of the roll to see the character's nature is eight and the social penalty becomes four.

10. At this point, most characters will notice that a person at this level is a Liminal, and that he is a powerful one at that. All the lights in a room may suddenly go dim around him, or the smell of garbage may follow the Liminal no matter how clean he appears. He may have a halo, or appear to be constantly wreathed in smoke. The Target Number of the roll to see the character's Noumenal appearance becomes seven, and he takes a penalty of five to all interactions with non-Liminals that require that the other character be comfortable.

Fade

As the character grows in his Passion, he steadily becomes less a part of the world as most understand it. When characters reach a rating of six in any one Passion, they begin the process of Fade. By this point, characters are routinely straining the bounds of credibility and sanity. As a character increasingly turns his back on the world of meetings, licenses, and newspapers, the world of meetings, licenses and newspapers responds by pushing the character away as well. The level of Fade is determined by the character's rating in his highest Passion, also called his Intensity.

Note that this process is totally inexplicable to the characters. No one has handed them a copy of *Liminal Existence for Dummies*. Further, though the system describes the effects of Fade in clear, distinct steps, the process from a character's perspective is more gradual and haphazard. Individual papers or bits of information may survive despite everything else disappearing, and certain people will remember the character

even when everyone else has forgotten. Characters find themselves experiencing things no one else does, with the exception of a few crazy people with whom he's forced by circumstance to associate.

At the Narrator's discretion, the character may be allowed to keep some parts of his former life, especially if those parts were or are essential to the character's concept. He may be able to keep his house, as people simply ignore both the home and the people living in it; or his credit cards, as his account information keeps falling through the cracks, never quite getting canceled. It's important to remember that Fade is a way of isolating and frightening *characters*, preventing them from interacting normally with the people and institutions around them. It is not an excuse to antagonize the players. At the same time, characters should lose *something* as they continue to Fade—that disconnection, fear and bewilderment is central to the game. The following rules for Fade are guidelines; Narrators should feel free to alter this progression as necessary (and fun) for their game.

Intensity Six: The paperwork and electronic information that makes up his identity in regard to faceless bureaucracies and corporations begins to unravel. His birth certificate and social security number disappear; and information on him held in a database of any kind goes missing. If characters investigate further, they may find that the documents or information for which they're searching are lost, damaged beyond use, or simply missing without explanation. Some small bits of information may survive, but they're isolated and ineffective in attempts to reconstruct an identity. For example, a character may find that he still has a membership to a video-rental store or a credit card, but no address or phone number on the account. He can still rent videos and make charges up to his credit limit, for what it's worth. On the upside, things like bills and debt start disappearing at this level as well. If the character ever drops below this level of Fade, the paperwork will reappear. The reappearance of this information is just as haphazard as its disappearance. Not everything will come back. It is up to the Narrator to decide what the character can and cannot regain if he drops below this point of Intensity.

*"O Conscience! Into what
abyss of fears And horrors hast
thou driven me; out of which I
find no way, but deep to deeper
plunged!"*

*-John Milton
Paradise Lost*

The character probably still has his job at this point, but his paychecks will be sporadic at best; payroll will consistently lose his paperwork, and he can forget about any accumulated sick time, vacation or personal days.

Intensity Seven: The character's acquaintances begin forgetting about him. As a general rule, if the character doesn't know both someone's first name and last name immediately and without thinking, that person forgets the character. Acquaintances who themselves have an Intensity of at least one are exempt from this forgetfulness. These acquaintances are themselves straddling two mutually exclusive existences, though they may not realize it yet, and their own madness, however gentle, shields their memory.

If the character is a celebrity, at this level of Fade, his fame instantly and without explanation disappears. Events with which he was intimately involved show no record of his influence, and those things he accomplished on his own seem to have either been undone or performed by someone else.

At this point, anyone seeing the character who didn't previously know him will only be able to describe him in the most vague of terms, if they remember interacting with him at all.

Keeping a job here is nearly impossible. The character will have to constantly reintroduce himself to everyone except those with whom he works most closely. Clearances, email addresses, and office mail all disappear with disturbing regularity.

At this point and up, a character can no longer be effectively treated with either drugs or therapy. Few (if any) therapists will be able to remember the character long enough to develop a strategy for helping him, his charts never stay put long enough to be any use, and drugs just *don't work* anymore.

Intensity Eight: A character's friends begin forgetting about him. This includes most co-workers. A character at this point will certainly not have a job. If he's lucky, he's managed to keep a little bit of cash or a credit card that still works in order to survive. As with acquaintances, friends are protected from this forgetting if they themselves have an Intensity of at least one. Friends of the character who have an Intensity of one or higher will themselves be in for a surreal ride as no one else seems to remember the character.

Intensity Nine: The character has nothing attached to his name. His driver's license disappears, and even old photographs with the character in them either disappear, develop damage where the character should be, or, most frighteningly, no longer show the character. His keys don't work, and someone else almost certainly owns his house, lives in his apartment, and drives his car. What's more, they have for *years*. For all intents and purposes, the character never existed.

Intensity Ten: Everyone except those with an Intensity of one or higher has forgotten the character. He may have a few meaningless scraps of paper with his name on them, and can keep any possessions that he can actively protect, but almost nothing else remains. Survival becomes a real concern at this level, if the character is attempting to maintain anything at all like his old life.

Consequences

When purchasing Pathos, characters may choose to gain Consequences in order to buy it at a discount. Each time a character purchases a power with a Consequence, he must pick a consequence from one of four categories: Allergy, Addiction, Barrier, and Compulsion.

The first time a character chooses a Consequence from one of these categories, he chooses what the focus of his allergy, addiction, barrier or compulsion is and gains the first level of the category. Each subsequent time a character takes a Consequence from that category, he takes the Consequence one higher on the scale *in regard to the same focus*, losing the Consequence in that category he had before. If a character reaches level

*"Illness, Insanity and Death are
the black angels that kept watch
over my cradle and
accompanied my all my life."
-Edvard Munch*

five in a category in regard to a particular focus, he can start over again with a new focus. Note that when a character completes a category, he keeps the level five Allergy, Addiction, Barrier or Compulsion and simply gains a new focus.

A character can be progressing in more than one category at a time. It is entirely possible for a character to have a level four Allergy to sunlight, a level five Addiction to blood, a level three Barrier to houses into which he hasn't been invited, and a level two Compulsion to count piles of small objects placed in his path. In short, he's a stereotypical vampire. The next time that character purchases a Pathos with a

Consequence attached, he can choose to gain a level five Allergy to sunlight, a level four Barrier to houses into which he hasn't been invited, a level two Compulsion to count piles of small objects placed in his path, or, he could start a new focus for his Addiction. He would still remain Addicted to blood at level five, but he would gain an *additional* addiction at level one.

A character may only be progressing with one focus in any given category at a time. A character cannot, for example, have a level one addiction to a dozen different substances. He must purchase a focus all the way up to level five before moving on.

A character may not choose the same focus for two different categories. A character cannot, for example, have both a Barrier Consequence and an Addiction Consequence in regard to holy ground. Nor could he have an addiction to blood and an allergy to it as well, no matter how masochistic the player is feeling.

A character retains all of his Consequences in full force as long as he has a rating of even one in Intensity.

The effects of the different levels of Consequence are listed below, along with examples of appropriate foci. As with everything else in Abeo, if the Narrator decides that a given focus is inappropriate for the game, a given character, or polite company in general, a character *cannot* use it. The Narrator has final say.

Addiction

When a character has an Addiction Consequence, he has an attraction to or need to consume a certain substance produced by people. Normally, drinking a pint of human blood or eating human fingernails would make someone sick, but a character with this Consequence is able to consume almost endless amounts of the substance to which he is addicted without ill effect. For purposes of the game, in order to have "consumed" the substance, he must swallow a substantial amount. What constitutes a "substantial amount" is left to the Narrator to decide.

Examples: blood and other bodily fluids, fingernail clippings, hair, bones, teeth, flesh, breath, skin.

1. The character is attracted to and fascinated by the substance. There is no game effect at this level, but the character likely takes any excuse to be in the presence of the substance.

2. The character is distracted by the presence of the substance. If he has not consumed any of the substance to which he is addicted that day, he operates at a one-point penalty to all rolls in the presence of the substance to which he is addicted.

3. The character is paralyzed with fascination in the presence of the substance to which he is addicted, or he will promptly move to feed. If he has not consumed any of the substance that day, he operates at a penalty equal to his Intensity to all rolls in the presence of the substance. The character does not suffer this penalty in regard to actions in pursuit of "feeding." If the character has "fed" that day, he suffers no ill effect, though he remains attracted to the substance.

*"Writing does not cause misery,
it is born of misery."
-Montaigne*

4. In addition to being paralyzed in the presence of the substance if the character has not “fed” that day, the character must consume the substance at least once every 28 days. If a character fails to consume the substance in that amount of time, he will not regain any Burnout or Trauma until he consumes the substance again.

5. In addition to being paralyzed in the presence of the substance, the character also will not regain Burnout or Trauma (even through the use of Pathos) if he has not “fed” that day.

Allergy

When a character has an Allergy Consequence, in the presence of the substance or circumstance to which he is allergic he has an adverse reaction that ranges from simple fear to potential death. Most people would regard the reaction, even if fatal, as a psychosomatic one. But then, a deer that's been hit by a car is different than a deer that's been shot, for all that it doesn't matter much to the deer. Dead is still dead, no matter what the reason.

Examples: sunlight, silver, water, iron, the sound of church bells, holy objects, salt, wood.

1. The character feels a bone-chilling fear in the presence of the allergen. There is no game effect, but the character will likely leave a situation where it is present at the first opportunity.

2. The character feels highly uncomfortable in the presence of the allergen. As long as he is exposed to it, he suffers a one-point penalty to all rolls. He also visibly pales, flushes, sweats or otherwise shows his discomfort.

3. The character finds himself in severe pain when contacted by the allergen. The character operates with a penalty equal to his Intensity to all rolls as long as he is exposed. At this point, the character is visibly pained; rashes and hives may appear.

4. The character takes an amount of Burnout equal to his Intensity for every round in which he is in contact with the Allergen. If he is rendered unconscious, no further damage is done, but he will not regain consciousness until he is removed.

5. The character takes an amount of Trauma equal to his Intensity for every round in which he is in contact with the allergen. The character continues to take damage after he loses consciousness. Death is a very real possibility. Should an autopsy be done, the character who died in this manner will likely reveal death due to natural causes (stroke, heart attack, aneurysm).

Barrier

A character with a Barrier Consequence is unwilling or unable to cross a certain boundary. He cannot be physically forced across by normal means; he will squirm out of any hold and resist any push across the forbidden threshold. This kind of obsession, while often regarded as relatively innocuous, is nonetheless a sign of severe mental disturbance according to any professionals the character is likely to run across.

Examples: wax, running water, the threshold of buildings into which the character has not been invited, holy ground.

1. The character feels a strong desire to avoid the forbidden threshold. There is no game effect yet, but characters will take elaborate detours to avoid the verboten area.

2. If the character crosses the Barrier, he is distressed and distracted. He operates with a one-point penalty to all rolls for an hour after crossing the Barrier.

*"Sometimes it seems like we're
all living in some kind of
prison, and the crime is how
much we all hate ourselves."
-My So-Called Life*

3. If the character crosses the Barrier, he is racked with excruciating pain. He operates with a penalty equal to his Intensity for an hour after crossing.
4. If the character crosses the barrier, his body turns on itself, doing an amount of Burnout equal to his Intensity.
5. The character simply cannot cross the Barrier. Only the most extreme direct, physical action can move him across the Barrier, and even that feels resistance, not just from the character, but from himself as well. The character will struggle with all of his power against such a forcing across. If the character is forced across, he takes a number of points of Trauma equal to his Intensity.

Compulsion

A character with a Compulsion Consequence feels the need to repeat a certain action. At first, the repetition is largely subconscious; the character is hardly aware that he's doing it, or if he is aware, he thinks that he's doing so for his own reasons. Eventually, the Compulsion becomes all-consuming. If given the opportunity, the character will engage in his Compulsion and do nothing else until he starves or is knocked unconscious. The Narrator ultimately decides under what circumstances a character's Compulsion triggers. Obviously, a character shouldn't have to count everything in a room or stare endlessly into any reflective surface he happens by, but at the same time, the character should regard mirrors or bags of rice with a certain attraction and/or trepidation.

Examples: counting small piles of objects placed in his path, staring into a mirror, telling the truth, telling lies, tying or untying knots.

1. At this level, the character engages in or repeats the behavior regularly without really being aware of it. There is no system effect, but the character's little "quirk" can be decidedly awkward in a social setting.
2. When presented with the opportunity to engage in the behavior, the character must succeed in a Retention+Tenacity+Mental Die roll with a Target Number equal to Imagination+Intensity in order to not engage in the behavior or to act contrary to his Compulsion for five full minutes, regardless of what's happening in his surroundings.
3. When presented with the opportunity to engage in the behavior, the character must succeed in a Retention+Tenacity+Mental Die roll with a Target Number equal to his Imagination+Intensity in order to not engage in the behavior or to act contrary to his Compulsion for a full hour.
4. When presented with the opportunity to engage in the behavior, the character must succeed in a Retention+Tenacity+Mental Die roll with a Target Number equal to Imagination+Intensity in order to not engage in the behavior or to act contrary to his Compulsion for a full two hours. If the roll succeeds, the character takes an amount of Burnout equal to his Intensity.
5. At this point, the character cannot act contrary to his compulsion or stop of his own free will. He must be physically moved away, forcibly silenced or tricked into acting contrary to his Compulsion or stopping. Note that the character does not want to be tricked. He really *wants* to engage in his behavior of choice—the deception must be complete.

Breath and Hunger

When a character reaches Intensity six, he begins to gain the ability to subsist on emotion rather than the more mundane substances around him. Whenever the character gains

*"The only antidote to mental suffering is physical pain."
-Karl Marx*

Emotion Points in a Passion rated six or higher, he may use them to fuel his metabolism. If the character spends three Emotion points, he may go for a day without eating, drinking, sleeping or even breathing. The character also gains the ability to use Emotion Points in place of Burnout. If the character spends three Emotion points, he may fuel a single Pathos as though he had burned out the Quality usually required to fuel that Pathos. This works equally well with Ethos, though the cost can quickly become prohibitive. The character is still capable of gaining sustenance from food and water, and he still needs to be sheltered somewhat from the elements.

Characters who reach Intensity six sometimes find themselves homeless, alone, and inexplicably powerful. Battered by perceptions they don't understand and that no one around them seems to share, they may begin to dress and behave eccentrically, overlooking the way they appear to those around them.

At Intensity ten, a character is no longer human, really. He no longer gains any benefit from eating, drinking, sleeping or breathing; he must survive entirely on Emotion. At the same time, his metabolism increases in efficiency at this level. When using Emotion points in Passions rated ten, a character need only use a single Emotion point

per day in order to survive. He must, however, consume an Emotion point every day, or he begins to be affected as though he is starving. A character may also use an Emotion point to fuel a Pathos or Ethos that normally requires a Quality to be burned out. Finally, a character at this level may use an Emotion point to instantly heal a point of Burnout or three points of Emotion to do the same for a point of Trauma.

When using Emotion points from other Passions, the exchange is still three to one, and the character *cannot* use Emotion points in these Passions to recover from Burnout or Trauma.

At this point, a character is no longer able to produce his own Emotion points for his primary Passion. He can only receive Emotion points by causing another character to behave in a way that gains him Emotion points in that Passion. The character receives a number of points equal to the level of action that the other character takes on the Emotion scale. The Intensity of the acting character is irrelevant to the number of Emotion points that an Intensity ten Liminal gets. Thus, a Liminal with Fury ten who caused another Liminal with Fury three to engage in a fight would receive three Fury Emotion points for the character engaging in a fight, despite the fact that the Fury three Liminal received none.

For this reason, Liminals often prey on one another—it's easy to get an individual already hooked by a Passion to behave in a far more extreme manner than someone without any Intensity. At the same time, Liminals are also more likely to be able to recognize the character's game and defend themselves. There's also the problem that, in feeding off of Liminal creatures, Intensity ten characters are making their victims more intense and thus more powerful—creating both more dangerous prey and potential rivals.

Characters at Intensity ten rarely have any concern for their appearance. Most who interact with them don't pay close enough attention to their appearance for it to matter. People will see what they want to see, and as for those who see the truth—well, it never hurts to dress to impress. Some of these characters wear fantastic or gruesome costumes regardless of the social context in which they find themselves: ball gowns at a bus stop, bloodstained togas in churches, and necklaces of human hands in a police station. Non-Liminals never really *look* at characters with Intensity this high anyway. By wearing these outlandish costumes and trophies, such characters are able to broadcast their own power, more effectively claiming territory and discouraging competition.

Of course there are also more subtle Liminals; these prefer speaking softly and carrying a big stick to common braggadocio. Even a Liminal would be hard-pressed to pick some of these out of a crowd without the help of their more ostentatious (and clearly supernatural) differences from the un-maddening crowd.

Chapter III: Crisis System

Nuts and Bolts

The creature coiled back after Henry unloaded his final bullet at it. "Liar," it spat at him, and Henry barely had time to register surprise that the thing could speak at all before it continued. "You think I'm the monster, but at least I look like what I really am." Its tone shifted, and three rows of teeth in three mouths parted: a sickening mockery of a smile. "And what isn't what it looks like, well, it isn't true. And what isn't true is a lie. Liars go to Hell, Henry. The Book says so."

He didn't even try to respond; Henry just ran out of the alley into the open rush hour streets. The creature followed slowly, dozens of insectile limbs unfurling and ticking at the pavement as it wove through the oblivious crowd.

Role-playing has been described as playing make-believe, except with more rules. Both parts: make-believe and structure— are essential. Without an idea, plot and conflict to build the story around, role-playing is reduced to an endless progression of die rolls on random-encounter tables with only the bare minimum of the overused, tracing-paper-thin genre conventions necessary to string together more mindless die-rolling.

At the same time, without rules, there is almost no way of satisfactorily resolving the elements of uncertainty that make a game interesting. Characters either effortlessly succeed in everything they attempt, or fail arbitrarily, if not capriciously, based on the whims of the Narrator. The system in Abeo is designed to avoid both problems.

Before getting into the nuts-and-bolts of how Abeo works: a discussion. Ultimately, no system, no matter how well designed or implemented, will succeed in conveying the million and one variables that go into determining the success of even the simplest action in the real world. A role-playing system, *any* role-playing system, is, at best, an approximation: a rough simulation of reality. There is simply no way for a game to have a standardized way of accounting for things like the glare that comes off of polished surfaces at midday or the reduction in friction that comes during freezing rain. The Narrator is thus encouraged to cut off players that seem to be analyzing a situation too deeply in order to affect the rolls. Too many games get bogged down in the minutiae of whether a character should get a one-point bonus to a roll because he's in a slightly brighter part of the room after drinking a cup of coffee.

On the same note, if you have a player who carefully hoards bonuses and extenuating circumstances, who has the rules highlighted and tabbed to show how “page XX clearly says...” and uses this as a justification to do something that just *doesn't make*

sense, then don't let him do it. Common sense and Narrator fiat trump everything else in this game. Even page XX.

Performing Actions

To determine whether a character in Abeo succeeds in performing a task, the player adds his character's rating in one of his Qualities to his rating in a Skill, then rolls either his Mental Die or his Physical Die. He then adds the number he rolled on the die to this total. The result is compared to the task's Target Number, the number assigned by the Narrator, reflecting the relative difficulty of the task, as well as the results of any environmental circumstances. The precise Quality and Skill used as well as the die rolled are determined by the task. For example, a character attempting to jump over an obstacle while running would require the character to roll Strength+Exertion+Physical Die. The Target Number for most standard tasks, such as noticing a small detail in a room or successfully using first aid, is eight. More difficult or easier tasks will have either higher or lower Target Numbers.

Easy

8

(Discover the date of a major historical event, break down a cheap apartment closet door, drive in poor conditions, program a simple page in HTML, change a tire. climb a rope.)

Moderately Difficult

10

(Research the economic basis of the Civil War. Pick a cheap lock, drive in awful conditions [torrential downpour, snowstorm], program a database, fix a simple engine problem, climb a wall with proper equipment.)

Difficult

12

(Investigate new information about the Civil War and incorporate into a new historical theory, drive in dangerous conditions [hurricane, blizzard], write a complete new financial software package, change a transmission, basic surgery, climb a wall without proper equipment.)

Extremely Difficult

15

(Incorporate new information on subatomic particles into an existing paradigm within physics, find an obscure, but essential, factoid, pilot a helicopter in poor conditions, create a new computer hardware device, break into a well-guarded building, perform open-heart surgery, climb a nearly-sheer wall without proper equipment.)

Nearly Impossible

20

(Create a working theoretical basis for the combination of Einsteinian and Newtonian Physics, pilot a helicopter in a hurricane, invent the next big thing in personal computing, rob a high tech bank without getting caught, brain surgery, freeclimb a skyscraper.)

Some tasks can be attempted using a choice of Qualities. This is, however, always subject to common sense. Strength is irrelevant for computer hacking rolls, and always will be, barring a brilliant explanation on the part of the player attempting to use it. The method the character uses to solve a problem or take an action determines which Quality is used. A character can intimidate someone, for example, three ways (at least):

A subtle or refined threat: "You'll never work in this town again." (SES).

A blunt threat of force: "You really don't want to disappoint me, do you?" *sound of cracking knuckles* (Strength).

An imaginative, explicit threat: "Did you know that the human retina isn't really part of the eye? It's attached though. You can actually peel it off, if you're patient enough. It

*"I eat too much to die
and not enough to stay alive
I'm sitting in the middle
Waiting."
-Manic Street Preachers
41st 7lb*

does take an awfully long time, but I'm game. How about you?" (Imagination).

In all three cases, the Skill "Intimidation" is used.

Characters attempting a task for which they have no Skill are subject to a penalty. If the task attempted uses the Physical Die, the character takes a two-point penalty to his roll. If the task uses the Mental Die, the character takes a four-point penalty to the roll. Note that some tasks, such as brain surgery or use of advanced mathematics, are simply impossible without the appropriate Skill. Whether a given action can even be attempted without the requisite Skill is entirely the decision of the Narrator.

Environmental influences can also make tasks easier or harder: attempting first aid outdoors in a pouring thunderstorm would warrant the Target Number being ten or even higher depending on the severity of the wound. At the same time, first aid in a well-appointed doctor's office is much easier than in the field—in such a case, the Narrator may decide to lower the target number to six, or even lower.

Sometimes when a character attempts an action, he is directly opposed by another character. These contested actions are a fairly simple matter to resolve. Each character rolls as though he were attempting the action against a Target Number. The character with the highest total wins. If the result is a tie, the characters re-roll until there's a winner.

If a character fails a roll and the circumstances allow for it, he may re-attempt the roll. In such cases, the Narrator may assess a one-point penalty to the roll for each successive attempt, representing a character's frustration and impatience, or in the case of actions like picking locks, damage done to the tools or objects essential to the performance of the task.

Example: Helen, a Flagler College journalism major with an unhealthy Yearning for forbidden information, has a fascination with the ambiguous disappearances that seem to pop up all over St. Augustine. After a semester of research, she has a thick manila folder filled with police reports, interviews, and newspaper clippings about people disappearing—not just from their homes, but also from all official paperwork and the memories of almost all of those around them. She gets on the Internet to see if she can find out anything about similar disappearances. The Narrator decides that since what Helen is looking for is incredibly difficult to find, the Target Number to find anything out is 10. She adds her Retention score of four to her Research score of three, coming up with a total of seven. She then rolls her Mental Die, a d6, and comes up with a two. Her total of nine is less than the Target Number of the task; after two hours of poring over the barely-coherent websites of conspiracy enthusiasts and dry public records, she walks away as empty-handed as she came. She elects to try again a few minutes later. The Narrator assigns a one-point penalty to the roll this time, as Helen is frustrated and unhappy because of her earlier failure. Sighing, she sits down in front of the computer again.

Factors

As established in Chapter II, "Character Creation," every individual has a unique set of aptitudes and ineptitudes, represented in Abeo by Factors, both positive and negative. When a Factor applies to a given task, as established within the description of the Factor, it provides either a bonus (as in the case of "Mathematical Savant") or a penalty (as in the case of "Speech Impediment") to the roll.

Example: The next day, Helen is at her favorite coffee shop, LiveWire, when she hears a woman next to her talking on her cell phone about how her husband hasn't come home in the past few days. She barely registers the topic before her friend Jessica sees her and joins her at the table. Attempting to maintain the bare minimum interaction necessary for politeness, Helen strains to listen to the woman on the cell phone over the small talk of

*"The tragedy of it is that nobody sees the look of desperation on my face. Thousands and thousands of us, and we're passing one another without a look of recognition."
-Henry Miller*

her friend. The Narrator decides that overhearing this conversation in spite of Jessica is a task with a Target Number of eight. Jessica adds her Perception of three to her two in the Skill Observation for a total of five. Normally, she would simply add her roll on her Mental Die to this total and compare it to the Target Number. However, Helen has the Positive Factor “Long Ears,” which gives her a bonus to rolls involving hearing. She took this Factor once, so she gets a bonus of one to her roll. This brings the total that she adds to her roll up to six. She rolls and gets a three on her Mental Die, making her total nine, which beats the Target Number of eight. Nodding and murmuring noncommittally at Jessica, Helen manages to catch that the woman next to her hasn't seen her husband in days, and that his co-workers now refuse to admit that they ever even worked for him. Helen smells a lead.

Burnout

Sometimes you have to give a little to get a little. Everyone has heard the apocryphal tale of the mother who lifted a Volvo to save her baby trapped underneath. In Abeo, the phenomenon of going above and beyond the scope of one's usual abilities in pursuit of a goal is called Burnout. When performing an important task, characters may Burnout a Quality to gain a higher score in that Quality for that one task. After the task is completed, the character's rating in the Quality is *reduced* by the amount that it was increased for purposes of that one task. The character can never Burnout more points in a Quality than he has. If, through Burnout, a character's Quality drops to zero, the character immediately goes unconscious until he regains at least one point in the Quality. This is true for every Quality but SES. A character at zero SES retains consciousness, but not much else.

Note that it is the player's responsibility to state that he is using Burnout before he rolls to attempt the task. If he fails, he's still lost the number of points in the Quality that he spent. Also note that if the character is burning out SES, he must describe how he is doing so—leaning on friends for a loan, calling in favors, mortgaging his house, etc. He must also describe how this Burnout will help him in his roll.

Example: Helen sees the woman talking on the phone leaving the café. Running after her, she is too late to see where the woman went. Scanning the crowd near the Ponce de Leon Mall to see if she can find her, Helen is told to roll Perception+ Observation+ Mental Die again, with a Target Number of eight. Knowing how important this lead could be, Helen's player elects to have Helen strain to see if she can find the woman, burning out a point of Perception in the process. For the purposes of this one roll, Helen's Perception is four, rather than three. She rolls, getting a total of nine. She sees the woman, still talking on her cell phone, entering the mall. She has a little bit of a headache from the strain, but, triumphant, she jogs in after. Until she recovers from the Burnout, Helen's Perception will be two, rather than three.

Degrees of Success and Failure

Attempts that total three or more higher or lower than the Target Number for a task may, at the Narrator's discretion, have certain game effects. In extreme cases, an attempt may backfire, doing more harm than good, or the character may succeed beyond their wildest expectations.

Penalties may reduce a character to a total of less than zero. Degrees of Failure should be calculated using this subzero number. Wise characters will think twice before attempting a stunt like this.

Degrees of Success

Target Number +3-5: The character not only succeeds, but does so with flair. There is no numerical benefit, but the task is done efficiently and beautifully. Even professionals will

*"...Delia's arms were inscribed
with a grid of self-inflicted
wounds, an intricate text of
self-loathing..."
-Jay McInerney
Brightness Falls*

be impressed.

Target Number +6-8: The character succeeds beautifully as above. Additionally, all numerical portions of the task (range, duration, damage) may increase or decrease by half, rounded in favor of the player.

Target Number +9-10: The character does beautifully and all numerical portions of the attempted task may be doubled (or halved) in the favor of the player. This is the kind of success that even the untrained will recognize as remarkable. Success greater than this is possible, but past this point, the task is usually so spectacularly finished that any other effects are merely cosmetic.

Degrees of Failure

Target Number -3-5: The character fails embarrassingly. There is no numerical penalty, but most people would slink away, humiliated, at this point.

Target Number -6-8: The character fails and most likely harms himself, someone else, or a significant piece of property in the process. If this failure occurs while attempting to damage something or someone, treat the roll as though an attack was made against the character. However, instead of assigning damage based on weapon rating plus the amount rolled over the character's Natural Defense, use the amount rolled under the character's Natural Defense as the damage assigned.

Example: Helen, having followed the woman to the mall, finds herself in the midst of a fight in the food court. All thoughts of the woman with the disappearing husband gone, Helen finds herself consumed with curiosity about the conflict. Masses of people are flooding toward the exit, forcing Helen to move "upstream" in order to find out what's happening. Barely managing to stay in place, much less make progress, Helen is beyond frustrated when a very large, tall, and frightened-looking man picks her up and tries to carry her out. She lashes out at him with her fists. Her Strength is two, and she has no Skill in Unarmed Strike. Her Strength of two only nullifies the two-point penalty for attempting a task without the appropriate Skill. She's down to a straight roll to try to hit the man. His Natural Defense is eight, and Helen rolls a two on her Physical Die, a d6. That's a full six points below the Target Number established by his Natural Defense. Startled at her violence, the man drops her onto the pavement outside the mall. She lands on her face, knocking a few teeth loose and going unconscious as she takes a full six points of Burnout.

Target Number -8-10. In addition to potentially taking damage as above, Murphy's Law goes into overdrive. Not only does everything go wrong that can go wrong, even a few things that can't go wrong do. That window that just got broken had an alarm attached to it, the thug had backup coming, it turns out that she does, in fact, have a sister. A wise character rethinks his course of action.

Timing

Not all actions are the same or take the same amount of time. The Narrator determines what interval of time is represented by each roll. As a general guideline, tasks can be split into three categories.

Simple tasks take a few seconds at most: opening a door, putting on shoes, or squeezing a trigger. Except in combat or high-pressure situations, characters can usually Peak on these tasks with little difficulty.

Normal tasks take a few minutes at most; examples include reading a menu, carrying on a brief conversation, and sending an e-mail.

"I chose the shadows, they did not choose me, I stay here securely not just because I feel pain, but because disappearance is by now the easy way. The habit. The worn path that I can trod knowingly and be assured safe passage home."
-Rod McKuen
Alone

Complex tasks take an hour or longer; these include creating a spreadsheet, extended conversations, and most research rolls. The Narrator may require that a player make a roll for every hour that a character spends on one of these tasks, requiring that a certain number of rolls be successful in order for the task to be completed.

Prolonged tasks take days or weeks to perform: climbing a mountain, building contacts in a new area, writing a short story, creating a painting, or building a piece or set of furniture from lumber. These rolls generally assume that a character uses all available time in pursuit of the task. Characters who take time out to perform other tasks (or move, or go spook-hunting) usually have to spend even longer on the tasks. In some time-sensitive areas, this lack of effort may be reflected in higher Target Numbers, or in extreme cases, the character having to start over (often also with a higher Target Number). The Narrator may require a player to make a roll for every day or week spent working on the task, and may require that a certain number of the rolls be successful in order for the task to be completed.

Grueling tasks take months or years to complete. Examples include writing a book, building a house, creating a masterpiece in any medium, and investing in stocks. While the time constraints on this are less rigid than with Prolonged tasks, the character is still expected to spend a minimum of 10-20 hours a week on the task or risk the penalties associated with insufficient effort described in Prolonged tasks. The Narrator may require a player to make a roll for every month or year the character spends working on the task, and may require that a certain number of the rolls be successful in order for the task to be completed.

*"The World of Madness is a lot
Bigger than the World of
Sane."
-Marilyn Manson
My Monkey*

If there's an amount of time available to work on a task that far exceeds the amount of time needed, the Narrator can allow a character to take his highest possible roll using the appropriate die. The character moves the task up one level on task type, (Simple to Normal, Normal to Complex, Complex to Prolonged, etc.) and at the end of that time, treats the task as having been completed with the highest possible result for the die used. Degrees of Success can apply in cases such as this. This process is called "Peaking."

Staying Alive

Food: A character must eat an adequate amount of food at least once per day. When a character does not eat for longer than a day, his body loses the ability to adequately repair itself—he does not regain any points burned out in any Quality until he resumes eating. After three days, a character begins burning out a point of Resilience every day. Permanent damage is very possible. After only a few days, the body begins breaking down to provide food.

Water: As a general rule of thumb, characters should consume an absolute minimum of a liter of water per day. In actuality, in order to maintain normal functioning, a character would need to consume just over two liters per day. On any day in which a character fails to consume at least two liters of water, the character does not regain any Burnout. On any day that the character does not consume at least one liter of water, he burns out a point of Resilience. If the character goes longer than a number of days equal to one plus Resilience without adequate fluid intake (whether through water, other liquids, or from water-rich food,) or supernatural assistance, he dies.

The precise amount of water that a human being needs varies wildly according to number of variables, including the metabolism of the individual in question, the temperature and humidity of the environment in which that individual finds himself, and the water content of any foods that human is eating. Because of this, the Narrator is encouraged to both adjust the figures given here to the needs of the story and to ruthlessly shut down players who attempt to find examples in real life that contradict his

ruling.

Breathing: A character can hold his breath for thirty seconds per point of Resilience. Past this time, the character takes a point of Burnout per five seconds (or per turn) that he continues to not breathe for whatever reason (whether because of suffocation, drowning, or holding his breath). The instant the character loses consciousness, the first level of suffocation Burnout is turned to Trauma. Additional levels of suffocation Burnout becomes Trauma for each turn the character cannot breathe there after.

Sleep: Sleep is another one of those highly variable needs. For purposes of Abeo, a character must sleep for a number of hours each night equal to ten minus Resilience. Failure to sleep this minimum number of hours results in the character burning out a point of either Perception or Retention. The character does not regain any points burned out in Mental Qualities unless he receives at least his minimum amount of sleep.

A character who receives *no* sleep takes a point of Burnout to *every Quality except Imagination and SES* for *each night* that he goes without sleep. A character with Intensity of even one also gains a temporary point in his highest Passion (and thus Intensity) for each night that he goes without any sleep. He gains no additional Pathos, but his existing Pathos may, due to this increase in Passion and Intensity make his existing Pathos more effective.

A character who reaches unconsciousness due to sleep deprivation will sleep for ten hours—not even pain will rouse him for longer than a few seconds.

Drugs

Therapeutic Psychotropics: Mental health professionals prescribe these drugs. In real life, many of these drugs can take weeks or months to fully come into their effects. For purposes of the game, however, Narrators can safely assume that these drugs take effect within a week, and that the effects of the drug last for a week after they have been taken. In Abeo, these drugs can be split into four basic categories.

Antidepressants reduce a character's Anguish by one point in the first week, another point in the second week, and so on until the character's Anguish reaches one. At this point, the drug will take away no further Anguish. While under the influence of antidepressants, a character cannot gain Emotion in Anguish. If the character stops taking the medication, he regains his former level of Anguish at a rate of one point per week.

Antipsychotics/Mood Stabilizers/Sedatives reduce a character's Yearning and Fury by one point in the first week, another point in the second week, and so on until the character's Yearning and Fury both reach one. At this point, the drug will take away no further Fury or Yearning. While under the influence of anti-psychotics, mood stabilizers, or sedatives, a character cannot gain Emotion in Fury or Yearning. If the character stops taking the medication, he regains his former level of Fury and Yearning at a rate of one point per week.

Anti-anxiety medications reduce a character's Dread by one point in the first week, another point in the second week, and so on until the character's Dread reaches one. At this point, the drug will take away no further Dread. While under the influence of anti-anxiety medication, a character cannot gain Emotion in Dread. If the character stops taking the medication, he regains his former level of Dread at a rate of one point per week.

Note that no member of the staff of Insomnium Games is a health care professional, nor is anyone pretending to be. If you are having problems with mental illness, please, please don't use a role-playing book as a reference. See someone who knows what they're doing. Similarly, every one of the drugs mentioned here is tremendously complex, with

*"The mind is its own place, and
in it self Can make a Heav'n of
Hell, a Hell of Heav'n."
-John Milton
Paradise Lost*

side effects and main effects, the complete documentation of any one of which would occupy more space than any three role-playing books. The rules in this book are simplified to the point of almost-pure fiction.

Narrators are encouraged to do a little research on names of the drugs characters may or may not be on. Intellectual property law prevents *Insomnium Games* from reproducing any of these proprietary names.

Recreational Drugs can have a host of effects within the game. Ultimately, it's up to the Narrator to decide what drugs will have what, if any, effects. Following are some possibilities for some of the drugs characters might run into over the course of a game. As with the therapeutic psychotropics covered earlier, all of these drugs are both legally and biologically complex. As before, the effects and side effects of the drugs here are streamlined so that they fit into the game, not so that they accurately cover the actual effects of the drugs.

Alcohol: A serving of alcohol causes an amount of Burnout to Mental Qualities (not SES) equal to four minus the imbibing character's Resilience. If the character's Resilience is high enough that alcohol will have no effect, he can consume up to twice his Resilience in servings before feeling any effect (at which point, he burns out one point in *each* Mental Quality [other than SES]). After this point, each drink causes one additional point of Burnout. If the character reaches unconsciousness due to alcohol consumption, one point of Burnout in every Quality is changed to Trauma. If the character is roused, kept awake, or continues to consume alcohol for any reason, each serving causes a point of Trauma.

Burnout gained through consumption of alcohol recovers at a rate of one alcoholically induced Burnout per hour. Note that *only* Burnout gained through alcohol is regained at this rate. Burnout gained through other means (even while drunk) takes the usual amount of time to recover.

The Narrator is free to assess penalties the next day for hangovers, especially if the character is attempting actions in the presence of loud noises, bright lights, or fragrant food.

Hallucinogens (DMT, psilocybin, LSD, peyote, ayahuasca, mescaline): Regardless of the vector or particular drug, a single dose of a hallucinogenic substance raises the character's highest Passion (and thus Intensity) by one. The character gains no new Pathos, but his existing Pathos and his ability to perceive the Noumenal is increased. The character is also able to Burnout a number of points of Imagination equal to the number of doses of the hallucinogen he's taken without suffering the effects of Burnout, effectively getting a free bonus of up to his Imagination to a number of rolls equal to the doses of the hallucinogen he's taken. A character can take a number of doses equal to his Resilience before the substance becomes poisonous. At that time, every dose causes a point of Trauma to Resilience. If the character reaches zero Resilience, he loses consciousness and *permanently* loses a point from his Resilience. After this point, the character is permanently sensitive to hallucinogens and every dose he takes, for the rest of his life causes a single point of Trauma to his Resilience. These points can be regained through spending Experience.

The effects of the drugs last for a number of hours equal to ten minus the character's Resilience.

Caffeine: The character receives a one-point bonus to Perception, Imagination and Retention rolls for the next hour. If the character uses this bonus more than once a day, he has become addicted and must consume at least that much the following day, or suffer a one point penalty to Perception, Imagination and Retention rolls for that day. On that day, he must consume twice the amount of caffeine he used the day before to gain the bonus.

*"Thoughts are the shadows of
our sensations – always darker,
emptier, simpler than these."
Friedrich Nietzsche*

It is up to the Narrator to decide how much caffeine is required to gain this bonus initially. Keep in mind that in order to receive this bonus, the character must imbibe significantly more than his usual amount. Thus, someone who wakes up with a cup of coffee every morning shouldn't get the bonus when starting play. A single cup of coffee or soft drink is probably not sufficient, but characters shouldn't have to down a bottle of caffeine pills to get the bonus either.

Ecstasy (MDMA): Narrators should first keep in mind that drugs claiming to be ecstasy rarely are. In the US, they're almost always cut with something else, making the "ecstasy" in question toxic at much lower doses.

Assuming "pure" 3, 4-methylenedioxy-N-methamphetamine, which is a pretty big assumption, the effects are as follows: when the character takes a dose of ecstasy, he gains a number of points of Yearning equal to six minus his Resilience. At the same time, if he has any Anguish, he loses an equal number of points. While under the influence of Ecstasy, a character is unable to use any Anguish Pathos. This may change his Intensity and ability to perceive the Noumenal as well. Note that the character does not gain any Pathos, but existing Pathos may become more powerful through the use of this drug.

While under the influence of the drug, characters lose the ability to effectively regulate their body temperature. Any environmental stressors relating to heat or fluid balance have their effects doubled.

Taking additional doses of MDMA has no additional effect. Once a character has hit the "sweet spot" he can go no further.

If a character attempts to take more than one dose, two points of Trauma are inflicted per dose.

The effects of ecstasy last for a number of hours equal to seven minus the character's Resilience.

Marijuana: A single dose of marijuana (which, depending on the quality of the marijuana in question can be as little as a single hit off of a joint or as much as a whole pipe of packed stems and seeds) causes the character to Burnout a point of both Retention and Agility and gain a point of either Perception or Imagination (player's choice). An additional dose will remove another point of Retention and Agility and

give another "ghost point" to either Imagination or Perception. This "ghost point" cannot be burned out and is not subject to Trauma. At the same time, if the character is injured, the "ghost point" will not allow the character to retain consciousness, or in extreme cases, live.

While under the influence of this drug, the character is more difficult to distract (effectively gaining a plus one bonus to rolls involving concentration), but is also likely to be extremely hungry and thirsty. Inhibitions are also lowered. While these don't have a game effect, the Narrator is encouraged to use these effects.

A character can't really *overdose* on marijuana, but he can easily lose consciousness.

A marijuana high lasts for an amount of hours equal to five minus the character's Resilience. Consequently, this means that some characters are just immune to marijuana.

*"Yesterday upon the stair
I met a man who wasn't there
He wasn't there again today
I wish that man would go
away."
-Hughes Mearns
Antagonish*

Torture

A character employs several tactics in order to cohere information from unwilling subjects. In these situations a contested Quality+Interrogation Die roll against the victim's Quality + Tenacity Die roll. The Quality is picked depending upon which form of torture that is desired. Physical forms of torture use Strength against the victim's Resilience. The Quality may also be dictated by how the target is resisting, such as Resilience to drugs or Retention against forms of subjugation and manipulation.

If a question is repeated, for any reason, in order to get new or different information the aggressor needs to surpass his previous degree of success in the contested roll. Each round of torture inflicts a level of Burnout appropriate to the form of trauma being inflicted. Torture is not always accurate and may not produce the desired results, especially if the subject does not know the information.

Many victims will spin halve truths and lies in order to bring the instance to a closure. However, this is not a license for stubborn players to refrain from giving information their characters would have surrendered under the circumstances. Ultimately, the information and quality surrendered is up to the Narrator.

Torture may only be used in a situation where there is a clear target and he is unable to defend himself or leave of his own volition. Most often this includes, but is not limited to, binds, drugs, entrapment, police interrogation rooms, and even dungeons.

*"I force myself to contradict myself to avoid conforming to my own ideas."
-Marcel Ducham*

Combat

Initiative

At the start of each combat turn, the participants take their action in descending order of initiative. Each character's initiative score is determined with a roll of Agility+Initiative (a Skill within the "Basic Combat" Skill Category)+Physical Die. Characters with tied results roll again, and the character with the higher result on their die goes before the one with a lower result. Because Initiative is a Skill, characters without it receive a two-point penalty.

Example: Jarrod has tracked his rival, Alejandro, to the food court of the Ponce de Leon Mall, intent on teaching him a painful lesson. Unfortunately for Jarrod, Alejandro has noticed his approach. The two square off amongst the commotion of the food court and roll initiative.

Jarrod's Physical Die is only a d4; he has an Initiative rating of four and an Agility Quality of three, so he adds the scores' sum of seven to the die roll's result. Jarrod's die result is a four, so his total initiative score is 11.

Alejandro, however, has also rolled an initiative of 11. The two roll their die again. Jarrod rolls a three on his d4. Alejandro rolls his d8 for a two. Jarrod will go first this round.

Had other people been involved in combat, their order of initiative would not have been altered by the second roll Alejandro and Jarrod made.

Attacking

The most common maneuver in combat is to strike an opponent with a weapon, be it a knife, a bullet, or your bare fist. This is accomplished like most other actions in the game, using a die roll plus modifiers. The roll used, however, depends on the weapon.

Unarmed Attacks: These attacks are generally those the character makes without

manufactured weaponry, though it sometimes includes brass knuckles or similar equipment. These attacks are made using the character's Strength+Unarmed Combat+Physical Die.

Armed Attacks: This category encompasses most close-range weapons, whether as simple as a club or as massive as a zweihänder. These attacks are usually made by rolling the character's Strength+Armed Combat+Physical Die. Certain weapons may use the character's Agility instead of Strength.

Ranged Attacks: Thrown knives, crossbows, javelins, and even shot puts are types of ranged attacks. When making an attack of this sort, use the character's Physical Die+Agility+Ranged Combat. These sorts of attacks may also suffer from penalties for attacking from extreme ranges.

Natural Defense: This is the ability to resist attacks. It is a combination of the character's ability to avoid being hit, as well as his innate toughness. A character's Natural Defense rating is the sum of his Agility plus Resilience.

Whatever form of attack the character is using, the Target Number for the roll is always the other character's Natural Defense. Armor may add to this score, however.

Example: Jarrod came to this fight prepared, and already has his knife in hand. He closes on Alejandro and stabs for his chest, hoping to end this quickly. Since he's using an armed attack, he will roll his Physical Die+Strength+Armed Strike, or $d6+three+four$. The Target Number for this attack will be Alejandro's Natural Defense, eight (Agility four + Resilience four). Jarrod rolls a two, which brings his attack total to nine. This beats the Target Number of eight, so Jarrod's strike lands true and inflicts its damage.

Damage

When a character is hurt, his physical capacity is diminished. He begins to bleed, bones break, and muscles tear. When a character is struck, he takes damage, which can be either Burnout, in the case of concussive or blunt damage which heals quickly or the more serious and difficult to heal damage called Trauma, to his Physical Quality equal to the weapon's damage rating plus the amount over his Natural Defense his opponent rolled. When a Physical Quality is damaged, its score (and scores derived from that Quality, like Natural Defense) is effectively lowered until the character is able to recuperate. The injured character decides where to allocate the damage done to him, but may not assign the damage to a Quality with a current score of one unless *all* of his Physical Qualities are currently score at one.

Once a Physical Quality drops to zero, the character falls unconscious. Further damage is assigned to the other non-zero Physical Qualities until they, too, reach zero. Once this occurs, another point of damage means that the character is dying.

Example: Jarrod successfully attacked Alejandro with his knife, so it inflicts points of damage equal to its Damage Rating – in this case, two, plus the amount over Alejandro's Natural Defense that Jarrod rolled, in this case, one. Alejandro has Strength three, Agility four, and Resilience four. He plans on using his pistol to take Jarrod down, and doesn't want to become too much of an easier target for Jarrod to hit, so he elects to have two points of damage be done to his Strength and one to Resilience. Until he recuperates, his Strength will effectively be reduced to one and his Resilience to three.

Alejandro had his pistol ready the moment he saw Jarrod, and is ready to defend himself. He fires at Jarrod and successfully hits with a 13, beating Jarrod's Natural Defense of six by seven points. Jarrod has Strength three, Agility three, Resilience three; the pistol has a damage rating of three. Jarrod decides, like Alejandro, that he'd

*"Please subdue the anguish of
your soul. Nobody is destined
only to happiness or to pain.
The wheel of life takes one up
and down by turn."
-Kalidasa*

prefer to take damage to his Strength first. However, he only has two points of Strength to spare – his score in it cannot be reduced below one unless all of his Physical Qualities are at one. He then assigns the damage to Agility, and comes across the same problem – not enough spare points in the Quality. Jarrod realizes that his Resilience won't be able to take the damage either – he's assigned six points of damage across his Physical Qualities, and still has four left to assign. He reduces his Strength to zero, and Jarrod falls unconscious.

Unfortunately for Jarrod, his problem gets much worse – with three more points of damage to assign, his Agility and Resilience must now drop to zero as well. There is still one point of damage remaining, meaning that Jarrod is now dying.

The Target Number to hit a character should never go below four. Even unconscious characters have at least this level of Natural Defense.

Dying

Once all of a character's Physical Qualities have been reduced to zero, another point of damage will cause the character to begin dying. When a character is dying, he takes an automatic point of Trauma every turn from hemorrhaging, sepsis, and other complications. This damage (as well as any damage from external sources, should others continue to beat on the unconscious character) is not applied directly to his Qualities. Instead, the character can "safely" take a number of points of damage equal to his normal, unmodified Resilience score. A character who drops to this point and is revived will recover fully with time.

If a character does not receive treatment before taking damage beyond this point, his wounds will never fully heal, and he permanently loses a point off of one of his Physical or Mental Qualities (player's choice) once he becomes conscious again. Once a dying character takes twice his normal Resilience score's points worth of damage, he is beyond the reach of medical treatment and dies.

Example: Jarrod is lying on the floor of the food court, unconscious and dying. With everyone running away after hearing Alejandro's gun shot, Jarrod's situation is grim. Alejandro doesn't stick around to finish Jarrod off quickly, leaving him to die slowly. Already one point of damage towards death, he takes a second point the next round as his wounds bleed out. Jarrod's normal Resilience is three, which means that he can only take three points of damage before he permanently loses a point from one of his Physical Qualities. Unfortunately for Jarrod, no help arrives in the next two rounds, meaning he's now four points of damage toward death – and one point beyond the safe limit. When he awakens, he will have to deduct one point from a Quality of his choice. Now with four points of Trauma and a normal Resilience of three, Jarrod has two more turns to live – a third turn will mean he's taken a seventh point of damage and has died.

Complications

Blindness: Characters who are completely blind are generally unable to make ranged attacks with any appreciable chance of success. If the circumstances give a blind character a reasonable ability to approximate the target's position (a narrow hallway, the character is making a lot of noise, etc.) an attack may be made, but the target's Natural Defense is treated as being ten higher than normal.

Blind characters have an easier time attacking opponents with armed and unarmed attacks than with ranged attacks. So long as the character is at least marginally aware of a nearby character's presence, he may make an attack. The target's Natural Defense is treated as being six higher than normal against these sorts of attacks.

Blind characters do not add their Agility to their Natural Defense as usual, as they cannot appropriately react to threats.

"If you think you have things under control, you're not going fast enough."
-Marshal McLuhan

Cover: Cover is a key method for a character to protect himself, particularly against ranged attacks. When behind cover, a character gains a bonus to his Natural Defense based on the quality of the cover. When hiding behind objects that obscure more than block, like drapes or bushes, a character gains a two point bonus. More solid protection, like a chair or large shield, provides a four point bonus. Large, sturdy items like a car door or large tree provide a six point bonus. For cover that almost totally protects the character, like hiding behind a wall or in a foxhole, rolls to strike the character take an eight point penalty. Cover that's virtually impenetrable but still somehow allows for an attack to be made provides a plus ten bonus.

Not all cover is created equal, however. Firearms are capable of blasting through many forms of cover without losing their killing power. Pistols, submachine guns, and other low-powered weapons reduce the effectiveness of cover by two. Rifles, shotguns, and other high-powered weapons reduce the effectiveness of cover by four.

Armed and unarmed attacks can more easily circumvent cover than ranged attacks, as the attacker can move to a more advantageous angle and reach past the covering item. Cover bonuses are halved against attacks made from close range.

Cover has its drawbacks, as well. The same mechanism that protects a character also makes it harder to get a bead on the enemy. Enemies a character attacks from behind cover gain a bonus to their Natural Defense equal to half the cover bonus you gain against them.

Darkness: Functionally similar to cover, darkness protects characters against attacks by making them more difficult to accurately locate. The given modifiers are for use at actions at a range – attacks at more than a few feet, or spotting something in the distance, for example. The penalties are half as severe at close ranges – for instance, reading or making armed attacks. Dim lighting, like at twilight or in a restaurant, has a modifier of plus two. Deeper darkness, like the light of the full moon, has a modifier of plus four. Darkness equal to a cloudy night gives a plus six modifier. Darkness that is just short of complete blackness, such as during a new moon, imposes a plus eight modifier. Complete blackness, like in a sealed room, causes functional blindness (see Blindness).

Off Hand Use: Most characters are not ambidextrous, and therefore unable to use their off hand as well as their primary hand. Any use of the character's off hand imposes a three-point penalty to rolls involving the non-dominant hand..

Prostrate: Characters may become prostrate for various reasons – often because they were tripped or want to reduce their profile. While prostrate, a character effectively loses his Agility bonus from his Natural Defense, but gains a four point bonus to his Natural Defense score against ranged attacks due to his low profile. Most firearms can be used while prostrate without penalty, as can crossbows. Normal bows are virtually impossible to use from this position. Perception rolls to notice the character also have a Target Number four higher than usual.

Two-Handed Weapons: Many large weapons require two hands to use effectively. Attempting to use a two-handed weapon with only one hand increases all Target Numbers for the action (usually the target's Natural Defense) by twice the weapon's Strength requirement.

Evasive Actions: When a character is attacked and realizes he's going to be hit, he has the option of making his next action a dodge. When doing this, the character rolls his Agility+Evasive+Physical Die. He can Burnout and use Experience to increase his likelihood of success if he wishes. If the result is higher than the roll to initially strike the character, no damage is dealt to the dodging character. If the result is *not* higher than the original striking roll, damage is assessed as normal. Regardless of the outcome, the character loses his next action—he's already spent it dodging. If he chooses to Burnout a

*"When all is said and done,
monotony may after all be the
best condition for creation."
-Margaret Sackville*

point of Agility on the dodge in order to gain another action, he may still take that action. The character must Burnout a number of points of Agility equal to the *total number* of actions he plans on taking at the time of the dodge.

Parrying/Blocking: When a character is attacked, he also has the option of attempting to block or parry the attack as his next action. Some attacks, such as those coming from a gun, obviously can't be affected with a parry or a block. Common sense, is, as always, the key.

If a character is able to block or parry, he rolls Agility+Block/Parry+Physical Die. He can Burnout or use experience as with any other roll to increase his likelihood of success. If the result of the roll is equal to or greater than the initial roll to hit, damage is not assessed as normal. If the character is parrying or blocking with something capable of taking the damage, no damage is done to the character—it is instead done to the item or weapon. Most hand-to-hand weapons are capable of taking this kind of abuse with relative impunity. Other objects may not stand up to the punishment as well. As a general rule of thumb, items can be used to block or parry an attack two to three times before they're completely destroyed. If the character attempts to block or parry the blow using only his own body, he takes an amount of damage equal to the Damage Rating of the weapon. The attacking character's roll is not taken into account in this case.

If the character fails in his Parry/Block roll, damage is assessed as normal.

If he succeeds with two or more Degrees of Success, the character may make an immediate Agility+Parry/Block+Physical Die roll with a Target Number equal to his opponent's Natural Defense plus three. The Parry/Blocking character needn't spend an action for this. If he succeeds, he removes the attacker's weapon from his hands. The attacking character must then spend an action retrieving the weapon before he can attack with it again. By the time the attacking character is able to get to the weapon, however, another character may have had the opportunity to take it.

*"We shape our tools and
thereafter our tools shape us."
-Marshal McLuhan*

Special Actions

Knockdown: The character attempting the knockdown rolls for an Unarmed Strike as usual, however, his Target Number in this case is equal to the attacked character's Agility plus Dodge. If the attacking character succeeds, the attacked character falls and must spend an action getting up. As there is no Target Number to get up, players cannot add Target Numbers to get additional actions in order to get up for free. Even if the character falls, no damage is assessed in the case of this attack.

Grappling/Pinning: If a player states that his character is attempting a grappling or pinning attack, he must make an attack in the same manner and with the same Target Number as in Knockdown above. If he succeeds, he engages in an opposed Strength plus Exertion roll. This roll is reattempted each round. As long as the attacking character wins, neither character can take any physically-based action. The only exception to this rule occurs if the grappling character chooses to choke his victim. Specific rules on this are below. While grappling, both characters lose the Agility portion of their Natural Defense, making both an easy target for further attacks. Ranged attacks like bullets are likely to hit either or both characters. When attempting to attack a grappled or grappling character with a ranged attack, if a character succeeds in the attack with anything less than two degrees of success (five or more over the Target Number), there is a 50% chance of striking the wrong target. If no coins are available to determine this, roll a d6. On a roll of 1-3, the wrong target is struck. On a roll of 4-6, the proper target is attacked.

If a character has successfully grappled or pinned another character, he may choke that character. In order to do so, he takes a two-point penalty to the opposed Strength+Exertion+Physical Die roll on the round in which he is attempting to strangle his victim. If the character still succeeds in his roll on that round, his victim takes a point of Burnout in addition to his inability to perform any physical action. Further, while a

character is being choked, he cannot cry out, speak or breathe effectively.

Aimed Shot: A character may choose to aim at a particular part of another character's body, thus doing damage to a particular Quality first. The character takes a penalty of three to his roll. If he hits, he may choose which Quality a character must take damage from first by aiming for particular body parts. For example, if a character is attempting to stop another character who happens to be fleeing, he could take an Aimed Shot at the character's leg and declare that he wants to aim for Agility. The character, if struck, must take damage from his Agility first. Note that once the Quality attacked reaches one, the character may assign the rest of the damage normally. Further Aimed Shots will have no effect.

Disarming: If a character chooses to make an Aimed Shot at another character's hand, he may do so with the usual three-point penalty. If he succeeds, he does a single point of damage (regardless of the weapon) and knocks the weapon out of the other character's hand. Note that in most cases, the character whose hand was struck will be unable to use that hand for the remainder of the battle, subject, as always, to common sense. The Narrator may make exceptions in the cases of certain weapons, such as brass knuckles.

Multiple Actions: In general, characters only receive one action per turn. Sometimes, though, a situation demands a character multi-task to stay alive. In these cases, there are two options open to a character.

First, a character can elect to Burnout a point of Agility. Each point burnt out this way grants a character an extra action. The Agility point must be burnt out before the character takes his first action, meaning that his Natural Defense and any Agility-based actions he takes on his turn suffer from his lowered Agility Quality. Aside from the Burnout penalties, this method imposes no extra hindrances on the actions the character takes.

Secondly, a character can elect to accept increased Target Numbers on his actions in exchange for the ability to take more actions. This must be decided before the character takes his first action in the turn. The first action suffers a plus two penalty to its target number, and each action beyond the first suffers an additional plus two, cumulative plus four, penalty. The total number of actions the character in that round doesn't need to be declared ahead of time; he only needs to declare that he plans on taking multiple actions. The maximum number of actions the character can take in this way is equal to his Agility Quality.

Two Firearms: Action movies notwithstanding, effectively aiming two guns at once is extraordinarily difficult. A character with a gun in each hand may fire both at the same time as a single action, but each attack suffers a six-point penalty, in addition to the standard three-point penalty to the shot from the gun in the character's off hand. A character shooting two guns as two separate actions does not suffer the six-point penalty, however the attack using the firearm in the character's off hand is still subject to the three-point penalty for attempting a task with the non-dominant hand.

Two Melee Weapons: Attempts to use two melee weapons simultaneously are generally clumsy without proper training in an appropriate fighting technique. An untrained character can attempt to attack with both in the same action, but each attack suffers an increased Target Number equal to the damage rating of the weapon, and the off-hand weapon also suffers the standard three-point penalty to the roll (unless the character is ambidextrous or using supernatural means). Each attack is resolved separately, thus giving the character two chances to inflict damage.

Armor

Every piece of armor has two ratings. The first, the Defense Rating, measures how well a piece of armor covers a character. The second, the Armor Resilience, measures how well the armor stands up to abuse. The first rating is applied as a bonus to the character's

"The fragmentation of rational knowledge in the post-modern world has produced a focus on information that is unaware of its history."
-Marcus Breen

Natural Defense. A character with a Natural Defense of five who wears a bulletproof vest (giving him a bonus of plus three) has a modified Natural Defense of eight. Only attacks that reach numbers higher than eight will penetrate or circumvent the armor and cause damage.

A piece of armor's Armor Resilience is used when a strike achieves a number between the character's normal Natural Defense and his Natural Defense with the armor. In these cases, an amount of damage is applied to the armor equal to the amount over the character's unmodified Natural Defense. For example, the bulletproof vest being worn by the character in the above example has been through the wringer and has an Armor Resilience of four. If the character is struck with a seven, the character takes no Trauma, but the vest takes two, bringing it down to an Armor Resilience of two. If a piece of armor reaches Armor Resilience zero, it no longer provides protection, and any damage left over after the armor reaches zero is applied to the character normally.

*"The gods have two ways of dealing harshly with us – the first is to deny us our dreams, and the second is to grant them."
-Oscar Wilde*

Armor Types

*Defense Rating: +1
Armor Resilience: +2*

Homemade armor, such as reinforced clothing and leather, that does not impede movement. For heads, hard hats and bicycle helmets.

*Defense Rating: +2
Armor Resilience: +3*

Armor made of bullet proof nylons, such as types of aramid fibers. Aramid fibers have no melting point and a low flammability. Motorcycle helmets are within this category.

*Defense Rating: +3
Armor Resilience: +4*

Bullet proof vests, steel helmets and bullet proof goggles. Characters wearing bullet proof goggles have a more narrow field of vision, giving them a Perception penalty of two.

Healing

Burnout heals at a rate of one point per Quality per 12 hours without strain. "Strain" is anything that causes Burnout or Trauma.

Example: Sammie sees the woman who has been haunting her acid flashbacks for the past three weeks at a rally. When the woman turns and lunges to attack, Sammie's player decides to Burnout two points of her Agility running away. Not wanting to take any chances, she also makes a second roll to think of a good hiding place, burning out a single point of Imagination. It will take her 24 hours without straining, that is to say, burning out, to fully recover from the escape. If she had only burned out one point of

Agility and one point of Imagination it would have taken 12 hours to recover, as the two points of Burnout were from different Qualities.

Trauma heals much more slowly. As with Burnout, each Quality is treated separately. Trauma takes a week without straining to heal per point in each Quality, rather than 12 hours.

If a character has both Trauma and Burnout, the Burnout heals first, at its usual rate, ignoring the Trauma. Erase the marks, one for each 12 hours without strain, skipping over any Trauma points.



If a player wishes, he may move the Trauma points over to the newly empty space so he has a clearer idea of his character's current Quality total.



If the character receive more Trauma or Burnout in the healing process, simply mark it in at the time.



Once all of the Burnout has been healed, move on to the Trauma, erasing the marks at the usual rate.



Weapons Chart

Damage Bonus: +0

Burnout: Unarmed attacks that typically leave bruises, such as punching, kicking and body-slammng an opponent does Burnout with a +0 Damage Bonus. The Narrator may choose to adjust this bonus upward in the event of accoutrements like steel-toed boots or a roll of quarters clenched in a character's fist, though there are few, if any circumstances under which these kinds of attacks could warrant a greater than one-point Damage Bonus.

Punching

Strength Requirement: 1

Penalty Modifier: 0

Concealment: N/A

Range: Physical Contact

Kicking

Strength Requirement: 1

Penalty Modifier: 0

Concealment: N/A

Range: Physical Contact

Trauma: Unarmed attacks that have a significant chance of breaking the skin will result in Trauma damage, examples include biting or clawing with non-supernatural nails. On average, you can only

do up to half your Strength in damage, rounded down, when biting or clawing. This can be modified by a high enough Degree of Success, or by supernatural means.

Biting

Strength Requirement: 1

Penalty Modifier: 0

Concealment: N/A

Range: Physical Contact

Clawing

Strength Requirement: 1

Penalty Modifier: 0

Concealment: N/A

Range: Physical Contact

Damage Bonus: +1

Burnout: A plus one bonus is given when a small blunt object is used during the fight, such as hitting someone with a pool ball, a brick or stone, flash light, blunt fist weapons (such as a chain around the fist and blunt brass knuckles), baton, beer bottle, mace spray, or phone. With a high enough degree of success a beer bottle, or any other breakable item, can shatter over them and become a Trauma weapon worth half the initial weapon's Burnout bonus in Trauma.

Pool Ball

Strength Requirement: 1

Penalty Modifier: 0

Concealment: Easy

Range: Physical Contact or reasonable throwing distance (determined by Agility).

Brick/Rock

Strength Requirement: 1

Penalty Modifier: 0

Concealment: Easy

Range: Physical Contact or reasonable throwing distance (determined by Agility).

Flashlight

Strength Requirement: 1

Penalty Modifier: 0

Concealment: Easy

Range: Physical Contact or reasonable throwing distance (determined by Agility).

Blunt Fist Weapons

Strength Requirement: 1

Penalty Modifier: 0

Concealment: Wearing: Hard, Pocketed: Easy

Range: Physical Contact

Baton

Strength Requirement: 1

Penalty Modifier: 0

Concealment: Average

Range: Physical Contact or reasonable throwing distance (determined by Agility).

Beer Bottle

Strength Requirement: 1

Penalty Modifier: 0

Concealment: Easy

Range: Physical Contact or reasonable throwing distance (determined by Agility).

Mace Spray

Strength Requirement: 1

Penalty Modifier: 0

Concealment: Easy

Range: 5 Yards. Requires Aimed Shot to the face.

Full-sized Phone (not Cellular)

Strength Requirement: 1

Penalty Modifier: 0

Concealment: Average

Range: Throwing distance determined by Agility.

Trauma: Knife (including a throwing knife), broken glass, scrap metals, fork (small pronged items, such as the prongs on plug-ins), pens and pencils, compass needle, spiked brass knuckles, keys.

Knife

Strength Requirement: 1

Penalty Modifier: 0

Concealment: Easy

Range: Throwing distance determined by Agility.

Broken Glass

Strength Requirement: 1

Penalty Modifier: 0

Concealment: Easy

Range: Physical Contact

Scrap Metals

Strength Requirement: 1

Penalty Modifier: 0

Concealment: Easy

Range: Physical Contact

Small Pronged Items

Strength Requirement: 1

Penalty Modifier: 0

Concealment: Easy

Range: Physical Contact

Writing Utensils

Strength Requirement: 1

Penalty Modifier: 0

Concealment: Easy

Range: Physical Contact

Compass Needle

Strength Requirement: 1

Penalty Modifier: 0

Concealment: Easy

Range: Physical Contact

Spiked Brass Knuckles

Strength Requirement: 1

Penalty Modifier: 0

Concealment: Wearing: Hard, Pocketed: Easy

Range: Physical Contact

Tiger Claws

Strength Requirement: 1

Penalty Modifier: 0

Concealment: Wearing: Hard, Pocketed: Easy

Range: Physical Contact

Keys

Strength Requirement: 1

Penalty Modifier: 0

Concealment: Easy

Range: Physical Contact

Damage Bonus: +2

Burnout: Baseball bat, pool cue, 2x4, pipes, chain whip (anchored by a padlock, or other weighted item), tire iron, bowling ball, mace, pepper spray (requires Aimed Shot),

pellet gun and paintball gun.

Baseball Bat

Strength Requirement: 1
Penalty Modifier: 0
Concealment: Hard
Range: Physical Contact

Pool Cue

Strength Requirement: 1
Penalty Modifier: 0
Concealment: Impossible
Range: Physical Contact

Board or Piece of Wood

Strength Requirement: 1
Penalty Modifier: 0
Concealment: Hard
Range: Physical Contact

Anchored Chain Whip

Strength Requirement: 2
Penalty Modifier: 0
Concealment: Average
Range: Up to three feet.

Tire Iron

Strength Requirement: 1
Penalty Modifier: 0
Concealment: Average
Range: Physical Contact

Bowling Ball

Strength Requirement: 3
Penalty Modifier: 0
Concealment: Hard
Range: Physical Contact, possibly a *very* short range throw. Narrator's discretion.

Mace

Strength Requirement: 3
Penalty Modifier: 0
Concealment: Hard
Range: Physical Contact

Pepper Spray

Strength Requirement: 1
Penalty Modifier: 0
Concealment: Easy
Range: 5 Yards. Requires Aimed Shot to the face.

Pellet Gun

Strength Requirement: 1
Penalty Modifier: 0
Concealment: Hard
Range: 25 Yards

Paintball Gun

Strength Requirement: 1
Penalty Modifier: 0
Concealment: Hard
Range: 25 Yards

Trauma: Any blade over 12" and under three feet in length (such as a machete or short sword), a .22 rifle, hatchet, spiked mace, crowbar, meat hook, hoe.

Blades 12" Through Three Feet

Strength Requirement: 2
Penalty Modifier: 0
Concealment: Hard
Range: Physical Contact

.22 Rifle

Strength Requirement: 2
Penalty Modifier: 0
Concealment: Hard
Range: 25 Yards

Hatchet

Strength Requirement: 2
Penalty Modifier: 0
Concealment: Average
Range: Physical Contact or reasonable throwing distance (determined by Agility).

Spiked Mace

Strength Requirement: 3
Penalty Modifier: 0
Concealment: Hard
Range: Physical Contact

Crowbar

Strength Requirement: 3
Penalty Modifier: 0
Concealment: Average
Range: Physical Contact

Meat Hook

Strength Requirement: 2
Penalty Modifier: 0
Concealment: Average
Range: Physical Contact

Hoe

Strength Requirement: 3
Penalty Modifier: 0
Concealment: Impossible
Range: Physical Contact

Damage Bonus: +3

Burnout: Large weighted object (such as a television, printer, or cinder block), sledge hammer, pry bar, shovel, and folding chair.

Weighted Object
Strength Requirement: 5
Penalty Modifier: +1 Penalty
Concealment: Impossible
Range: Physical Contact

Sledge Hammer
Strength Requirement: 5
Penalty Modifier: 0
Concealment: Impossible
Range: Physical Contact

Pry Bar
Strength Requirement: 5
Penalty Modifier: 0
Concealment: Impossible
Range: Physical Contact

Shovel
Strength Requirement: 3
Penalty Modifier: 0
Concealment: Impossible
Range: Physical Contact

Folding Chair
Strength Requirement: 3
Penalty Modifier: +1 Penalty
Concealment: Impossible
Range: Physical Contact

Trauma: Cross bow, hedge trimmer, long sword (any sword that is over five feet and under five feet in length), scythe, .38 special, 9mm.

Cross Bow
Strength Requirement: 3
Penalty Modifier: 0
Concealment: Hard
Range: 35 Yards

Hedge Trimmer
Strength Requirement: 4-5 to use as a weapon.
Penalty Modifier: +2
Concealment: Impossible
Range: Physical Contact

Long Swords
Strength Requirement: 4
Penalty Modifier: 0
Concealment: Hard
Range: Physical Contact

Scythe
Strength Requirement: 4-5 to use as a weapon.
Penalty Modifier: 0
Concealment: Impossible
Range: Physical Contact

.38 Special
Strength Requirement: 1
Penalty Modifier: 0
Concealment: Easy
Range: 30 Yards

9mm
Strength Requirement: 1
Penalty Modifier: 0
Concealment: Easy
Range: 30 Yards

Damage Bonus: +4

Trauma: High powered cross bow, molotov cocktail, Claymore, Flamberge, .357, .40, .45 ACP.

High-Powered Crossbow
Strength Requirement: 4
Penalty Modifier: 0
Concealment: Average/Hard
Range: 75 Yards

Molotov Cocktail
Strength Requirement: 2
Penalty Modifier: 0
Concealment: Average until lit
Range: Determined by Agility.

Claymore
Strength Requirement: 5
Penalty Modifier: 0
Concealment: Impossible
Range: Physical Contact

Flamberge
Strength Requirement: 5
Penalty Modifier: 0
Concealment: Impossible
Range: Physical Contact

.357
Strength Requirement: 2
Penalty Modifier: 0
Concealment: Easy
Range: 45 Yards

.40
Strength Requirement: 2
Penalty Modifier: 0
Concealment: Easy
Range: 35 Yards

.45 ACP
Strength Requirement: 2
Penalty Modifier: 0
Concealment: Easy
Range: 40 Yards

Damage Bonus: +5

Trauma: Pipe bomb, homemade explosives (for people who want to make chemicals out of what they have in their kitchen. Not military grade), chainsaw (per round of contact), .50 AE, .454, .45 mag.

Pipe Bomb

Strength Requirement: 3

Penalty Modifier: 0

Concealment: Unknown

Range: Determined by Agility.

Homemade Explosives

Strength Requirement: 2

Penalty Modifier: 0

Concealment: Unknown

Range: Determined by Agility

Chainsaw

Strength Requirement: 4

Penalty Modifier: +2 Penalty

Concealment: Impossible

Range: Physical Contact

.50 AE

Strength Requirement: 3

Penalty Modifier: 0

Concealment: Average

Range: 40 Yards

.454

Strength Requirement: 3

Penalty Modifier: 0

Concealment: Average

Range: 45 Yards

.45 mag

Strength Requirement: 3

Penalty Modifier: 0

Concealment: Average

Range: 45 Yards

Damage Bonus: +6

Trauma: 12 gauge shotgun, frag grenade (base minimum for military grade explosives), stick of dynamite.

12 Gauge Shotgun

Strength Requirement: 3

Penalty Modifier: 0

Concealment: Hard

Range: 25 Yards

Frag Grenade

Strength Requirement: 2

Penalty Modifier: 0

Concealment: Unknown

Range: Determined by Agility.

Dynamite Stick

Strength Requirement: 2

Penalty Modifier: 0

Concealment: Unknown

Range: Determined by Agility.

Chapter IV Magic: Castles in the Sky

Popowycz--that was her name, she said--not Aliza, or Mrs. Popowycz, she tried to drown the baby when it first come out, but mama said that no old witch was gonna drown no baby of hers. Old Popowycz shook her fingers at Mama then, like she was one of them California surfer boys I seen on TV, or like she was flicking water in her face. Popowycz shook her fingers at Mama just like that, and she said that it ain't her fault, then, what that baby comes to. Mama didn't say nothing else just paid her and said she wasn't welcome no more in our home. Popowycz looked at mama real weird then, almost like she felt sorry for her, and walked away, shaking her fingers one more time when she stepped through the door.

I think that old witch tried to curse us, but it didn't work. The baby's the prettiest little girl I ever seen, and she never cries or spits up or nothing. Now that Mama's gone, I have to feed her anymore, but I don't mind, especially once her teeth sink in, and it feels like Heaven until she stops. Then I wanna cry. She's the prettiest little girl I ever seen.

The Impossible Becomes Routine

In Abeo, participants play one of the individuals torn by passion and the wider world they suddenly perceive. The common denominator of all of the characters in Abeo is the emotion that allows them to see and do things that the average person cannot. These aren't fickle variations in mood; they are beyond trends. They are part of the character as much as his eyes or hands. And just as evident. With a high score in Fury, an individual is already habitually angrier than most people will ever be for even a moment. An anguished character cannot be entirely medicated into contentment--his sadness is an inextricable part of his soul and his world.

Normal people can see this. They can see the lust or fear in a character's eyes, and it makes them uncomfortable. It may be that this discomfort glosses over the existence of the character, much like it seems to occlude the existence of Noumenal phenomena. Whatever the reason, the more intense a character becomes, the less he can easily interact with the apathetic. Over time characters drift: first from the institutions of the world, then gradually from the world itself as their Passion fades them, one forgotten relationship or document at a time.

A player's character is taking his first step on a journey away from the mass-market, safe, standardized, one-size-fits-all world that he's used to. He's not the first and he won't be the last, but it doesn't matter how many people have traveled down the road, it's still scary, exhilarating, and new. The character is finding depths of passion he didn't know he had even as he discovers the dark outer limits of his ethics. A character, over the course of Abeo, slowly discovers the other denizens of the world he's ignored his whole life: from the violent and dangerous predators of the unseen to the more seductive, but equally dangerous dealmakers. In time, he may discover others who have seen what he's seen—things that most people regard as fairy tales.

Noumenal, Phenomenal, and Liminal

The landscapes, beings and experiences that make up the world commonly regarded as “real” are collectively called the Phenomenal. There are rules for the Phenomenal: down is always down, red is always red (even if someone can't see color, his lack of perception is a deficiency within himself, not the world), and a thing doesn't have a *meaning* so much as it has *properties*. Repeatability, objectivity, cause and effect are the ruling principles of the Phenomenal. There are no ghosts, no monsters. The world is a cold, uncaring, but ultimately *safe* place.

Characters who begin gaining Intensity, however, have had the scales removed from their eyes; they see things that they've never seen before, and that those around them, in all likelihood, never will see—the Noumenal. The Phenomenal is not the whole world, but a single band on the broader spectrum of reality. In the Noumenal, Passion is the first and last law—everything else is a suggestion, if even that. The impossible is routine there, and the line between literal truth and metaphor blurs, often disappearing entirely. The Noumenal is, in many ways, a larger place than the Phenomenal, more full of possibility, more malleable. It is also more dangerous. Limiting Factors like space, gravity, and conservation of energy do not apply to the predators of the Noumenal as they do in the “real” world. The much-lauded intellectual capacity of humans: our ingenuity, pattern-recognition and planning skills are of far less use when the “rules” on which such skills depend are absolutely governed by pure, uncivilized Passion. Likely the only thing that has enabled humanity to survive in the world of Abeo is this: Noumenal creatures are just as blind to the Phenomenal as most people are to the Noumenal.

Characters who have gained Intensity but who have not entirely turned into creatures of the Noumenal see and walk in both worlds, though “world” is not a completely accurate designation. The Noumenal and Phenomenal are more properly different ends of the same spectrum, with most of creation sampling one end and calling it “complete.”

A metaphor: the honeybee can see much farther into the violet and ultraviolet end of the spectrum than humans. Thus many flowers have developed patterns and “coloration” that is completely invisible to people, geared instead toward the perceptions of the insects that pollinate them. At the same time, honeybees cannot see into the red end of the spectrum as humans can. A human and a bee looking at a field of flowers would thus see two almost entirely different landscapes. Neither can be said to be more “accurate” than the other, but then, neither is really complete either.

The whole world is like that field of flowers, except infinitely more varied across the

"Reality is that which, when you stop believing in it, doesn't go away."
-Phillip K. Dick

Noumenal-Phenomenal spectrum. Both ends are valid, if fragmentary, views of the world. Player characters in Abeo see the whole picture; they are the Liminal.

Liminal characters look at the world with strange eyes—an object's meaning, to one of these characters, takes on a concrete appearance. Murder weapons can appear covered in bloodstains; no amount of washing can remove the spectral gore that their use has left behind. Prisons seem to forever carry the faintly sick smell and taste of despair and fear; and even banks may be covered in a thin oil of avarice. The way that a character perceives the Noumenal is different for each character. While the Narrator may say, “this place still feels like terror,” one character may see it as spider webs draped across the corners, while another may taste its fetid sweetness in the air. The sheer volume of additional information that characters gain, as well as the characters' haphazard, chaotic exposure to that information often renders it useless without the use of a specific Pathos that enables the character to make sense of his surroundings.

Also, some things exist in the Noumenal that just don't in the Phenomenal. Characters may see diaphanous cathedrals, phantom cars, or wings of houses long since burned to the ground—emotional detritus that may be years or centuries old. These places and objects, though rare, do exist and around them, the character may find himself disoriented and torn as he attempts to see or pass through a place where fully half of him not only doesn't belong, but *doesn't exist*. In these places, Noumenal and Phenomenal creatures, objects and forces move around one another, seemingly unaware of each others' existence. Sometimes, they even pass *through* each other, seemingly without ill effect, though one or the other might seem to react to a sudden coldness, heat, or feeling of electricity. Liminal characters may interact with these objects or places just as anyone else interacts with a Phenomenal object, but while doing so, they slip under the collective attention of those blind to the Noumenal.

Some few brave, foolhardy, or clever Liminals have learned to use these Noumenal half-places, ducking into them in order to hide from police or psychiatric professionals, or settling into purely Phenomenal zone to avoid a Noumenal Predator. Pockets large enough to hold a character, much less enable him to stand or walk, are *extraordinarily* uncommon, though some large, old or particularly intense cities may have as many as one or two dozen. Purely Phenomenal areas are rarer, but some exist; many house several Liminals, huddled together, hiding from things they can't even begin to understand. Some Liminal characters, however, refuse to hide from their would-be predators, instead bending their own minds to use their enemies' weapons against them. These Liminals are able to use one end of the spectrum to create change in the other—the power of madness, the power of the Noumenal. This is Pathos.

Power brings with it danger, however. The denizens of the Noumenal world, and even other Liminals—the ghoulies and ghosties of antique stories and modern nightmares—are not bound by human conceptions of morality, but by a savage need for survival. By and large, the wonders of the invisible world are red of tooth and claw, feral, frightening and predatory. The indifferent masses are safe from the hunger of things that go bump in the night; huddled within the unassailable fortress and prison of their own apathy, they are by turns invisible and unappetizing. Player characters, however, have no such luxury. Seeing into both the Noumenal and Phenomenal, they are also seen by, and subject to the dangers of, both.

In terms of game mechanics, while the characters may notice creatures, landscapes or events of a Noumenal nature, those around them may not. Individuals without Intensity may react to Noumenal phenomena, walking around a purely Noumenal obstacle, or getting out of the path of a Noumenal creature, but they will do so unconsciously and without any memory of doing so. No amount of repetition or illustration will prove to these people that they are reacting to forces that are, to them, invisible; they are really and truly completely blind to Noumenal phenomena. When Noumenal phenomena have an unquestionable effect on the phenomenal world, making individuals disappear, animating inanimate objects, or otherwise doing the impossible, those without Intensity will either

*"If I am not for myself, who will
I be? If I am only for myself,
what am I? And if not now,
when?"*
-Rabbi Hillel

justify what they've seen (“Yes, officer, he pulled a gun out of his coat and shot the guy right in front of me. No, I didn't see what he did with the gun.”) or gloss over it entirely (“What are you talking about? There was no one else in this room.”). While recording devices will likely catch some or most of what happened, those without Intensity who watch or listen to the recording will react similarly to what they've seen, though some might attribute the events to special effects or manipulation of the film/tape. This blindness does not produce its own artifacts—witnesses may say that a man who was killed by Pathos was shot, but there will be no bullets. This in itself provides ground for an interesting story if a character is a police officer or private detective.

Logos

Some few characters already feel around the edges of the unknown, even without the open eyes of ardor. In the ghettos, *santerios* and *vodoun* struggle with the unseen to ensure the well being of either their community or themselves. In bland suburbia, disaffected teens and not a few adults plumb the depths of paperback “forbidden” tomes, attempting to grind their enemies to dust or get a raise. Unable to look elsewhere, pastors of rural churches scour catalogs of demons and ghosts to find answers, and secret societies practice the forms of ritual without understanding their intent. While the reasons range from the highly spiritual to the deeply profane, occult and arcane knowledge is more common than at any other point in western history. Most of the time, a rating in the Arcane Skill Category reflects a knowledge of ghost stories, fairy tales, or cryptic theology. Occasionally, though more commonly as time goes on, a rating in this Skill Category reflects an understanding and basic familiarity with magic. Magic takes many forms, from the pacifying of the *lwa* in *vodoun*, to the arcane requirements of a high magic ritual to searching the outer edges of cognitive and quantum sciences. Their common denominator is that they search outside of commonly accepted causes to reach certain effects.

In order to cast the Logos spell, the character spends a number of hours casting equal to his rating in that spell. He then gets a bonus equal to his rating in the spell to rolls using that Quality. He can only use this bonus once, though he can split it however he chooses (if he has a rating of three, for example, he could give himself a one-point bonus three times, a three-point bonus one time, or a two-point bonus and a one-point bonus). He does not need to use this bonus on the first roll or rolls that he makes, but if he does not use this entire bonus by the time he next sleeps, he simply loses it. Additionally, the character may choose to use his bonus *after* the die has been rolled for a particular task. A character may cast the spell a number of times in a day equal to his rating in the Logos spell.

A character may choose to spend less time on the ritual than his rating allows. In that case, the bonus he gets from casting the spell is equal to the number of hours he *did* spend in the ritual rather than his full rating. The amount of time spent on a ritual must be determined before the ritual begins. An interrupted casting gains the character no benefits. If the Narrator determines that an event is likely to interrupt the casting of the spell, the player may roll Retention (or Resilience, whichever is more appropriate)+Tenacity+Mental Die against a Target Number determined by the Narrator. A backfiring car may have a target number of six, while someone breaking into the ritual space and trying to get the character to react could have a Target Number of twelve or even higher. Even if the character opts for shorter castings, he can still only cast the spell a number of times in a day equal to his rating.

When using a Logos rite, the character performs whatever actions are necessary to the spell: burning sage and holly in a copper vessel, sacrificing a black pig to *Ezili*, or participating in a Mass; Gnostic, Catholic or Black. Only the range of human behavior limits the possibilities in religious observance, which is to say not at all.

Example: Gabe's player decides that he wants Gabe to have some knowledge of basic

"Creativity is not merely the innocent spontaneity of our youth and childhood; it must also be married to the passion of the adult human being, which is a passion to live beyond one's death."
-Rollo May

magic. He decides to buy a Logos spell keyed to Gabe's Retention. Since Gabe is primarily a high magician, it only makes sense for him to have a high magic Logos spell. Gabe is already a Savant in the Arcane Skill Category and has a rating of three in Eldritch. Gabe can thus buy up to a rating of three for the spell. Gabe's player writes on his character sheet "High Magic Retention Logos." He then discusses with the Narrator what things should be required for the spell. The Narrator and Gabe's player decide that Gabe needs unused parchment, a yellow and violet robe, frankincense, and a specially prepared lotus wand. Gabe needs these items every time he performs this ritual. They don't have to be these particular items, however: any fresh parchment, violet and yellow robes, frankincense, and lotus wand will do (good luck finding a lotus wand on short notice).

When Gabe casts the spell, he gathers all the materials and begins the ritual. Gabe decides that he wants to make the ritual as powerful as possible, so he spends three hours on the ritual—Gabe's player should describe in detail what precisely he does for the ritual; in this case, drawing an "aetheric circle" with the lotus wand while wearing the yellow and violet robes. Frankincense burns in the background, and Gabe spends hours calling out to Raphael, the archangel of knowledge and communication, drawing his sign and seal on the parchment.

Gabe now has a total bonus of three points to spend on Retention rolls before he goes to sleep that night. He could raise three rolls by one point, one roll by three points, or one roll by one point and another roll by two. Unlike with other bonuses, the character can choose to apply bonuses gained from Logos after the roll has been made. Gabe may cast this up to three times a day, but with a total casting time of nine hours for such an undertaking, he's unlikely to do so without a very good reason.

"Straying maps the path."
-Rumi

Pathos

Passion creates effects that are, by definition, impossible: effects called Pathos. With Pathos, burning need may manifest itself as literal flames, and an icy Dread may frost windows. There are no limitations to Passion other than those of the frail vessel that channels it. It is less subtle and burns itself out quicker than Logos, but, like Millay's candle, it sheds a lovely light.

Where Logos is a function of cold logic and precision in purpose, Pathos is a creature of fire. At lower levels, the magic of Pathos is quick, unconscious and largely within the framework of the world as we understand it. Frightened characters realize sooner than anyone else that there's danger afoot or dart toward an exit with a quick burst of supernal speed. At higher intensities, it breaks the laws of physics and reason. Fortunately for most people's understanding of the world, by the time these more blatant effects occur, the characters have become the invisibly insane. Fade has taken over.

As characters grow in both instability and power, their Pathos manifest naturally as expressions of their Anguish, Dread, Fury or Yearning. They do not need to be taught these abilities or practice them; Pathos is a reflection of their raw emotions forcing change onto the world.

Wracked by vehemence, a conduit for forces beyond the capacity of the logical mind to comprehend, when a character begins manifesting obviously unnatural phenomena he begins to fall away from the waking world. Some theoretically-minded passionate individuals believe that the character begins to invest a portion of their own reality to fuel what would not have otherwise come to pass. Others suspect that the character's perspective becomes such that the world can no longer contain it. In any event, the character slowly begins to lose his hold on the world that the indifferent understand. At first the character finds himself losing small but important items; birth certificates, baby pictures, old phone numbers or items rotting in storage. On closer investigation, the character may discover that it isn't just the items in his possession disappearing, but everything relating to him. Old paperwork becomes water-damaged or lost in a fire and

photographs fade beyond recognition. As the descent into madness continues, old acquaintances begin to forget. Eventually, the character is bereft of everything that linked him to his normal life. His keys no longer work, and even family members fail to recognize him, or recognize that they ever existed at all. Eventually he cannot hold a job, and over a course of a conversation people will forget that he's even there. He becomes for all intents and purposes invisible, rootless and hopeless.

By this point, he can perform even the most blatantly unnatural acts without raising an eyebrow. If a crowd didn't even notice that a man was present, how would they know if he turned into mist and floated away? Even more direct methods will fail to catch the attention of those without Intensity. A glowing dart of supernatural force that kills someone will be interpreted as a tracer bullet, causing panic and confusion, but hardly making people rethink what is possible.

The perceptions of the passionate, however, are immune to this effect. Having already in some sense stepped beyond the world, even a single point in any Passion allows a character to see what others will not. Passion isn't all that rare at the lower levels, and most crowds of any significant size will have a few people who will recognize what is truly happening should something blatant occur. Of course, these people are ridiculed when their account differs from what everyone else saw, and the more unnatural their perception, the more they are ignored. It's a steep, slippery path, for all that few slide down it.

The process for using Pathos is determined by the Pathos itself. Most Pathos require that a character Burnout a point of Imagination (or some other Quality) and roll that Quality plus the Passion under which the Pathos falls plus either the Mental or Physical Die. In whatever case, if a Quality is burned out and then rolled, the *post-Burnout* value of the Quality is used. If a character has Retention of six before burning out and burns out a point to activate an Anguish Pathos that uses the Mental die, his roll would be five+Anguish+Mental Die.

Unless otherwise stated or implied, a Pathos requires an action to perform, though the character cannot be distracted from the use of Pathos—there's no real thought process to interrupt; it's all Passion.

If a character's Passion ever drops below the level of Pathos, he cannot use that Pathos until he regains his former level of Passion. If the Pathos was originally purchased as an Ethos, however, the character is able to use the Pathos just like any other Ethos.

If the character *did not* initially purchase the power as an Ethos and falls below the rating of the Pathos, he simply cannot use the Pathos. If he wants to be able to perform the Pathos as an Ethos, he will have to purchase it as such through the usual channels; though he has previously used the power, he is unfamiliar with the ritual requirements of using it with deliberation rather than Passion.

Ethos

Somewhere between logic and passion is Ethos, the path of the elect. When the raw power of zeal is married to the practice and precision of the practitioner of Logos, wonders are the impossible children. Where Pathos is largely unconscious and exacts a high price, Ethos can perform many of the same tasks without the concerns of fade or the prohibitions that come with them. Ethos rites are the spells of legend; the ability to spin straw into gold, walk through a mirror into the world on the other side, or rise into the clouds.

In order to perform Ethos a character must be a Savant in the Arcane Skill Category, and must have a minimum rating of four in the Eldritch Skill. He then purchases a Pathos

*"At a certain point in time, no decision becomes the decision."
-Watts Wacker*

using the standard costs, and makes note that he purchased it as an Ethos. The character may purchase *any* Pathos as an Ethos, regardless of the level or the Passion to which it is attached.

Characters must be taught Ethos by either another character who knows the Ethos and practices a similar kind of magic (Wicca, Vodoun, High Magic, etc.) or he may turn an existing Pathos into an Ethos if he has purchased the power normally. At this point, he is able to teach the Ethos to another character, but again, only if that other character practices a similar kind of magic.

The process of Ethos looks much like Logos. The character determines a ritual associated with the Pathos consistent with his magical style, such as burning mistletoe and holly in a copper vessel while importuning the old gods of the wood or sacrificing a goat to Met Gran Bwa. To begin, the character burns out a point of Imagination and starts the casting. If the Pathos requires the Burnout of a Quality other than Imagination, the character burns out that Quality instead. If the Pathos requires no Burnout, the initial Burnout of one Imagination is required. This ritual takes a number of hours equal to the difference between the character's rating in the Passion to which the Pathos is attached and the level of the Pathos. If a character with Anguish five used an Anguish seven Pathos as an Ethos, the ritual would take two hours. If the character had no Anguish, the ritual would have taken seven hours.

The character may Burnout additional points of Imagination (and only Imagination) in order to shorten the casting time. The casting time is shortened by one hour for every additional point of Imagination that the character burns out, to a minimum of a single action. Note that even in such cases, the character needs all of the elements of the spell to succeed, and he's likely chanting/speaking/singing nigh-incomprehensibly fast while any gestures he attempts to make look more like seizures. Such behavior is, under any circumstances, likely to draw unwelcome attention.

When the process of the ritual is completed, the character rolls the Quality required for the Pathos plus the Passion of the Pathos (even if he has no rating in that Passion—in that case, he simply doesn't add a number for the Passion)+either the Mental or Physical Die as determined by the Pathos. The result is compared to the Target Number for the Pathos as usual. Note that Ethos will almost certainly be weaker than its Pathos equivalent. This is to be expected—the character, by using Ethos in the first place, is going against the “laws of nature” inasmuch as such can be said to exist regarding the Noumenal.

If the character wishes, he can “store” the Ethos spell in an object used in the ritual for a number of days equal to his Intensity in the appropriate Passion at the time of casting. He may at any time in those days release the spell as an action, though he must be touching the ritual object with his bare skin at the time. If the character doesn't use the Ethos within the allotted time frame, the spell simply fades away. This cannot be done without the purchase of a Pathos as Ethos. Pure Pathos is too instinctive and urgent to enable such a use without training and practice.

If a character has purchased a Pathos as an Ethos and later reaches the level of the Passion required for the Pathos normally, he no longer requires ritual implements to use the power. He instinctively “knows” that such tools are unnecessary. If, however, he wishes to “store” the Pathos, he may still do so, though he then requires at least one element of the previous ritual in which to “store” the power.

People without Passion will still not notice that the character is performing a blatantly unnatural act unless they have their attention drawn toward it somehow. Even a simple “Here, look at this” is usually sufficient to make someone pay attention. They will, however, do everything within their power to debunk the phenomena. While it is possible to make small numbers of people begin to believe in the possibility of what is happening, it's not a rewarding past time by any stretch of the imagination.

*"The day ends whether or not I
get up, whether I fail or
achieve, no matter how hard I
struggle to understand why, I
still watch it come and go."
-Sunshine*

Ethos Trappings

Ethos rituals are almost always long and universally complex, involving any number of ritual elements. Players are encouraged to determine the particulars of the Ethos their characters cast and run these elements past the Narrator, who has final say on whether the tools and symbolism are appropriate. Each game will have different requirements as to the trappings involved in the casting of Ethos.

Narrators who wish for characters to be able to cast Ethos with relatively little preparation ahead of time (or who wish for characters to always have access to their Ethos if they have the time to cast it) may require no external elements, allowing characters to cast their Ethos with nothing more than the appropriate divine calls, demonic imprecations, numerological or temporal elements, postures or ritual prohibitions. These games tend to highlight the supernatural, controllable aspects of Abeo. Characters with access to Ethos with this level of ease have a cheap and relatively easy advantage over those with no Passion. What's more, they can have this advantage early and *completely without Fade*. If Narrators are comfortable with characters having this level of power, they should, by all means, encourage this kind of ritual.

Narrators may alternately require that characters obtain exotic or hard-to-find elements in order to successfully cast Ethos. Sacrifices of rare herbs, tools that must be purchased, manufactured or first used on a certain day and time, or substances that require months or even years of preparation to complete are all appropriate for this level of difficulty for Ethos. Games with more difficult Ethos force the characters to act strangely in the pursuit of their magic, highlighting the strangeness of the world in which they find themselves.

The following trappings, divided by Passion, are suggestions of appropriate elements to incorporate into Ethos rituals. Everything—*everything*—on this list is a guideline, not a rule. Elements of these rituals can easily move between Passions, and players should be encouraged to come up with Ethos that make sense to them. Still, for those who are stymied as to what to include:

Anguish: Symbolic marriages and births, menstruation, the element of water, mirrors, chalices, cauldrons, mirrors, the time around sunset, ritual purifications, the color blue, autumn, mercury, silver and fish.

Dread: Death, dying and the dead. Disease, vermin, secrets, winter, knots, trees, execution, weapons, nightmares, sleep, binding, midnight, the color black and the element of Earth.

Fury: Fire, explosion, sacrifice, noon, blood, destruction, heat, electricity, wands, candles, garnet, bonfires, sunlight, storms, symbols of authority, lions, angels and summer.

Yearning: Meditation, light, wind, swords, incense, knives, dawn, the element of air spring, tin, fragrant herbs, numerological manipulation, aventurine, topaz, amethyst, symbolic phalli, song and poetry.

Predator and Prey

A player character has started his metamorphosis to a Noumenal creature, but others have nearly finished, and they're hungry. Every boogeyman that has lurched its way out of the human subconscious has a kernel of truth to it. The zhombi, marae, whampyr, dwellers at the crossroads, and other things, nameless but equally frightening, hunt the Liminal to provide their daily bread, blood, or tears. Many of these were people once upon a time, others may have been, and still others are so totally alien to human understanding that it's difficult to conceive of them as ever being more than incomprehensible masses of appetite and power.

The lions, tigers and bears need blood (literal or metaphorical); they need food, they need

"I asked an 85-year old professor, 'What makes you cry?' He said, 'Whenever I see or hear the truth.'"
-William Sloan Coffin

attention, and only the Liminal can give it to them. In time characters may develop their own ways up the food chain through power or wits, but in the beginning they are food, and all the wonders of the invisible world hear the dinner bell.

At the same time, they are slowly becoming these things out of legend. As their aging slows, characters find their appetite for food decreased and for other things increasing. Suddenly sunlight may hurt, or they may feel an unconquerable urge to count spilled grains of rice. At the end of this progression, the character, forgotten and barely recognizable as human, disappears entirely from the Phenomenal. No one knows at what point the Liminal become something else entirely, but no one close to what they fear is the edge is eager to find out for themselves.

Memes

When enough people pour their Passion into an idea, that idea can, and often does, manifest. People may be created, conspiracies develop where there were none before, and the creatures that children fear at night may suddenly become terrifyingly real. Even a lie, if convincing enough, has the potential to become true with time. Many agencies, alien sightings, and other bizarre phenomena have been simultaneously proven and explained by some breakthrough or another, only to topple the next minute under skepticism. Whether or not they exist tomorrow, the effects of these manifestations are all too real today.

*"There are more things in
heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your
philosophy."
-Hamlet*

Below are some of the most common explanations and misconceptions among Liminals for their condition. Narrators are encouraged to expand on these ideas and modify them as necessary. Characters who always take extra precautions to avoid detection may find themselves the center of a thorough investigation by an unknown agency. Such a character might slowly slip to Fade as his "curse" settles in, causing him to be harmed by sunlight or barring him from doorways without permission. Each character's belief as to why they have powers and can see the Noumenal when nearly everyone around him cannot should reflect his unique perspective.

Disease: Liminals may believe that their condition is the result of a disease, poison, or engineered virus. Whatever the etiology, it's getting worse. Such a character is driven to increasingly desperate ends as he tries to find a cure for his sickness.

Turned: Creatures that lurk in the night and feed upon the Emotions of people are the stuff of fairy tales, and so are the ways that you join their ranks. Still, fairy tales, some say, have a basis in truth. Strange bites, lycanthropy, or long denied blood in a Liminal's veins could be the reason for their newfound Passion. New urges and monstrous appetites often emerge and possibly even skew a Liminal's features.

Drug: The mind-altering and metabolic effects of many drugs are known to cause some of the most intense states in existence. Illegal, over the counter, or homemade drugs are used nearly everywhere for nearly everything imaginable. The Liminal's state might simply be some really strange prescription drug interactions or a newly discovered gateway to chemical enlightenment, depending on his perspective and temperament.

Occult: Through occult experimentation or long practice in ancient rites, some Liminals have become a conduit of forces beyond the understanding of mortal men, or so they say. Perhaps such a character uncovered a secret grimoire, learned the basics of alchemy, or found a charm that works better than expected. The only question is, what is the cost and how does the character learn more?

Religious Blessing/Curse: In every time, there are those chosen by a higher power to carry the banner of righteousness and those who choose to act in the service of evil. Characters who believe that they are the chosen of Heaven (or Hell) might believe that they are angels among men, saints, bodhisattvas, avatars of gods, or demons.

Scientific: The singularity is near, and the character *is* the singularity. Maybe the world is

closer to useful, self-replicating nanotechnology than anyone knows. Maybe it's already here. Maybe the character is a guinea pig in a massive government experiment, or has been exposed to some previously unknown energy like some strange, unbalanced character in a comic book.

Possessed: Characters might believe themselves to be the victims of a Noumenal creature. People have often spoken of strange voices, losing control of their body, or blacking out and waking up in another place entirely days later, clear signs of possession—at least to characters who believe the possession theory.

Government/Conspiracies: The conspiracy is larger than you think. It's larger than anyone thinks. Everyone knows that the government routinely tests unproven drugs on its soldiers, and things like the Tuskegee experiments have shown time and again that those on the receiving of “progress” rarely know what's really going on. Characters who believe this may believe that the government, UN, secret societies, or extraterrestrials are the cause of their woes.

Imprints

Particularly intense events in history often resonate for generations to come. Pearl Harbor's visitors, even today, hear the echoing screams and buzzing roar of Imperial bombers, and phantom children of Terezin seem to wander numbly through a nightmare landscape of desperately faked happiness. The mental detritus of these dreadful spectacles and dramas collect and coagulate—forming imprints that then endlessly play out the events that formed them, either in part or in whole.

Imprints mindlessly reenact their genesis without change, in the same location, sometimes for centuries. On certain hills in France, tourists sometimes report seeing the battles of Vercingetorix and Caesar, smelling the smoke from burning villages, and hearing the endless clash of arms over shouted Latin and Gaulish. Performance is not guaranteed, and while the events themselves never change, a characters may see a battle on one visit, smell it on another, and see it on a third. Any combination of senses and experience within the bounds of the original event is possible—the particulars are up to the Narrator.

Imprints are often mistaken as ghosts. The Imprints, for their part, don't seem to care particularly who or what their audience is or isn't.. Particularly powerful Imprints may interact with the world currently going on around them, albeit in a limited fashion, lacking, as they do, intelligence. A tormented mother may witness her daughter dangling from the second story banister each night, or pass her in the hall. An especially powerful Imprint might even give her mother a hug every morning before going out the door to school, all depending on the circumstances and the Intensity of the Passions involved.

Imprint Gardens are locations that contain multiple Imprints. Particularly impressive Imprint Gardens may offer reenactments of battles, protests and slaughters, drawing the obsessed and the merely curious with equal facility. These sites are often highly prized and viciously defended Liminal hunting grounds. Some of them are widely known among Liminals for the continual source of Emotion that can be harvested from visitors and even occasionally the grounds themselves.

Once a site is drained of Emotion, the Imprints will stop occurring unless they are “recharged” in some way. These sites may be fueled by outside sources, such as the Anguish, Dread and Fury funneled to New York City on the 9/11 terrorist attacks. New York currently contains one of the most powerful Imprint gardens in North America for this reason. Modern technology has allowed more people to witness events as they happen, sending massive waves of Emotion across the lines of sympathy. Though for

"Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself."
-Satre

every Imprint garden that arises, one is forgotten and simply Fades.

Imprints are static events that cycle with time and eventually Fade out as the Emotion fueling it declines and finally evaporates, or is consumed altogether. When that happens, the Imprint will vanish and that portion of history will fall to the drier memories of books and academics. An Imprint that is attacked may vanish or simply ignore physical interaction. Those playing parts in an Imprint garden will not react to a character beyond recognizing someone is there, or a short exchange, before they continue on their way. As always, a subjective interpretation of events may possibly sway the consensus and alter an Imprint. If enough people believe Germany attacked Pearl Harbor, not the Japanese, the Imprints will reflect the change.

One example of an Imprint is the “Girl of City Gates” in St. Augustine. When the Spanish established themselves in St. Augustine, one of their larger works was a massive wall on the north side of the city. Most of this wall has since crumbled or been demolished, but one portion remains at the head of St. George Street. A ghostly girl, around 13 or 14 years old, still wanders around the gate, looking for parents, the story says, that never claimed her body after she died there of yellow fever.

The little girl, who has been named Elizabeth by the locals, is a particularly strong Imprint, slowly developing her own consciousness. Some nights she can be seen dancing on the City Gates, fully visible in all their old glory. Other nights she stands by the dilapidated base and cries pitifully, gesturing for help from anyone who drives by before vanishing. The police department learned long ago to ignore calls from out-of-towners about the girl.

Thought Forms

Imprints are different from Thought Forms in at least one concrete way: consciousness. Thought Forms are no longer chained to the repetitive cycles from which they were formed, and they are able to interact normally with their environments, or at least as normally as one can expect. Emotions have been so strongly meshed with thought that it can hold form and function independent of the people who created it. As with Imprints, Thought Forms are not limited to living creatures; if enough people believe in the holy grail and its mystical properties, it may well appear. Mythologies may clash, creating many Grails with many different powers: immortality, the power to cure all ailments, or even a curse upon the unworthy who try to touch it.

When people are formed in this manner they are pale reflections of the individual they imitate. Thought Forms are created by the memories and impressions others have of the subject, not by the soul and memories of the subject himself. A loved one who is recreated will act like an entirely different person in many respects. While he could offer the comfort and protection he is remembered for, he may suddenly lose the common sense that he always had, but no one seemed to notice. He may also take up an interest entirely different from those his “real” self had. Important characteristics too faded by time, reputation or secrecy to be accurately remembered may be twisted or entirely absent.

Once created, Thought Forms are completely on their own. They may betray lifelong friends, make peace with blood enemies, or throw themselves into conflicts (both political and physical) that the individual the Thought Form is modeled after would have considered quixotic at best. Physically however, they are identical to the memories of those who formed them. Popular icons have been known to walk off the pages of a novel or out of a movie screen and into a world ill prepared to deal with them. Independent and almost always confused or confusing, these characters are capable of anything that a “real” person can do. Their only limitations are their ambition and understanding.

More than one author has been surprised to meet or hear about a character in the real

"Being here is a kind of spiritual surrender. We see only what the others see, the thousands who were here in the past, those who will come in the future. We've agreed to e part of a collective perception."
-Don DeLillo

world that he thought he created *ex nihilo*. Initially Liminal figures, Thought Forms completely progress into the Phenomenal, often becoming exceptional, though purely mundane, individuals. Patches in his personality he can craft and fill in on his own with time. The more skillful the Thought Form, and the more powerful, the sharper and more resolute these facets become.

Thought Forms may assume the lives of their living counterparts, with enough skill and power. Even if the original is killed, these alternate forms will continue to exist, casting doubt upon the portrayal of events. It is also entirely possible for a Thought Form to gain Intensity, becoming Liminal again. It is important to note that, to the Thought Form, he *is* the original. No memory of an individual includes the individual pretending to be himself, thus nothing growing out of that memory can include it.

Thought Forms usually start out as Imprints. As Emotion pools, and thought slowly gives it form, it will begin to develop distinctive properties. Recognizing certain people, the world around itself, and interacting with objects and people normally, the Thought Form will exhibit all traits of the modeled person or item. It will be a consistently solid object by Phenomenal standards, with heartbeat, blood, and physical Qualities appropriate to their modeled form, unless they fall to Intensity or Fade. Thought forms are rare, due to the extreme nature of their creation, but no one knows (or even can know) just how rare they are; their very nature prevents their knowing.

Chapter V Pathos: Madness and Power

She knew he was out there. At 10 PM every night when she locked up the building and walked to the car she could feel his eyes on her. True, Joan had never seen him, but she could picture his leering face in her mind; see how he would grab her from behind and drag her into the nearby alley. Lately it had been getting worse - more vivid. Tonight as she walked the blurred details she visualized of his face had become crisp; the sound of his voice clear. So much so that when the coarse, beer scented hand clamped over her mouth as she went to unlock her car she knew it was him. Through the muffled screams and futile attempts at escaping her mind had already accepted the fact that she would soon be dead.

Characters in Abeo find themselves swept up into a massive world wherein everything they had previously taken to be true is called into question. They are alternately hunted, recruited, wooed and disregarded by things—impossible things. And yet, these characters find themselves with their own set of tools as well: Pathos. The insanity and perspective that comes with Intensity also brings the ability to use raw Passion to create change in the world. Following is a list of the Pathos that characters may develop as they fall farther from their own minds.

Anguish

Impression (Anguish 1) The character burns one point of Imagination and rolls Perception+Anguish+Mental Die to pick up the residue of an emotion previously felt at his current location. The more powerful the emotion, the easier it is for the character to pick up on it. This Pathos is most effective when used at a location of recent, massive emotional upheaval, such as the site of a car accident, suicide or murder. Emotions will be increasingly hard to detect in well-traveled locations or in the case of emotions eroded by time. Degrees of Success will accumulate more complete, nuanced emotional portraits of the situation, and may perhaps even allow the character to look back farther in time, at the Narrator's discretion.

<u>Target Number</u>	<u>Item Intensity</u>
7	Murder Scene.
9	Recent emotional disturbance.
11	Emotional disturbance, occupied location.
13	Faint disturbance, well traveled location.

Habituation (Anguish 1) The character burns one Imagination in order to effectively tune out any unwanted noise, smell, or other stimulus—Noumenal, Phenomenal or Liminal—for a scene. The character must choose a stimulus to ignore when this Pathos is activated. A character can choose a specific power to ignore, though it will only work for that use of the power. If, however, a character were to choose the aggressor *using* the power as the stimulus to ignore, *no* use of any Pathos or Ethos that requires the character to sense it would affect the character. Unfortunately, the character would also be unable to perceive his attacker at that point, leaving him absolutely defenseless against more mundane forms of aggression. This “head in the sand” approach to self-defense can be highly useful in dire circumstances, but makes a poor sole means of defense. This Pathos can be canceled at any time, allowing the character to again perceive the stimulus. Note that though the character may become immune to perception-requiring Pathos, he is still subject to purely objective effects like explosions, physical damage and collapsing floors.

Pity (Anguish 1) The character burns one point of Imagination and subconsciously broadcasts his Anguish. All characters within sight of the character must add the Liminal's Anguish rating to the Target Number of any and all social rolls for the rest of the scene. It becomes awkward to relate to the character, or to anyone else, while the character is in such ostentatious pain. This penalty applies to any social situations that are not physical in nature, including verbal confrontations and legal proceedings; even successful prosecutors may alienate the jury if they appear to be picking on the defendant or completely unsympathetic.

Sob Story (Anguish 1)

The character burns one Imagination and sends his Anguish into the ether. With a Perception+Anguish+Mental Die roll, this Pathos communicates a basic and immediate *need* (not *want*—the character must have his life or physical well-being endangered) of the Liminal's to a single being unable to symbolically communicate with him (through speech, sign language, gesture, writing, ideographs, etc): almost always an animal. A foraging coyote affected by this power might leave scraps of food behind for a starving character or a bloodhound may lead trackers off of a hiding character's scent.

<u>Target Number</u>	<u>Creature</u>
7	Domestic animal: cat, dog.
8	Exotic domestic animal: parrot, lizard.
10	Trained animal: guard dog, hound.
12	Wild prey animals: deer, rodents.
15	Wild predator animals: wolves, bears.

Withdrawn (Anguish 1) The character burns one point of Imagination and rolls Retention+Anguish+Mental Die with a Target Number of nine to turn his Anguish into a protective barrier around his mind. He must spend an action in order to do so. While his mind is protected in this way, his Intensity is added to any roll used to prevent or defend against mental compulsion or manipulation through Pathos or Ethos. This Pathos lasts for a scene or until canceled by the character. While the Liminal is preoccupied with his own pain in this way, he is unable to use any other Pathos. Note that while this protects the character from supernatural manipulation, purely mundane forms of persuasion, deception and control may still be fully effective.

Cookie Jar (Anguish 2) When a character performs an act that is of questionable morality or contrary to law, a Liminal with this Pathos may target that character, burn an Imagination and make a contested Retention+Anguish+Mental Die roll. If the Liminal is successful, the target is ashamed of the action and will think twice before performing it again. The character performing the illegal or immoral action must beat the character's Pathos activation roll to perform the action again that day. Degrees of success may extend the duration of this Pathos.

Degree of Success Additional Duration

"We are accustomed to use our eyes only with the memory of what other people before us have thought about the objects we are looking at."

-Guy de Maupassant

1 Degree	Additional day.
2 Degrees	One month.
3 Degrees	One year.

Floor Effect (Anguish 2) There's only so much that can go wrong, even for a character with Anguish. When using this Pathos, the character burns out a point of Imagination and rolls Imagination+Anguish+Mental Die with a Target Number of eight. The use of this Pathos does not require an action. If the roll is successful, the odds are very slightly stacked in favor of the character—his pessimism creates an equal and opposite reaction as his expectations sabotage themselves Noumenally. There is no mechanical effect to this Pathos, rather the precise expression of this subtle manipulation of probability is up to the Narrator. The character may catch a bus at just the right moment, fall just in time to miss a bullet aimed for his head, or be the closest person to an exit when a fight breaks out, even if the exit was not mentioned prior to the use of the Pathos—this power, like most Noumenal phenomena, is not subject to logic, causality, or a strict interpretation of linear time, however; it will not rewrite what information has already been given by the Narrator.

*"After all, what is reality
anyway? Nothin' but a
collective hunch."
-Lily Tomlin*

Otherworldly (Anguish 2) Upon the purchase of this Pathos, the character becomes intimately tied to the Noumenal—he receives a permanent one-point bonus to any use of Pathos, as well as any rolls made in attempting to perceive or manipulate the Noumenal.. Unfortunately, the character's connection to the Noumenal works the other way as well—any attempt to affect the character through Pathos or the Noumenal also receives a one-point bonus. This Pathos cannot be “turned off,” the character is permanently tuned in, with all attendant benefits and drawbacks. Note that this power does not affect the character's Intensity—Fade is unaffected by this Pathos. This Pathos can be taken up to three times, “stacking” the bonuses and drawbacks. For example, a character who takes Otherworldly three times would then receive a three-point bonus to all rolls to use Pathos. All attempts to use Pathos on him, however, would also receive a three-point bonus.

Pretty When You Cry (Anguish 2) The character burns a point of Imagination and, with a successful contested Imagination+Anguish+Mental Die roll, is able to convince an individual to feel sorry for him. In minor cases (a small speeding ticket, late rent payment, or accidental insult) this is usually enough to get the character out of hot water. More severe transgressions (getting caught after committing a murder, theft, or assault) will still have the normal repercussions, though the police officer, banker, or offended party will feel sorry for the character while they arrest, report, or beat him. Degrees of Success will make this Pathos more effective, however it is ultimately up to the Narrator to decide if his plea is persuasive enough to escape trouble.

When You Cry You Cry Alone (Anguish 2) The character burns out a point of Imagination while making a statement; the statement can be as innocuous as "have a nice day" or as clear as "If you don't leave right now, I'm going to kill myself." After burning out the Imagination and making the statement to a single person, he makes a contested Imagination+Anguish+Mental Die roll. If the roll succeeds, the target is made uncomfortable by the character's presence and will leave as soon as possible. Note that the target is not *obligated* to leave, but he will take any excuse to do so, including canceling appointments and getting off of a bus early.

Mutilation (Anguish 3) All life is suffering—and the character with this Pathos finds utility in the monistic quality of his torment. After purchasing this Pathos, the character is able to Burnout any Quality to fuel Pathos, regardless of the Quality the Pathos originally required. If this Pathos is purchased as an Ethos, the ritual must be completed once a week in order to maintain the effects of the power.

Bump (Anguish 3) The character burns out a point of Imagination and an existing Pathos power (ether used by the character or by someone else) gains an additional effect. The Narrator determines what this effect is, and this additional effect can change from use to

use. In many cases, this will allow a low-Intensity Pathos power to mimic the effects of a higher-level one. This additional effect is always advantageous to the character that uses this power, and frequently to the group as well. If the character uses this Pathos, he must physically touch the character using the power.

A few examples:

Used on Unbound, the power may work on locked doors or windows. With Percussive Maintenance the character may be able to make mechanisms function even if the device is missing important parts. With Oracle the character could receive an important vision of the future or the past, or alternately, may not suffer the negative effects of the Pathos. If the Narrator can't think of an additional effect for the power, he may also assign a bonus to a roll following the power equal to the Bumping character's Anguish.

This Pathos is a wild card; lacking hard and fast rules, it's excellent for use when no solutions present themselves to the players. It also encourages creative use of existing Pathos, and Narrators should feel free to reward particularly brilliant uses of this power and punish excessive use with something bizarre or unforeseen. If no immediate additional effect presents itself, the Narrator may choose to apply the Bumping character's Intensity as a bonus to the activation roll for the Pathos to be Bumped.

Psychometry (Anguish 3) The character burns a point of Imagination while physically touching a target and then makes a contested Retention+Anguish+Mental Die roll. If the target is an item, this becomes a standard roll with a Target Number of nine. The character is able to catch small glimpses of the history of a person or object he's touching. Note that information like names, phone (or PIN) numbers, dates, specific locations, or specific words of any variety are impossible to get by means of this Pathos. The character experiences the target's history as a series of emotionally charged vignettes. While the character is unlikely to get any useful specifics out of this Pathos, it's a good way to get a general idea of a target's history and motivations.

Shame (Anguish 3) The character burns out a point of Imagination and makes a contested Imagination+ Anguish+Mental Die roll in order to transfer his Anguish into his target for the scene. If the roll is successful, the target is blindsided by a lifetime of sudden regret slamming into his consciousness; he takes a one-point penalty to all actions for the remainder of the scene, with an additional penalty of one point assessed for each degree of success.

Shameless (Anguish 3) The character burns out a point of Imagination and rolls his Imagination+Anguish+Mental Die against a Target Number of nine. If the character succeeds, he manages to suppress his Anguish for the scene, nullifying the negative effects of Passion (Fade, social penalties, visibility to Noumenal beings).

Glimpse (Anguish 4) The character burns a point of Imagination to briefly view the most immediate consequence of an action that has already been taken. The character must be in the presence of the action while it takes place. He rolls Perception+Anguish+Mental Die with a Target Number determined by the specificity of the question asked to determine particular details about the effects of an action. As the character sees the plausible outcomes of the action, his subconscious simultaneously confronts him with the thousand and one mistakes he's made over the course of his life, drawing out past consequences and facing him with past failures. Drowning in a sea of his own regret, the character is gripped with paralyzing nausea for the next hour.

<u>Target Number</u>	<u>Question</u>
10	General: "Will attempting this work?"
13	Detailed: "Will doing this hurt Brad?"
16	Specific: "How might doing this hurt Brad?"

Hyperchondria (Anguish 4) The character touches another individual or concentrates on

*"There was a fantastic universal sense that whatever we were doing was right, that we were winning....And that, I think, was the handle – that sense of inevitable victory over the forces of Old and Evil. Not in any mean or military sense; we didn't need that. Our energy would simply prevail. There was no point in fighting – on our side or theirs. We had all the momentum; were riding the crest of a high and beautiful wave. So now, less than five years later, you can go up on a steep hill in Las Vegas and look West, and with the right kind of eyes you can almost see the high water mark – that place where the wave finally broke and rolled back.
-Hunter S. Thompson*

*"In a place ravaged by fear and haunts I have found hope. I have discovered purpose."
-Tuong Van Nguyen*

himself, burns out a point of Perception and rolls Perception+Anguish+Mental Die against a Target Number of ten. If successful, the character is able to precisely determine what, if anything, is wrong with the character he is touching (or himself), such as a particular disease, injury, poison or Pathos. The character is able to apply a bonus equal to his Intensity to any attempt to fix that problem.

Omen (Anguish 4) Red sky at morning, sailors take warning. When purchasing this Pathos, the character specifies a particular circumstance, such as “death,” “danger,” “dishonesty,” or “trap.” As long as the character maintains the Anguish or Intensity necessary to keep this power (Anguish four if Omen was purchased as a Pathos or Intensity one if it was purchased as an Ethos) the character has a built-in warning when the circumstance is about to occur. After choosing what circumstance triggers this Pathos, the character chooses a (relatively common) symbol to signal its occurrence, such as “roses,” “the ace of spades” or “three seagulls.” Whenever the circumstance is about to occur, the Narrator rolls the character's Perception+Observation+Mental Die against a Target Number determined by the relative obscurity of the signal (see table below). If the roll succeeds, the Narrator inserts the signal into his description of the scene. Note that not every occurrence of the symbol is going to be due to the circumstance the character wishes to be warned about. The Narrator is encouraged to use the symbol in circumstances not related to the situation of which the character wishes to be warned if the character uses this power as his only means of warning.

<u>Target Number</u>	<u>Chosen Signal</u>
10	Commonly occurring symbol (roses, a cat crossing the character's path).
13	Rare occurrence (rain from a sunny sky, a bird landing on the character).
16+	Incredibly Uncommon (A white rabbit approaching the character, lightning striking something nearby).

If this power is purchased as an Ethos, the ritual must be completed once a week to maintain its effects.

Pedant (Anguish 4) The character burns a point of Imagination after a conversation with a single other individual. At the end of the conversation, the character makes a contested Retention+Anguish+Mental Die roll. If the roll is successful, the specifics of the conversation become hazy to the affected character. With Degrees of Success, the conversation/interrogation/exchange becomes progressively hazier—even to the point of the memory completely disappearing.

<u>Degree of Success</u>	<u>Effects</u>
Success	Details of the exchange disappear—though main points remain.
1 Degree	Main points of the exchange disappear from memory.
2 Degrees	The subject and context of the exchange disappear.
3 Degrees	The victim of the Pathos forgets the exchange occurred at all.

*"I must be the author of my own salvation."
-Laurie H. Huster*

Second Sight (Anguish 4) The character is capable of making a contested Perception+Anguish+Mental Die roll. In the case of an opposing Pathos or use of a hiding Skill, those Qualities, Skills or Passions used by the opposing Pathos, Die or Skill are substituted (if different) for the defending party's Perception+ Anguish+Mental Die roll. If the character using this Pathos succeeds in the roll, he is able to see even normally invisible, inconspicuous or hiding Liminal targets. This power is always active. In the presence of an invisible being, the Narrator secretly makes the roll for the character and tells him if he's successful. If there are multiple invisible beings, the roll is made separately for each being. The character need not spend an action or Imagination to activate this Pathos—additionally, if the character fails to win the contested roll, the roll reoccurs on each

succeeding round until the character with Second Sight sees the hidden Liminal or the Liminal moves out of sensory range.

Framed (Anguish 5) The character burns out a point of Imagination after performing an action, whether illegal or merely embarrassing, and is able to shift the blame to another. With an Imagination+Anguish+Mental Die roll a passing bystander at the time of a murder may be framed, or an innocent man may be taken in for a bank robbery. In any event, the character leaves no trace; he's gotten off scot-free. This power works only on indirect evidence. While fingerprints may smudge, footprints become obscured, and even video cameras will fail to take sharp (or accurate) enough evidence to find the proper culprit, a witness will not be fooled. This power is thus only effective without witnesses. If a witness is later discovered or comes forward, the weight of supernaturally altered evidence will shift from the framed individual to the character who actually committed the act. This is true even after conviction (if there is one). Any Liminal may contest this Pathos with an Anguish+Imagination+Mental Die roll. If he exceeds the character's original score on this Pathos, he will immediately know the information is false. After the use of this power, the character is paralyzed with guilt for the remainder of the scene. While he may walk and say one or two words at a time, the shame of what he's done has become too overwhelming for him to do anything but agonize.

Degree Duration

- 1 Additional Day.
- 2 A week.
- 3 A month.

Oracle (Anguish 5) The character burns a point of Imagination to briefly view all possible outcomes of an action he is about to undertake. In addition to seeing the possible outcomes of the action, he gains a bonus equal to his Anguish for a single roll involved in taking the action for which the character used Oracle. At the end of this roll, the character is savaged by all the better roads he could have taken over the course of his life, much as in Glimpse above, except to a much greater degree. At the end of the roll using Oracle, the character is paralyzed for the next hour as in Glimpse, but also unable to use any Pathos for the rest of the day (until he sleeps again). If the character doesn't sleep, the regret releases its hold at the next sunrise.

Pessimist's Gift (Anguish 5) The character using this Pathos burns out a point of Imagination and makes a contested Imagination+Anguish+Mental Die roll. If the character using this Pathos succeeds, the victim finds himself plagued with unfortunate luck for a day. In many ways, this Pathos functions as a perfect inversion of Floor Effect. The victim's computer may crash continuously or he may find himself consistently harried by random police DWI checkpoints, the sudden subject of an IRS audit, or on the wrong end of a sick drunk. This Pathos lasts for a day, with Degrees of Success increasing the duration.

*"Was there ever any
domination that did not appear
natural to those who possessed
it?"
-John Stuart Mill*

Snark (Anguish 5) The character burns a point of Imagination and makes an unpleasant (but arguably true) observation about his target, such as "Hey, Tubby—the diet soda isn't going to help if you keep chugging the double cheeseburgers like that." The target must hear the insult to be affected by this power. Once the target has heard the insult, a contested Imagination+Anguish+Mental Die roll takes place. With success the target is humiliated by the insult and will go to great lengths to fix or deny his "problem." He may try new diets, skip meals, or forgo eating entirely. While under the effects of this Pathos, the target may not engage in any behavior that might result in his "problem" becoming worse, such as watching television (if the character's intelligence was targeted), eating fast food (if the character's weight was insulted), or interacting in public (if the character was accused of being socially inept). Degrees of success determine how long the target remains under the sway of this Pathos.

Degree of Success

Duration

- Success One day.
- 1 Degree Additional day.

2 Degrees	A week.
3 Degrees	A month.

Sympathy Pain (Anguish 5) The character burns out a point of Imagination and concentrates on a single target within sensory range. The character rolls Imagination+Anguish+Mental Die against the target's roll of Resilience+Anguish+Physical Die. If the character using Sympathy Pain succeeds, he communicates his pain to the target. Overwhelmed by the sudden, bleak onslaught, the targeted character takes an amount of temporary Burnout determined by the character's Degree of Success. Burnout assessed by this Pathos will not cause permanent damage or death, but may result in lack of consciousness. The character receiving the damage chooses the Qualities affected by the Burnout assessed by this Pathos. Burnout assessed by use of this Pathos returns to the targeted character at the end of the scene.

Degrees of Success Burnout Incurred

Success	Two
1 Degree	Four
2 Degrees	Five
3 Degrees	Six

Apsi (Anguish 6): The character burns out a point of Imagination. For the remainder of the scene, one target in the character's presence (that is, in the same room or, if outdoors, within earshot) takes a penalty on all Pathos and Ethos rolls equal to the Anguish of the character. If there is already Pathos in effect, the character who used it must immediately make a Quality+(Passion with which the Pathos was associated)+Mental Die roll with a Target Number equal to the character's Imagination+Anguish or have the effects of the Pathos immediately cease. Note that this roll to continue existing Pathos *is* subject to the penalty of the Pathos-using character's Anguish.

Example: Dorian Kinney is facing down a Liminal he knows only as Cackling Helen. He knows that she's in the room, but he can't seem to find her. He also knows that she's likely to try to escape through the television in front of him. Concentrating for a moment on all of the pain the supernatural has caused him over the course of his life, he activates Apsi. His Mental Die is a d8, an Imagination of five (after burning out for Apsi) and an Anguish of six.

Cackling Helen currently has an Imagination of five and an Anguish of ten. Therefore, Dorian's Target Number is fifteen. Dorian rolls his Imagination (five)+his Anguish (six)+his Mental Die (d8). He rolls a six, for a total of seventeen. The Pathos is immediately effective. Cackling Helen must immediately make a roll for her Unassuming Pathos. She rolls Imagination (five)+Anguish(ten)+Her Mental Die (d8) against a Target Number of Dorian's Imagination (five)+Anguish (six). Her Target Number would normally be, therefore, 11, but because of the penalty from Dorian's new use of the Pathos, her Target Number becomes 17 (11 +an additional penalty equal to Dorian's Anguish (six). Helen rolls atrociously, getting only a one, for a total of 16. This was not enough for her to maintain her Unassuming Pathos, so she immediately returns to a state of normal perceptibility. Should she try to escape later in the scene through the television, she would, take a penalty of 6 to any Pathos rolls associated with that escape.

*"There are no eternal facts, as there are no absolute truths."
-Friedrich Nietzsche*

If a particular Pathos power is permanent or slated to continue in duration after the encounter with the character using Apsi, the Pathos power returns in effect once the character using Apsi is no longer in the Pathos-using character's vicinity.

Gadfly (Anguish 6) A problem can't be fixed until it's known, and no one knows problems better than a character with Anguish. The character touches the target of this Pathos or concentrates on himself and burns out a point of Imagination, then rolls Imagination+Anguish+Mental Die against a Target Number of 12. If the character succeeds, his (or his target's) healing rate is doubled for the next week. Degrees of Success extend this duration farther.

<u>Degrees of Success</u>	<u>Time</u>
1	Additional week.
2	One month.
3	Two months.

Eyes of the Dead (Anguish 7) The character burns a point of Imagination and touches the corpse of a person. Once this Pathos is invoked, he will immediately lose all sense of himself and *become* that person for the final moments of his or her life. He does not register a difference between bodies, and will experience every sensation the deceased felt. Particularly violent or painful deaths will be experienced up until the final moments of consciousness. At the end of that person's life the character immediately rolls his Anguish+Resilience+Mental Die at a Target Number that reflects the horror of the final moments. He may even manifest some of the injuries of the deceased; Degrees of Success allow him to absorb the shock of death with fewer repercussions. Failure while using this Pathos can have a devastating effect upon the user.

<u>Target Number</u>	<u>Cause of Passing</u>
11	Passing away in bed.
13	Quick end: car accident, smoke inhalation.
16	Violent death: blood loss, poisoning.
19	Torture: rape, burned alive.

<u>Degrees of Success</u>	<u>Effects</u>
Success	The character falls into a seizure for 12 minus his Anguish rating rounds. Frothing and full seizures will occur, and Burnout equal to the character's Anguish rating will manifest.
1 Degree	The character falls into a seizure for 10 minus Anguish rating rounds. Frothing and full seizures will occur, and Burnout equal to half the character's Anguish rating (rounded down) will manifest.
2 Degrees	The character is struck by the full enormity of death and operates with a penalty to all actions equal to his Anguish rating for the next hour. No injuries manifest.
3 Degrees	The character is shaken by dying, but is unharmed.

*"As I was sitting in my chair
I knew the bottom wasn't there.
No legs nor back, but I just sat,
Ignoring little things like that."
-Hughes Mearns*

This experience is traumatic for any character, and will undoubtedly affect him for quite some time. No one has been closer to death than he has and still lived to tell. This power, used inappropriately (and with Degrees of Failure), has been known to destroy Liminals, leaving them in comas or with new Consequences.

Switch Fate (Anguish 7) Using this Pathos, the character is capable of moving the effects of another Pathos, such as bad luck, fears, physical changes, mental problems, or even new abilities (if the Pathos effects to be moved are exclusive to the character who initially purchased the Pathos) from one individual to another person or to himself. The player specifies which Pathos he wishes his character to "absorb." The character then burns out a point of Imagination and touches the character who is currently under the effects of the Pathos. If the target is willing, he simply absorbs the effects of that Pathos. The character then touches the individual he wishes to move the Pathos to. If the second target is willing, the effects of the Pathos simply move. If either target is unwilling, that target must engage in a contested Imagination+Anguish+Mental Die roll with the character.

If the first target successfully resists the character taking his Pathos, Switch Fate simply fails. If the character successfully absorbs the Pathos and is unsuccessful in transferring it, the next person the character touches for any reason will have to make the contested Imagination+Anguish+ Mental Die roll. The character using this Pathos can only avoid passing on this Pathos to the next person he touches by absorbing its effects into himself.

The character using Switch Fate does not have to be touching both targeted characters simultaneously, but if the character using Switch Fate does not elect to take the removed effects onto himself, the next person that he touches for any reason will have the effects of the Pathos thrust upon him. While the character is "carrying" the effects of the Pathos he is subject to all of the limitations and problems he will soon be transferring to someone else. A character can only "hold" one Pathos at a time in this manner, though a character can absorb any number of Pathos effects if he is willing to become permanently affected by them. The character can also transfer any Pathos that he himself is subject to by burning out a point of Imagination, touching the target to whom he wishes to pass on the Pathos effects, and engaging in a contested Imagination+Anguish+Mental Die roll. This power cannot be used to affect a character by a Pathos more than once. If a character using Switch Fate attempts to add the effects of a Pathos power that a character is already affected by, the transfer merely fails. In this case, the *next* person that the character touches will have the effects thrust upon him.

Descry (Anguish 8) By burning out a point of Imagination, the character is able to see through the links of sympathy in *one* particular way. This power is effective for a number of miles equal to the character's Anguish around the character and only works for current events. The precise means of seeing vary from character to character; a given character may have a particular animal through whose eyes he's able to see or he may be able to look into a puddle of seawater and see anything going on near it, or through a mirror, or near a television. In any event, the medium of viewing must be limited in some material way; a character cannot, for example, see through the air, as air is too common to be limiting. This Pathos doesn't allow any particular facility with locating particular objects or people. Looking for particulars is, for these characters, like flipping through the stations on a TV. They may luck out, but the number of "stations" they have access to is usually too massive to effectively search all examples of their chosen medium, even within a limited radius.

If a character chooses a particular creature through which he sees, he has the option of limiting his power to a half-dozen or less individual creatures. If he takes this road, he's granted control of the creature while he looks through its eyes, enabling him to move unobtrusively closer to a conversation in the form of a cockroach, or to buzz across the ceiling of a highly-guarded building as a fly. If one of these creatures is killed, the character isn't penalized; he's immediately able to find and imprint another such creature as soon as he sees one, though he's likely to be unhappy, as he's formed an emotional or practical bond with that particular animal.

If the character chooses the "object" medium of view, he can, at his option, allow others to view what he's seeing. Anyone else wishing to watch must also burn a point of Imagination, but from that point onward, he's able to see everything the character sees unless he specifically shuts off that portion of the power. This only works if the character uses an external source to Descry. A character who sees things through light bulbs must actually gaze into a light bulb and see things there to make this work. If he simply sees things in his "mind's eye," he doesn't have the option of making it visible.

If the character knows what particular object he's attempting to look through ("I want to look through the TV at the conference center in room A.") He may do so, and will be able to look through that particular object normally. Characters looking through the eyes of a creature or object are able to see, hear, and smell normally, though they're subject to the limitations of location. If, for example, a character being spied on is whispering, the character is no more likely to understand what he's saying than if the character were standing in the location from which he's viewing. Similarly, he won't understand anything being said by someone speaking in a language he doesn't understand. It's also worth mentioning that the character isn't automatically provided any context by this power, and the most interesting conversations are the ones least likely to give the character everything he needs to know. ("Do you have the stuff?" "Yeah, *he* was able to get it for me." "Good, now we can do what we need to do.")

*"Power is the most pompous
ideal yet; the more you gain the
fewer problems you solve."
-Mark Adair*

If the character has another Pathos power that allows him to locate specific objects or individuals, he can use that power in conjunction with this one to narrow the focus of his Descrying. If a character is looking for a particular individual, he can also use the laws of sympathy to make it easier to find them. There's no die roll for this; it's purely at the Narrator's discretion, but having a sample of a character's handwriting, blood, or hair clippings and tossing them into a puddle of rainwater should make it easier to locate the puddle of rainwater closest to the character to which the sample belongs.

This power is active for as long as the character wishes, though while Descrying, his attention is almost entirely on the scene he's viewing. Taking Trauma, breaking his line of sight, or intense stimuli may break him out of his reverie, but unless he disengages or has his attention diverted, he will be unable to talk, move, or perform anything but the most basic functions such as breathing and blinking.

Note that all variables in this power (specific medium, animal or object, number of creatures if animal, and external or internal view) must be decided at the time of this Pathos' purchase. Once decided, these choices cannot be unmade except by purchasing the Pathos again, at which point the character gains an additional means of information gathering, without eliminating the means by which he Descried with his first purchase of the Pathos.

Liquid/Gas Form (Anguish 8) The character burns out a point of Imagination and at the end of the round turns into a single form, determined at the time of purchasing this power. The character always becomes a specific *single* liquid or gas*; blood, tears, chilling mist, smog, smoke, or a cloud of dust. *Liquid* characters are able to move slowly (Agility in inches per round or approximately four miles per hour) in any direction, including up walls and across ceilings, though they are subject to dripping and being trapped within watertight containers. Characters in this state will still stain or abrade surfaces they move across, depending on the material of which they're made. *Gaseous* characters hang in the center of a room and can move in any direction, provided there's not a prevailing wind (or even stiff breeze) greater than five mph or so. In the case of such a wind, the character is only able to move with the wind until such time as he decides to drop back into his normal form. In this form, however, the character is not subject to gravity or to being trapped in anything less than an airtight container. No matter what form he chooses, when a character becomes his chosen substance, he truly *is* that substance in every way except his ability to move and think. Thus, blood will leave genetic information behind and smoke will choke someone who has a smogged character fly into his face. For this reason, Narrators shouldn't allow characters to pick substances like napalm or chlorine gas unless they are willing to allow their players to abuse the abilities their form will allow them.

The character is capable of nothing other than movement (or escape) in either form; he cannot move objects, speak, or use Pathos that requires that they speak, make eye contact, or manipulate objects. The character is also not subject to Trauma from guns, falls, kicks, punches, swords, getting hit by cars, or other concussive, blunt or sharp impacts. The character is subject to Trauma from heat, cold, gases, explosions, and mental attacks. In most cases, these encounters will do normal damage, but due to the additional potential vulnerability of this form, the Narrator may assign an additional one to three points of Trauma.

**Or suspension, if your game gets particularly picky about states of matter, solutions and mixtures.*

Maligner (Anguish 8) By burning out a number of points of Imagination equal to the damage he wishes to heal, the character can help others (or himself) to miraculously recover from even the most severe injuries. The character concentrates on himself or touches a willing target and burns out a number of points of Imagination equal to the amount of Trauma or Burnout he wishes to heal in himself or another. The character then rolls Imagination+Anguish+Mental Die with a Target Number of 14. If this roll is

"The feeling had something of the quality of a very large tearing vital pain spreading chiefly over the chest but within the organism – and yet the feeling was not pain so much as abhorrance."
-William James
The Varieties of Religious Experiences

successful, the affected Burnout or Trauma is instantly healed, though if the character thus healed is not the character using Malinger, he is unable to do anything but walk and stare numbly ahead for the next hour. The depth of Anguish to which he has been exposed is too much for any mind to bear without bending or breaking. Degrees of success may, at the Narrator's discretion, shorten (or even eliminate) this time.

Locus (Anguish 9) The character burns out a point of Imagination and concentrates on a place he wishes to view. The character then rolls Anguish+Perception+Mental Die against a Target Number determined by his familiarity with the location. The Target Number can be lowered, at the Narrator's discretion, if the character has an object from the location he is attempting to view. The character is then able to see, hear, smell, feel and even taste from any vantage point in the location, though he may not in any way affect the location unless he has another Pathos that specifically allows him to do so. While in this state the character is not aware of his actual surroundings, though his concentration may be broken by loud noises, impacts, or extreme sensory input from his real location.

<u>Target Number</u>	<u>Familiarity</u>
15	The character's own home.
18	Familiar haunt.
20	Location visited infrequently.
22	Location only heard or read about.

Secret Shame (Anguish 9) By burning out a point of Imagination, physically touching a target and making a contested Anguish+Retention+Mental Die roll, the character is able to nearly instantly gather the history of a person or object he's touching. Specific information like names, PIN numbers, and addresses are available to the character only if the victim himself were likely to remember them. Note that this power gives an individual *total knowledge* of another human being. To touch another's mind like this is a tremendously life-altering experience, even for someone as twisted by Anguish as a character using this Pathos must be. A character using this Pathos doesn't gain any of his opponent's Skills or Pathos, but he does know how it feels to use them.

On the downside, because of the massive sympathy engendered by this kind of intimate knowledge, the character permanently takes a penalty equal to his own Anguish to any actions that he takes to harm this character, whether directly or indirectly. The victim of this Pathos, however, is under no such compulsion. The character is also likely to keep most (if not all) of the things he learned through this Pathos confidential, as he knows *exactly* how it would feel to have those secrets revealed.

If the character uses this power on an object, he may use the object for one scene as though he had a Skill in using that object equal to his Anguish. If the object is a computer or ATM, he is capable of using any passwords or information stored on that machine. At the end of the scene in which this power is used, all benefits cease; the machine or object that was read has no mind to speak of, so the information contained in it isn't "predigested" by another consciousness in a way that enables the character using this power to keep the information indefinitely, the way he can with people and animals.

Crucible (Anguish 10) The character spends an Emotion Point to instantly heal an amount of Burnout or Trauma equal to his Anguish. The character may use this Pathos on himself or on a willing target.

Dread

Charms (Dread 1) The character spends a point of Imagination and works to make himself appear less of a threat to animals or Noumenal creatures of animal-level intelligence. With a successful Dread+Perception+Mental Die roll against the creature's Target Number he is able to approach his target without startling the creature and without

"Follow your bliss ...If you do follow your bliss and put yourself on a kind of track that has been there all the while, waiting for you, and the life that you ought to be living is the one you are living. When you can see that, you begin to meet people who are in your field of bliss, and they open doors to you. I say, follow your bliss and don't be afraid, and doors will open where you didn't know they were going to be."

-Joseph Campbell

danger to himself.

<u>Target Number</u>	<u>Creature</u>
8	Domestic animal: cat, dog.
9	Exotic domestic animal: parrot, lizard.
11	Trained animal: guard dog, hound.
13	Wild prey animals: deer, rodents.
16	Wild predator animals: wolves, bears.

Off the Trail (Dread 1) The character burns one point of Imagination and rolls Imagination+Dread+Mental Die. The result of this roll becomes the Target Number for any attempt to track that character (and only that character) for the rest of the scene.

Tail (Dread 1) The best defense is a good offense, and the best offense is one the victim never sees coming. The character's obsessive attention to detail allows him to accurately follow a target's every move. After burning out and making a Perception+Dread+Mental Die roll, the character is able to add his Dread to any roll used to follow any one target (stated at the activation of this Pathos) for the remainder of the scene.

“Them” (Dread 1) The character has become jumpy and paranoid in all the right ways. When the character burns out a point of Imagination and successfully rolls Perception+Dread+Mental Die with a Target Number of seven he is able to add his Dread to any rolls attempting to determine hidden motives, hostile agencies, traps, or other nasty surprises.

Prey Instinct (Dread 1) The character understands the food chain, and he understands that the only way up it is to become a predator himself. He is able to process every detail of his opponent's actions, enabling him to know what action a character engaged in physical combat with him is going to take, even before his enemy himself knows. The character burns out a point of Perception and rolls Perception+Dread+Mental Die with a Target Number of seven. If the character is successful, he is able to add his Perception as a bonus to all Initiative rolls for the scene, provided he knows that an attack is coming.

*"Faith consists in believing
when it is beyond the power of
reason to believe."
-Voltaire*

When the character reaches Dread five, the player is given the option of instinctively burning out a point of Perception to activate this Pathos in the event of an ambush. If the player decides not to do so, the character remains unaware of the impending hostility. If he chooses to activate the Pathos, the character knows the attack is coming, even if the Pathos activation roll somehow fails.

Chameleon (Dread 2) The character burns out a point of Imagination and rolls Imagination+Dread+Mental Die against a Target Number of eight. If the roll is successful, the character is able to add his Dread to all rolls attempting to hide or avoid being spotted for the remainder of the scene.

Finals (Dread 2) The character burns a point of Imagination. He is then able to operate for up to his Dread in days without sleep without taking Burnout. Note that he is still tired and will take any excuse to sleep, but he is able to operate at full capacity. At the end of this power's duration, the character must sleep uninterrupted for eight hours multiplied by the number of days he operated without sleep or immediately take all the accumulated Burnout for his days without rest. Note that in this state the character can sleep through virtually anything; he will only wake if the player chooses to have the character do so.

Hypervigilance (Dread 2) The character burns out a point of Perception and rolls Perception+Dread+Mental Die against a Target Number of eight. If the character is successful, he becomes hyperaware of the potential dangers in his environment, enabling him to add his Dread as a bonus to all Perception rolls for the remainder of the scene.

Paranoid (Dread 2): It is extremely difficult to catch a character using this Pathos by

surprise. If the character is going to encounter any unexpected event (anything from a surprise birthday party to an ambush) the Narrator makes a secret Perception+Dread+Mental Die roll against a Target Number of eight. If successful, the character becomes aware that there is a threat coming. This Pathos provides no more detail than that.

If the unexpected event is being hidden by a Pathos of some variety, the roll uses the Pathos activation roll total for the “hiding” Pathos as the Target Number for Paranoid. This Pathos only works for the character himself, not for his property or for those associated with him. Note as well that no Burnout is required for this Pathos—the effect is always active.

Tamper-Proof Seal (Dread 2) The character burns out a point of Perception and touches a seal, door, or opening. The character then rolls Perception+Dread+Mental Die against a Target Number of eight. If the roll is successful, the character knows when the last time the entrance or exit was entered or exited, when a seal was broken, or when a door was last opened. The character also has a vague understanding of why the targeted item or location was breached. Through the use of this Pathos, the character might be able to determine if someone has entered his home while he was gone or whether someone has opened his prescription medication and slipped in poison.

Corruption (Dread 3) The character touches an inanimate object. He then burns out a point of Imagination and makes an Imagination +Dread +Mental Die roll with a Target Number of nine. If the roll is successful, the object the character touches ages a number of years equal to the character's Dread in just a few moments. Paper yellows, wood becomes brittle and cracked, and exposed metal begins to rust. At the Narrator's discretion, this Pathos may make objects easier to break or harder to use. He may assess penalties or bonuses to certain actions involving the objects equal to Degrees of Success (or more, in some cases).

Don't Hurt Me (Dread 3) The character burns a point of Imagination and attempts to cause one target not focused on the character to ignore him for the rest of the scene. The character attempts to get out of the target's sight, then makes a contested Imagination+Dread+Mental Die roll. If the roll is successful, the target will ignore the character for the scene. Even if the character succeeds, it's important to note that the target doesn't leave the scene, but merely ignores the character. If the character does anything to draw attention to himself, such as attacking the target or shouting, the power's effects are nullified. The target still knows the character is there, but the character doesn't register as being important.

Jitters (Dread 3) The character burns a point of Imagination and tells the target a particularly harrowing story or anecdote (everything from "Once, when I was cleaning out a basement I saw..." to "Do you know how many cockroach shells they allow per pound of hamburger meat?") and makes a contested Imagination+Dread+Mental Die roll. If the character succeeds, the target is seized with uncontrollable disgust or frightened shakes for the rest of the scene, causing everyone within a few yards to notice him or her and levying a penalty equal to the character's Dread to the target's next roll. Shaken, disgusted or distracted by what he just heard, the target is unable to adequately react to the world around him for just a moment. At the Narrator's discretion, degrees of success may apply this penalty to subsequent rolls in addition to the roll initially affected by Jitters.

Last Ditch (Dread 3) The character burns a point of Imagination and adds his Dread rating to a defensive action. The character is flooded with adrenaline, and his reflexes peak. The character need not use an additional action to activate this Pathos—it is a subconscious response to immediate physical threat.

Social Anxiety (Dread 3) Any elementary school bully or high-school queen bee can tell you that the surest way to be certain that no one notices one's flaws is to make sure that

*"Any insincere and evil friend
is more to be feared than a wild
beast; a wild beast may wound
your body, but an evil friend
will wound your mind."
-Buddha*

someone else's problems are always the topic of discussion. When using this Pathos, the character focuses on a target in the same social setting as the character, burns out a point of Imagination and makes an opposed Imagination+ Dread+Mental Die roll. If the roll is successful, the target's flaws immediately become apparent, levying a penalty equal to the character's Dread to all of the target's rolls involving interaction with another human being for the rest of the scene. At the same time, the character gains a bonus equal to his Dread to all rolls involving interaction with another for the scene. If the character interacts positively in any way with the target initially affected by this Pathos, the effects of the Pathos immediately cease. The only safe acknowledgment the Liminal using this Pathos can give his target is more of the abuse already, in all likelihood, being heaped on him.

Confused, frightened and embarrassed, the target of this Pathos will instinctively understand that the character using the Pathos is somehow involved in his social nightmare. Though he can't express it, as his understanding hovers just below his conscious awareness, the target will find himself gravitating toward the character and attempting to interact with him, a dangerous set of affairs for both the target of the Pathos and the character using it.

Stille (Dread 3) The character burns a single point of Imagination and subconsciously causes one normally noisy event to take place nearly silently. When sneaking through a building in the middle of the night, for example, the character may accidentally knock over a stack of boxes or step on a creaky stair. The player may determine that his character decides to use this Pathos power in these situations, and the situation will simply occur silently. To use the previous examples, the stack of boxes slide to the side and slough to the ground rather than knocking anything else over or rattling or the stair simply doesn't creak. Note that this Pathos cannot be used on alarms or security devices as it only works for a single event. This power could, at most, cause the alarm to go off a few seconds late. Also note that while knocking over a box of marbles counts as a "single event" for this power, if a character has to walk across packing bubbles, each step would count as a separate event. This Pathos may also be used to silence a single scream.

Tension (Dread 3) The character burns a point of Imagination and rolls his Resilience+Dread+Physical Die against a Target Number of nine. If the roll is successful, the character's jitters and locked muscles function as a kind of combination distraction and armor. If the character is successful, he may add half his Dread (rounded down) to his Natural Defense for the rest of the scene.

Kid Fears (Dread 4) Everyone is afraid of *something*. The character burns a point of Imagination and studies a target for at least three turns. At the end of this time, the character rolls Perception+Dread+Mental Die against his opponent's Imagination+Dread+Mental Die. If the character wins the roll, he gains a vague understanding of what it is the target fears. This is only a vague understanding. The character might discover that his target fears physical violence, but he wouldn't find out that the target is specifically afraid of being mugged. Still, even a vague understanding of an opponent's fears can be useful.

Mutter (Dread 4) The character burns out a point of Imagination and rolls Imagination+Dread+Mental Die against a Target Number of ten. If the character is successful, he is able to speak a single message to one target without fear of anyone overhearing. His voice drips menace, and those around him subconsciously shy away from the implications of anything he says. Those attempting to listen will get vague chills and hear only an indecipherable murmur from the character. Even electronic recordings of the character's voice will carry this sense of danger. The words and sounds the character speaks are unaltered, but everyone except the targeted recipient undergoes a minor subconscious revolt as their brains steadfastly refuse to understand what they hear.

Skew (Dread 4) After gaining this Pathos, the character's Dread colors every aspect of his life. He may choose to substitute his Dread for any other Passion, both for purposes of

*"If the world cannot be solved
by will alone, what do you
imagine to achieve but
disaster?"*
-Mark Adair

defending against Pathos and activating Pathos. Note that this power requires no Burnout or roll. The Dread simply inserts itself seamlessly and totally into the character's life.

Note that though the character may use his Dread rating in place of his rating in another Passion, he must still have the appropriate level in that Passion to purchase the Pathos in the first place.

Unassuming (Dread 4) The character burns a point of Imagination at the beginning of a scene. As long as he doesn't draw attention to himself (by yelling, attacking, running, waving his arms about) and isn't obviously out of place (in a bank vault, for example) he will remain entirely below the radar of everyone nearby. This is different from Please Don't Hurt Me in that the character is unimportant to *everyone* in the vicinity rather than just a single target and in that the character must not draw attention to himself even before activating the Pathos.

What-if? (Dread 4) The character designates a target, burns one point of Imagination, and engages in a contested Imagination+Dread+Mental Die roll. If the character is successful, he may designate a specific behavior that the target has engaged in such as fighting, engaging in illicit drug use, or saying a particular name. For the remainder of the scene, the target is struck with fear of the potential outcomes of his action. Basic success levies a one-point penalty to actions associated with the targeted behavior. Additionally, if the targeted behavior is opposed by another character's roll, the targeted character simply loses ties; he is unable to reroll.

*"He who makes a beast of himself gets rid of the pain of being a man."
-Samuel Johnson*

<u>Degrees of Success</u>	<u>Effects</u>
1 Degree	The behavior takes twice as long to attempt, in addition to the one-point penalty and the tie-loss.
2 Degrees	A penalty is assessed equal to the character's Dread to attempt any action associated with the targeted behavior.
3 Degrees	The target cannot attempt the action for the scene.

Deepest Fears (Dread 5) A character may use this Pathos on any target of whom he has a physical sample, regardless of the character's distance from his victim. The character burns out a point of Imagination and engages in a contested Imagination+Dread+Mental Die roll with the target while the target sleeps. If the character wins, the target is plagued with nightmares. Though he remains asleep, the next day, he functions as though he received no sleep at all. This process can be repeated for as many nights as the character wishes, though it may only be attempted once per night.

Here be Dragons (Dread 5) The character burns out a point of Imagination after hiding in an already inhospitable location such as an abandoned building, alley or cave. The character then rolls Imagination+Dread+Mental Die against a Target Number of 11. An individual searching for the character, or characters, in the affected location are confronted with all of the fears and worries associated with the area in which the character or characters is/are hiding (spiders, muggers, collapsing staircases), taking a penalty on all their rolls to search equal to the character using this Pathos' Dread. This effect lasts for a scene. Additional Degrees of Success double either the numerical effects of the penalty or the time frame of this Pathos—player's choice.

Infestation (Dread 5) The character burns out a point of Imagination and engages in a contested Imagination+Dread+Mental Die roll with a designated target. If the character is successful, the target hallucinates an insect, snake, or rodent running across his body. One turn later, the target feels the hallucination begin to dig into his flesh. For a number of turns equal to the Dread of the character using this Pathos, the target takes a penalty equal to the character using this Pathos' Imagination. Degrees of Success will likely extend the duration of this effect.

Ransom Note (Dread 5) The character burns out a point of imagination and writes a threatening message. The character then rolls Imagination+Dread+Mental Die against a Target Number of 11. If the character succeeds, he is able to imbed a single message of up to the same length as the message he initially wrote. When activating this Pathos, the character designates a recipient who will understand the message. This recipient or recipients can be an individual, a member of a group, or a person who fulfills a certain set of requirements (“The first Liminal who enters this room.”). No one other than the individual or group to whom the message is directed will be able to decipher the message, though if the recipient is unfamiliar with the medium, he will be bewildered by his understanding. The message is not cryptographically hidden, it is supernaturally embedded in an otherwise threatening note. This note can be an email, letter, graffiti, or even a painting in an art gallery.

Zeitgeist (Dread 5) Sometimes we recognize our own not by what we love in common, but by what we fear in common. A character with this Pathos understands that terrified sympathy and is able to play on it in order to appear to be “one of us” for purposes of infiltrating a group. The character burns out a point of Imagination and rolls Imagination+Dread+Mental Die against a target number determined by the group he is attempting to infiltrate with this Pathos. If successful, the character will know how to appear to be a good fit for the group, and with Degrees of Success he may find that he knows passwords, secret handshakes and inside jokes as well.

<u>Target Number</u>	<u>Type of Group</u>
8	Large local group without much organization, such as a hunting lodge or church.
11	Medium-sized group with some organization, such as a city police department, shipping company, or a pyramid scheme.
14	Small-sized group with a tightly-knit organization and purpose such as a legal firm, small agency, or activist group.
17	Covert or supernatural group, cult, or executive board of a corporation.

Burning Ears (Dread 6) The character burns a point of Imagination and makes a Perception+Dread+Mental Die roll with a Target Number of 11. If the character is successful, he is able to hear anything being said about them within a number of city blocks equal to his Dread for a single scene. Degrees of Success allow the character to determine the location of the speaker with greater precision.

<u>Degrees of Success</u>	<u>Precision</u>
Success	The character is able to determine that the speaker is within the range of the power.
1 Degree	The character is able to determine the specific building in which a speaker is located.
2 Degrees	The character is able to determine a specific room within a particular building in which a speaker is located.
3 Degrees	The character is able to determine a speaker's position within the room in which he is located, his posture, gestures and a vague idea of his appearance.

*"She felt again that small shiver that occurred to her when events hinted at a destiny being played out, of unseen forces intervening."
-Dorothy Gilman*

Somnia (Dread 6) The character burns a point of Imagination and engages in a contested Imagination+Dread+Mental Die roll with a target within sensory range. If the roll is successful, the target will immediately fall asleep, regardless of the circumstances in which he finds himself. The target will be in a restless, dreamless slumber until roused by physical contact or the next sunrise. With Degrees of Success the sleep is progressively deeper and may not allow the victim to wake until the duration of the Pathos has expired.

<u>Degree of Success</u>	<u>Duration</u>
1 Degree	Additional day.

2 Degrees	A week.
3 Degrees	A month. Note that a character who has slept this long without eating or drinking will almost certainly require medical attention, if he even manages to survive.

Note that this power is only effective for the scene in which it is activated and only works to the limit of the range of the power. The character hears any and all conversations within the range of the power, though he is only able to focus on one enough to pinpoint the location. If the conversation is occurring over the phone, the character can only locate one speaker at a time, and if one of the speakers is out of the range of the power, the character will only hear half of the conversation. This Pathos doesn't allow a character to hear an *entire* conversation, just those aspects that directly relate to him. Finally, this power only relates to conversations that can be *heard*. Email, mail, note, and sign-language conversations are still safe from intrusion with this Pathos.

Mass Somnia (Dread 7) The character burns out a point of Imagination and makes an opposed Imagination+Dread+Mental Die roll against each individual within a number of yards equal to his Intensity. Each individual that the character succeeds in his roll against immediately falls asleep. The sleeping characters may, obviously, take no actions, and are unaware of what is happening around them. Note that this state is, despite its origin, still sleep. Shaking, attacking, or making loud noises around the sleeping individuals will still wake them. Also note that if the character fails against even one individual in a group, that one individual can easily wake everyone else.

Possum (Dread 7) The character burns a point of Resilience and rolls Resilience+Dread+Physical Die against a Target Number of 12. If the roll is successful, the character immediately collapses into a death-like state. While in this suspended state, he character has no pulse, his eyes do not dilate, he does not breathe, and he no longer bleeds. His skin cools, and, if this Pathos remains active long enough, rigor mortis will set in. Needless to say, the character is unable to move.

Hovering between life and death, the character remains somewhat aware of his surroundings, though only in a hazy, indistinct way. The character may remain like this for up to an hour. Degrees of Success add one hour per degree. At the end of that time, the character revives, for better or for worse. The character may cancel this Pathos at any time.

Alibi (Dread 8) The character designates a target, burns out a point of Perception and engages in a contested Perception+Dread+Mental Die roll with him. If the character is successful, he may designate a one-hour span of time and experience exactly what his target was experiencing at the time. No time passes for anyone else, but the character experiences that hour in its entirety, retaining all salient details of any crimes, conversations or television programs that the character was watching at the time. Note that if the target was asleep or simply staring at a wall at the time in question, the character is unlikely to get information of much use. Degrees of Success may allow the character to experience more of his target's time, one hour per Degree, at the Narrator's discretion.

Nightmare Genesis (Dread 8): The character burns out a point of Imagination, chooses a target, and rolls Imagination+Dread+Mental Die. If he succeeds in the roll, he manifests an object from a nearby individual's deepest fears. Nearly instantly, vaporous dream stuff begins coalescing around the character who uses this Pathos, quickly solidifying into a real, physical form at the end of the round. The character has no idea what he is going to create unless he uses Kid Fears beforehand. By succeeding, the character is able to create inanimate objects or small animals (guns, handfuls of hissing snakes).

With one Degree of Success, the character is able to bring human beings and large objects into being (serial killers, specific abusers, tanks).

"What is the most innocent place in any country. Is it not the insane asylum? These people drift through life truly innocent, unable to see into themselves at all.
-Arther Miller

With two Degrees of Success or higher, the character is able to manifest full landscapes for a time: yawning chasms, tropical jungles, or arctic wastelands.

These manifested items last for a number of minutes equal to the character's Dread, at which time they dissolve into the same insubstantial mist from which they came. These created materials are absolutely real, affecting not just the character who feared them in the first place, but also everyone else within range. Animals or people temporarily created will not attack the character using this Pathos, but everyone else within range is fair game.

Buried Alive (Dread 9) The character burns a point of Imagination and engages in a contested Imagination+Dread+Mental Die roll with everyone within the character's Dread in feet. The head of any character that loses this roll is immediately enveloped in a noxious grey material that boils out of his nostrils, ears and eyes. This material strangles and blinds the characters for a number of rounds equal to the Dread of the character using this Pathos. Characters subject to this Pathos take modifiers and damage appropriate to being blinded, deafened and suffocated. This Pathos may be dismissed at any time by the character and is immediately stopped if the character using the Pathos loses consciousness. When the power ends, the material simply dissolves into a harmless dust before disappearing entirely. Degrees of Success increase both the severity and the duration of this Pathos. Characters killed by this Pathos appear to have died of heart attacks or "dry drowning."

<u>Degrees of Success</u>	<u>Effect</u>
1 Degree	Lasts an additional turn, completely covers their head and fills their mouth and nostrils.
2 Degrees	Lasts two additional turns, the nightmare expands enough to capture their arms and torso, rendering the victims incapable of any action except running.
3 Degrees	Lasts for the scene. The nightmare has fully consumed the victim's form into a nightmarish cocoon and will last until the victim suffocates or the Pathos is deactivated.

Nightmare Form (Dread 9) The character burns a point of imagination while in the presence of a sleeping individual and immediately assumes the insubstantial form of a nightmare. The character is invisible, intangible, and simultaneously completely aware of his surroundings. He is still visible to those using Second Sight and similar powers and can still be affected by Pathos. Purely physical phenomena, however, have no effect on him. The character can remain in this form indefinitely and use any Pathos that doesn't require a body, provided he always remains within his Dread multiplied by itself in yards of a sleeping person. The character is able to instantly travel to any point within the boundaries delineated by the sleeping individuals, and his range of motion is limitless within these boundaries is absolutely limitless. Such a character can be a terror in crowded apartment buildings at night.

Should the character ever find himself out of range of a sleeping individual, whether because the sleeping person wakes or because he attempts to travel out of range, he immediately shifts back to his normal physical form.

Arbitration (Dread 10) As with Alibi, the character designates a target, burns out a point of Perception and engages in a contested Perception+Dread+Mental Die roll with him. If the character is successful, he may designate a one-hour span of time and experience exactly what his target was experiencing at the time. Unlike in Alibi, the character may include any number of other (willing) people within his Dread in yards in the experience. No time passes for anyone outside of this connection, but the characters experience that hour in its entirety, retaining all salient details of any crimes, conversations or television programs that the character was watching at the time. Degrees of Success may allow the characters to experience more of the target's time, one hour per degree, at the Narrator's discretion. Those unfamiliar with Noumenal phenomena may attribute the experience to a

*"When you use words, you're
able to keep your mind alive.
Writing is my way of
reaffirming my own existence."
-Gao Xingjian*

particularly vivid daydream, if they remember it at all.

Speak of the Devil (Dread 10): A character with this Pathos is always aware when someone uses his name. No Burnout is necessary; whenever anyone refers to the character by his name or a common nickname, he is aware of the context in which his name was spoken, as well as the *exact statements* that were made in reference to him. By concentrating for a moment, the character is also able to pinpoint the exact location of the person speaking his name. This applies equally well to written and electronic communication.

Note that the character is only aware when people use his name or common nicknames. A character named Brandon, for example, wouldn't hear any time anyone talked about any Brandon, only when he is personally referred to. Similarly, the character wouldn't hear if someone used a code name that he himself wouldn't recognize.

Fury

800 Pound Gorilla (Fury 1) The character burns out a point of Imagination and rolls Imagination+Fury+Mental Die against a Target Number of seven. If the roll is successful, the character is able to apply his rating in Fury as a bonus to a single social interaction roll relating to intimidation or dominance.

Adrenaline Rush (Fury 1) After a character is impacted by an attack or event that does Burnout damage, the player may, before recording the Burnout damage, choose to have his character instinctively Burnout a point of Resilience and roll Resilience+Fury+Physical Die roll against a Target Number of seven. If the roll is successful, the character is able to completely ignore a number of points of Burnout done by the event or accident equal to his Intensity—often, the character is down a only single point of Resilience, rather than the full amount of damage he would have taken.

Bully (Fury 1) The character burns out a point of Perception and rolls Perception+Fury+Mental Die against a Target Number of seven. If the roll is successful, the character is immediately able to instantly determine the physically weakest member of any given group with which he is interacting. Degrees of Success may, at the Narrator's discretion, be applied as bonuses to attack rolls against that individual for the remainder of the scene: one point per Degree of Success.

Force (Fury 1) The character burns out a point of Strength and rolls Strength+Imagination+Mental Die against a Target Number of seven. If the roll is successful, the character may substitute his Fury rating for his Strength in any Strength roll for the remainder of the scene. If the character burns out his Strength to help with any roll, the additional points gained through Burnout are applied *on top of* the character's rating in Fury as his Strength for that action. While this Pathos isn't terribly useful at lower levels of Fury, characters with higher levels of Fury can be unreal powerhouses with this Pathos.

Lock and Pound (Fury 1) When the character using this Pathos makes an attack, the player may choose to have his character instinctively Burnout a point of Strength and make a contested Strength+Fury+Physical Die roll with his target before rolling to strike. If his attack affects multiple victims, the character must choose a single target to be affected by this Pathos. If the roll is successful, the character applies the number of points by which he won the contested roll as a bonus to his normal attack roll.

Cowed (Fury 2) The character burns out a point of Imagination and rolls Imagination+Fury+Mental Die while asking a target a simple yes or no question. The character then engages in a contested Strength+Fury+Mental Die roll with his target. If the character is successful, the target truthfully answers that question. Degrees of Success may, at the Narrator's discretion, allow the character to ask more yes or no questions: one

*"We do not have to visit a madhouse to find disordered minds; our planet is the mental institution of the universe."
-Johann von Goethe*

question per Degree of Success. Unlike most Pathos, Cowed uses *two* Qualities (Imagination and Strength) and also requires the character to roll Strength with his *Mental Die*.

Friends Like These (Fury 2) The character shouts an insult at a target within hearing and rolls Imagination+Fury+Mental Die against a Target Number of eight. If the roll is successful, the target is able to use the character's Fury as if it were his own for purposes of determining the relative power of Pathos, resistance and Intensity. This effect lasts the remainder of the scene. Though this Pathos must be initiated with an insult, it is almost always used on a character's friends and allies. At the end of the scene, the target will still be jittery and short-tempered, but his Fury will have returned to its normal levels. Any action taken while under the influence of this Pathos gives the character an amount of Emotion points commensurate with his *real* Fury rating rather than his artificially inflated one. Degrees of Success may make the target even more furious than the character using this Pathos, at the Narrator's discretion.

Powder Keg (Fury 2) The character burns a point of Imagination and touches an inanimate object, rolling Imagination+Fury+Mental Die against a Target Number of eight. If the roll is successful, the object then takes an amount of Trauma equal to the character's Fury. For only mildly angry characters, this Pathos expresses itself in malfunctioning machinery or cracking glass. As the character reaches higher levels of Fury, this Pathos power can easily warp thin metal, break a car windshield, or utterly destroy more delicate devices. The level of destruction that is inflicted, up his rating, is completely up to the character.

Righteous Indignation (Fury 2) When a character witnesses someone performing an act against his (possibly twisted) moral code, he may instinctively Burnout a point of Strength and roll Strength+Fury+Physical Die against a Target Number of eight. If the roll is successful, the character is able to apply his Fury as a bonus to a single attack roll against the perpetrator of the act. The character may "hold" this bonus for up to an hour as he follows his target into a back alley, tails him down the street, or otherwise delays the gratification of righting a clear wrong.

Shut Up (Fury 2) The character may burn a single point of Imagination to make another character or animal be quiet. This effect is temporary and may only grant a few seconds of silence before the target begins to yammer again. The character must make eye contact with the animal or person, and tell them to be quiet, in some way. A character slowly raising his finger to his lips and shouting threats at the target are both equally effective when using this Pathos. The character then makes a contested Fury+ Imagination + Mental Die roll. If the character succeeds, the target is unable to talk, bark, chirp, or make any deliberate noise for a round. Degrees of Success may, at the Narrator's discretion, increase the amount of time that the target is forced to remain silent: one round per Degree of Success.

Berserker (Fury 3) When taking damage, the character may instinctively Burnout a point of Resilience and roll Resilience+ Fury+ Mental Die against a Target Number of nine. If the roll is successful, the character is able to shrug off an amount of damage (Trauma or Burnout) equal to his rating in Fury that would have been assessed from that one attack. He simply doesn't take the damage. Degrees of Success have no effect on this Pathos. Either the character is able to shrug of the injury or he isn't.

Malfunction (Fury 3) The character spends a point of Imagination and focuses upon a particular device within sensory range. With a successful Imagination+Fury+Mental Die roll against a Target Number determined by the device's sophistication, the unit will behave erratically and unreliably, shut down, or lose signal for the scene. Degrees of Success may extend the malfunction, at the Narrator's discretion, possibly resulting in permanently ruined device.

"Why am I so sympathetic to the creatures I see preying on the masses? The answer is simple. Because I am one."
-Brenden

Target Number

Sophistication

10	Cell phone/computer.
12	Pencil sharpener/car.
15	Firearm.
18	Mechanical pen.

Next Topic (Fury 3) While engaged in a social interaction (of whatever stripe, from casual conversation to courtroom interrogation) the character may Burnout a point of Imagination, indicate his unwillingness to continue a discussion, and engage in a contested Imagination+Fury+Mental Die roll with his target. If the roll is successful, the target drops the topic currently under discussion, regardless of the relative importance of the topic. Note that a security guard who has had this Pathos used against him won't stop arguing with a character and simply let him waltz into a secure building. In this circumstance, the guard is more likely to simply call the police. This is, however, an excellent Pathos to have when conversing with police, judges, psychiatrists, or jury members.

"There is a quake that rips the soul asunder...it is the pain of remembering."
-Nrb

Overdrive (Fury 3) Once a character has taken this Pathos, he is able to Burnout any Quality to raise his Strength. He may Burnout two points of Imagination, for example, and apply them as a bonus to a single Strength roll. No roll is necessary to activate this Pathos and it does not require the character to take an action.

Staredown (Fury 3) The character makes eye contact with his target, then burns out a point of Imagination and engages in a contested Imagination+ Fury+Mental Die roll with that target. If the roll is successful, the target is totally immobile as long as the character maintains eye contact with him and remains stonily silent. This Pathos effect ceases as soon as the eye contact is broken for any reason. Note that most attacks will jar the victim enough to knock his head out of alignment with the character's eyes. If the character performs no action other than staring at his victim, this Pathos can last for up to a scene.

Alpha (Fury 4) The character orders his target to engage in an act that can take no more than a single round, burns out a point of Imagination and engages in a contested Imagination+ Fury+ Mental Die roll. If the character using this Pathos is successful, the target does what he is ordered, even if the action is directly dangerous or harmful to him. Additional Degrees of Success may, at the Narrator's discretion, allow the character to give his target more orders.

Note that once the action is completed, the character who has had Alpha used on him will almost certainly resent the order, and his resentment will, in all likelihood only be worsened by the fact that he *obeyed*. Even if a target was not hostile to a character before, after having this Pathos used on him, he almost certainly will be.

Gagged (Fury 4) The character tells his target to be silent in some way as in Shut Up, burns a point of Imagination and engages in a contested Imagination+Fury+Mental Die roll with him. If the character wins, the target is unable to speak as with Shut Up, but with Gagged, the character is sufficiently intimidated to be silent for the remainder of the scene or until the Pathos is deactivated.

Kiai (Fury 4) The character burns a point of Imagination and rolls his Strength+Fury+Physical Die as though he is attempting to strike his target with a physical attack., with Burnout damage assessed to the target as with a physical attack as well. The target must be within range of hearing of the character using this Pathos, and must be able to hear a shout in order for Kiai to work on him—deaf characters and characters using Habituation are immune to this Pathos.

Murphy's Eye (Fury 4) The character burns a point of Imagination, makes eye contact with his target, and wishes him bad luck (either out loud or silently). The character then makes a contested Imagination+Fury+Mental Die roll. If the character is successful, the target faces a degree of misfortune determined by the following table, modified by Degrees of Success.

<u>Degree of Success</u>	<u>Effect</u>
Success	A minor, but embarrassing misfortune happens to the target, such as falling down at a party or tearing the seat of his pants in a bank. No lasting harm occurs, but the target is mortified. This can take up to an hour to occur.
1 Degree	A significant, humiliating misfortune happens to the target, such as a furious, unstoppable need to urinate (likely resulting in an "accident"), sudden onset of a minor but embarrassing medical condition, such as allergies, resulting in the target being unable to function for a day, a full-body outbreak of acne, warts or boils, or unexplained, conspicuous, highly embarrassing stains repeatedly appearing for the rest of the day. These effects can take up to a half an hour to begin.
2 Degrees	A damaging (though not physically) misfortune occurs, such as the target's wife finding another woman's underwear in the dryer, the boss finding pornography on his work computer, or a particularly vindictive round of the target's gossip being broadcast over an intercom. These effects begin immediately, though the character may not begin to face the consequences of these events for a few minutes (less if he has a cell phone).
3 Degrees	Two instances of misfortune of the 2 Degrees of Success

Rile (Fury 4) The character shouts at his companions or allies, and with a successful Imagination+Fury+Mental Die roll with a Target Number of ten, the character is able to pass along one of his physical Factors to any willing individuals he designates within his Fury in yards. Degrees of Success may, at the Narrator's discretion, allow the character to pass along more Factors.

Evil Eye (Fury 5) The character burns a point of Imagination, makes eye contact with his target, and wishes him bad luck (either out loud or silently). The character then makes a contested Imagination+Fury+Mental Die roll. If the character is successful, the target faces a degree of misfortune determined by the following table, modified by Degrees of Success. Effects of Evil Eye, unlike Murphy's Eye, take place instantly.

<u>Degree of Success</u>	<u>Effect</u>
Success	A small but damaging incident takes place, injuring the target, causing 1d4 Trauma (the victim trips, severely barks his shins, or hits his head on a low-hanging door frame).
1 Degree	Misfortune strikes the target, causing 1d6 Trauma (a bike messenger runs into him, a book or vase falls from a high shelf, someone opens a door into his face).
2 Degrees	A major accident, causing 1d8 Trauma, occurs. The victim may be struck by a (slow-moving) car, have a heavy paperweight fall on his head, or get into a car accident
3 Degrees	The character takes an amount of Trauma equal to the character's Fury+1d6 in a potentially fatal, and certainly painful, accident.

Ignite (Fury 5) The character burns out a point of Imagination and instinctively makes an Imagination+Fury+Mental Die roll with a Target Number of 11 while touching an inanimate, flammable object. The fire is as intense as a normal fire would be if doused with gasoline. The flammable portions of any object will be completely consumed within ten minus the character's Fury rating turns. Buildings take longer, but still burn supernaturally fast. Due to the lack of a traceable accelerant, investigators are likely to find the fire unusual, but not likely the result of Arson. This Pathos cannot be used on anything except flammable objects. Attempting to use this Pathos on another character's

*"It is extremely difficult to like oneself in a culture which things you are a disease."
-Chrystos*

clothing will cause three points of Trauma before the clothes completely burn away. In order to successfully ignite a combatant's clothing, a character must succeed in an attack against the targeted character. This Pathos does not require an action to activate.

Internal Bleeding (Fury 5) The character burns a point of Imagination and chooses a target. He then engages in a contested Imagination + Fury+Mental Die roll with that target. If the roll is successful, any damage the character does to that target will take twice as long to heal as normal. At the Narrator's discretion, additional Degrees of Success may double the healing time again: one doubling per Degree of Success.

Restraining Order (Fury 5) The character burns a point of Imagination, makes a contested Imagination+ Fury+ Mental Die roll and tells the target to leave him alone. If the character succeeds, the target leaves the character's presence as soon as humanly possible, regardless of the social result. He will storm out of a party or get off of the bus at the next stop, even if it isn't his. He will not, however, jump out of a window or moving vehicle. The target must physically stay at least 200 yards away from the character for an amount of time determined by the degree of success. If he attempts to come closer than this to the character, memory of their last meeting will immediately drive the target away.

<u>Degree of Success</u>	<u>Time Frame</u>
Success	Scene
1 Degree	Week
2 Degrees	Year
3 Degrees	Permanent

Note that just because the target cannot physically come near the character, it doesn't mean that he can't cause problems or be involved in his life. The target must simply do so remotely.

Unbound (Fury 5) The character burns a point of Imagination, and rolls Imagination+Fury+Mental Die against a Target Number determined by the type of restraint from which he is attempting to free himself. He can struggle his way out of any personal bonds such as ropes, handcuffs, chains, or straight jackets, if he rolls well enough.

<u>Target Number</u>	<u>Binding</u>
11	Rope
12	Chain
14	Handcuffs
18	Total restraint (straight jacket, stocks, handcuffs with thumbcuffs)

If the character succeeds in the roll the bindings simply slide off. In cases where this is impossible (such as with thumbcuffs and handcuffs together) one or both of the bindings will also come undone. Degrees of Success have no effect with this Pathos. Either the character frees himself or he doesn't.

Hurt (Fury 6) The character burns out a point of Imagination and makes an unarmed strike against a person or object, doing an amount of Burnout or Trauma (depending on the attack) equal to his Fury. This strike is considered a part of the activation of this Pathos; a character needn't burn a point of Agility or add the Target Numbers in order to take multiple actions in order to use this Pathos. The character must declare the activation of this power before he makes the strike, however. Hurt must be used with intent; it can't be added as an afterthought to a normal strike. The character's Fury takes the place of the Burnout or Trauma that would normally be assessed—it is *not* added to the damage. When using this Pathos, Degrees of Success should not be allowed to affect the results of either the strike roll or the Pathos activation roll.

Jump (Fury 6) The character burns a point of Strength and rolls Strength+Fury+Physical

"The world needs anger. The world often continues to allow evil because it isn't angry enough."
-Bede Jarrett
The House of Gold

Die against a Target Number of 12. If the roll is successful, the character is able to jump a number of yards equal to his Fury when jumping in any direction. This effect lasts for the scene. At the Narrator's discretion, Degrees of Success may multiply this effect, allowing a character to jump two, three, or even four times his Fury in yards.

Percussive Maintenance (Fury 7) The character burns a point of Imagination and kicks, hits, rattles or otherwise abuses a malfunctioning (but whole) piece of machinery. He then rolls Imagination+Fury+Mental Die. When he has finished attacking the device, it functions at peak efficiency for the character's Fury in minutes. Note that this power requires that the machinery be whole. A car without an engine will not start, no matter how hard the character hits it, and a computer that isn't plugged in will never work.

The level of damage that the character is attempting to "repair" determines the Target Number for this Pathos. If a character fails at his first use of this Pathos, he may attempt to use it again. At the Narrator's discretion, Degrees of Success might allow a device to function optimally for a number of hours, days or even weeks equal to the character's Fury.

<u>Target Number</u>	<u>Level of Damage</u>
7	Functional but breaking down. (Examples: rattling engine, crashing computer, dying battery, creaking door.)
11	Recently deceased. (Examples: car that died on the side of the road computer that just had its final crash, recently dead battery)
15	Broken. (Examples: broken-down car with a cracked engine block, computer with a damaged hard drive).
19	Junk. (Examples: abandoned car with no fully functional parts, computer or batteries from a junkyard, door that has completely rusted shut.)

Samson's Blow (Fury 7) The character burns out a point of Imagination, touches an object (or a person) with his hand or foot and rolls Imagination+Fury+Mental Die. The resultant total is applied directly as Trauma to the target. If the target is a person, the character must first overcome the target's Natural Defense with a standard strike (using the standard roll). The character needn't make a violent strike, he can simply touch the object lightly to do this damage to it. Attempting a violent strike does not add to the damage.

This strike is considered a part of the activation of this Pathos; a character needn't burn a point of Agility or add the Target Numbers in order to take multiple actions in order to use this Pathos. The character must declare the activation of this power before he makes the strike, however. Samson's Blow must be used with intent; it can't be added as an afterthought to a normal strike.

If the target is a person or animal and the target is able to absorb or avoid the blow (that is, if the character fails to overcome the character's Natural Defense), the damage discharges harmlessly. If the target is not capable of avoiding the blow or is an inanimate object, the character's foot, fist, or hand delivers a massive amount of additional concussive force; in some cases enough to shatter walls or blast doors from their hinges.

Distant Blow (Fury 8) The character burns out a point of Imagination and glares at someone or something within uninterrupted line of sight. The character first rolls Imagination+Fury+Mental Die if the target is a living creature. If the character wins, he applies his total on that roll (*not* the total over his opponent's roll) directly as Trauma to the Target. This Pathos can be truly spectacular to watch. Objects affected with this

"Like an unchecked cancer, hate corrodes the personality and eats away its vital unity. Hate destroys a man's sense of values and his objectivity. It causes him to describe the beautiful as ugly and the ugly as beautiful, and confuses the truth with the false and the false with the true."
-Martin Luther King Jr.

Pathos often seem to explode, and even the sturdiest walls buckle under the character's assault. Few victims survive an assault with this Pathos.

Fly (Fury 8) The character burns out a point of Imagination and makes an Imagination+Fury+Mental Die roll. If the roll is successful, for the duration of the scene, the character is able to fly. He is able to move at something like his normal walking and running speed, except that Imagination is used in place of both Agility and Resilience for purposes of determining speed and duration of a character's possible run. Factors that apply specifically to running or mundane forms of transit do *not* affect movement by means of this Pathos. The character can hover, swoop and move freely in all directions. Short of being affected by Apsi or similar powers, the character will not crash or injure himself. When the Pathos expires, the character floats gently to the ground.

Telekinesis (Fury 9) The character burns out a point of Imagination and rolls Imagination+ Fury+Mental Die against a Target Number of 15. If the roll is successful, the character may, for a number of sequential rounds equal to his Intensity, move any object that weighs up to fifty times his Intensity in pounds to anywhere within his visual range. The object that the character moves *does* travel through intervening space, but can do so

quickly enough that transit time doesn't matter. The character may "put down" an object and "pick up" another during activation of this power, though he can only move one object per round, and the amount of time he can use the power is limited *in toto*, not per object, thus a character with Intensity nine can't throw around a crate for seven rounds, then pick up a log and levitate it for another nine rounds. He would only be able to move the log for two rounds in this case. The character must make an Imagination+Fury+Mental Die roll against a targeted character's Natural Defense to attack him. The character receives no weapon bonus, regardless of the object he is using, and whether the attack does Burnout or Trauma depends entirely on the object used—the type of damage is ultimately the Narrator's decision.

Shapeshift (Fury 9) The character burns out a point of Imagination and rolls Imagination+ Fury+Mental Die against a Target Number of 15. If the roll is successful, the character shifts into an animal, determined at the time of purchase of this power. This power can be purchased multiple times for different creatures. The character is able to stay in this form theoretically indefinitely, but is unable to use any Pathos requiring capabilities the animal doesn't have (speech, hands, sex appeal). The animal is normal in all ways except its intellectual capacity; indistinguishable from a normal specimen except by Noumenal means.

The specific Qualities and abilities of the animal are entirely at the Narrator's discretion, keeping in mind the natural capabilities of the animal in question.

Ground Zero (Fury 10) The character spends an Emotion point or burns out a point of Imagination. He then makes a contested Imagination+Fury+Mental Die roll against all individuals within the character's Fury in yards. If the character is successful, every person that lost the roll with the character and every item within the character's Fury in yards takes an amount of Trauma equal to the character's Fury. The character cannot choose who or what is affected by this Pathos. A roaring wave of force rushes out from him, blasting everything unfortunate enough to be near at hand. After using this Pathos, the character is unable to use any other Pathos for the remainder of the scene.

Yearning

Allure (Yearning 1) The character has a nearly perfect understanding of what his victims want to hear. By burning a point of Imagination he can add his Yearning to all social interactions relating to charming, seducing, and manipulating people. He is a virtuoso at playing his targets' greed, lust and corruption.

*"The best lack all conviction,
while the worst are full of
passionate intensity."
-William Butler Yeats*

Avarice (Yearning 1) The character has an increased sense of value in all items. He can

precisely assess the monetary worth of material goods simply by burning out a point of Imagination and rolling Perception+Yearning+Mental Die with a Target Number of seven. The character is able to sift valuable antiques from the dross of garage sales, rare albums from used bins, and golden investments in a sea of scams. Careful use of this Pathos can allow a character to quickly gather needed capital or identify counterfeit bills, shortchanged drug deals and social climbers wearing inauthentic name-brand clothing.

Bribery (Yearning 1) Everyone has their price, and with this Pathos, the character can know what that price is. By burning out a point of Imagination, and successfully rolling his Perception+Yearning+Mental Die against his target's SES+Yearning+Mental Die, the character gets an idea of his target's secret vices: drugs, money, underage prostitutes or power. The character must interact with his target for at least a few minutes to feel him out before using this Pathos.

Cry for Attention (Yearning 1) The character burns out a point of Imagination and shouts or otherwise makes himself conspicuous in order to make everyone within earshot listen to what he has to say. No roll is necessary, but the character has no persuasive power attached to his words; if anything, his audience may resent him for interrupting their meal, conversation, or mugging. This is, however, an excellent way of seizing the attention of even the most jaded, disinterested crowd. In combat, this a dangerous, but effective, means of distracting the enemy.

Socialize (Yearning 1) The character has developed a very shrewd understanding of the differences between classes. He is able to add his rating in Yearning to any roll used to discover social climbers trying to rise above their station, and additionally may use his Yearning in place of his SES when engaging in a contested roll that would normally use SES. He need not Burnout an Imagination point to use this Pathos—this understanding has become fundamental to his nature.

Caveat Emptor (Yearning 2) Occasionally a character finds himself needing to convince someone to take a course of action that his target seems inclined, but reluctant to take. The character may burn a point of Imagination and roll his Yearning+Imagination+Mental Die to bring a character to their way of thinking. The target must already be inclined to take the course of action; the target's reluctance determines the Target Number as follows:

<u>Target Number</u>	<u>Reluctance</u>
8	Generally inclined, but unsure. (Examples: the character is trying to get the target's phone number at a bar or get an investor's support.)
11	Reluctant. (Examples: the character is trying to get the target to give him confidential information in exchange for money, is attempting to borrow a significant amount of cash, or is attempting to get a salesman to give him an item at cost.)
15	Inclined Against. (Examples: the character is trying to get confidential information but is offering no substantial reward, is trying to get the target to participate in a blatantly illegal scheme, is trying to get a salesman to sell him an item below cost.)

Creative Genius (Yearning 2) When creating or attempting to sell a product or work of art, the character may Burnout a point of Imagination and roll Imagination+Yearning+Mental Die to infuse it with his own Yearning. Like calls to like, and this raw need draws the possessive impulse of other characters. Anyone seeing the product or artwork must defeat the character's initial Pathos roll or be so enamored of the affected item that he will pay any reasonable price to own it. At the Narrator's discretion, Degrees of Success may create increasingly desperate need. Note that the character using this Pathos is not aware of the effects of the power once he has released it. He has done

"The unknown is a place I'd rather not go because inside I find precisely what I don't want. Therein lies my faults, my mistakes, and the portrait of my failings. I can only hope no one lays eyes upon it but me."
 -Mark Adair

his job—it's up to the greed and status-consciousness of his “customers” to do the rest. This Pathos is only active for its first purchase or acquisition and only for the single item on which it is used. After the initial acquisition, the character who gained the item may find himself wondering why he willingly paid for it. A wise character using this Pathos is careful to note that all sales are final.

Glimmer (Yearning 2) When the character wishes to draw a target's attention away from himself, he may burn one point of Imagination and make a contested Yearning+Imagination+Mental Die roll. With any success the target is distracted for the turn by sudden movement or light that flickers at the edge of his vision. For each Degree of Success the target will be affected by this distraction for an additional turn, barring an attack or circumstance to which the target could normally react.

Social Chameleon (Yearning 2) By burning out a point of Imagination, the character is able to seamlessly blend in with any group that he chooses to. Note that he must be appropriately dressed and comport himself in a manner consistent with the expectations of those around him, but he is immune to the gaffes and faux pas that normally accompany the kind of shameless deception in which the character engages himself. Anyone attempting to see through the character's ruse must roll Perception+Yearning+Mental Die against the character's Imagination+Yearning+Mental Die in order to catch on to the game the character is playing. With that being said, this Pathos allows a character to blend in well enough that it's highly unlikely that anyone will become suspicious enough to look closer without the use of Second Sight or an equivalent unmasking Pathos.

Touch of Oil (Yearning 2) After burning out a point of Imagination, and successfully rolling Imagination+Yearning+Mental Die with a Target Number of eight, the character is able to add his Yearning to any roll attempting to circumvent mechanical security measures through purely mundane means. A character must, for example, have appropriate tools to pick a lock, but he has supernatural facility with those tools.

Carpe Diem (Yearning 3) By burning a point of Imagination and rolling Yearning+Imagination+Mental Die, a character can attempt to blind another character to the hazardous outcomes of a suggested course of action. The potential damage of the suggestion determines the Target Number.

<u>Target Number</u>	<u>Damage/Suggestion</u>
7	Potential for minor inconvenience. ("Can I get in line in front of you?")
10	Potential for embarrassment. ("Excuse me, sir, would you mind holding my purse? Can you wear these shoes, too?")
14	Potential for professional harm. ("Why don't you just let me in to see your boss?")
18	Potential for massive professional or small personal harm. ("No, really, I'm not supposed to be in this cell; please let me out." "He's not that big, and he just called you a jerk. You should punch him.")
22	Potential for severe physical harm/suggestion of a crime. ("Why don't you rob that bank?" "The street isn't that busy; why don't you go run out and grab that cone?")

Note that the victim of this power will still not take the course of action unless he would already be inclined to do so; a quiet accountant is unlikely to go rob a jewelry store just because he forgot the consequences, and few people are willing to take *any* extensive action to help a complete stranger unless the stranger in question makes it worth his time,

*"Can anyone remember love?
It's like trying to summon up
the smell of roses in a cellar.
You might see a rose, but never
the perfume."
-Arthur Miller*

one way or another.

This power only works on a single, explicit course of action and can only be used on one person at a time. The target also only overlooks the consequences for a number of hours equal to the character's Yearning. At the end of that time the character will realize that he's been fooled and may attempt to go after the character.

Craftsman (Yearning 3) The character burns out a point of Imagination and makes an Imagination+ Yearning+ Mental Die roll against a Target Number of nine. If the roll is successful, the character is able to add his Yearning as a bonus to all rolls to build, create or repair an item or work of art for the rest of the scene. Degrees of Success may, at the Narrator's discretion, allow for even greater bonuses to this roll: two points of additional bonus per Degree of Success.

Fad (Yearning 3) When creating or attempting to sell a product or work of art, the character may Burnout a point of Imagination and roll Imagination+Yearning+ Mental Die to infuse it with his own Yearning as in Creative Genius. Anyone seeing the product or artwork must defeat the character's initial Pathos roll or become so enamored of the affected item that he will pay any reasonable price to own it. At the Narrator's discretion, degrees of success may create increasingly desperate need. Note that the character using this Pathos is not aware of the effects of the power once he has released it. He has done his job—it's up to the greed and status-consciousness of his "customers" to do the rest.

Unlike with Creative Genius, items affected with Fad retain their attractive quality indefinitely, and any item functionally identical to the affected item has a similar effect on potential consumers. With the use of this Pathos, something as common as a pair of shoes may become worth killing over.

Gratuity (Yearning 3) By spending a point of Imagination and verbally suggesting it, a character is able to make his victim misunderstand quantities or numbers. This can affect the target's understanding of weights, measures, monetary amounts, or even arithmetic. The character rolls Yearning+Retention+Mental Die and states the altered number he wishes his target to perceive in a conversational or observational tone: reading off a total due, counting out loud, or summarizing a transaction. After the affected character acts in accordance with his understanding of the total, he will forget the precise number he understood, possibly not ever becoming aware of the deception. This is a subtle, but useful, power.

"Dream lofty dreams, and as you dream, so you shall become. Your vision is the promise of what you shall one day be; your ideal is the prophecy of what you shall at last unveil."
-James Allen

<u>Target Number</u>	<u>Increase</u>
7	Up/Down by 10%
11	Up/Down by 25%
15	Up/Down by 40%
19	Up/Down by 50%

Huckster's Sense (Yearning 3) The character is able to identify the emotions (and Passions) of those around him. If the character succeeds in a Perception+ Yearning+Mental Die roll with a Target Number of nine, the character is able to know precisely what Passions a character has, if any. At the Narrator's discretion, Degrees of Success may enable the character to determine what ratings a character has in his Passions, and even particular Pathos. The character doesn't receive this information in any easily identifiable way—it's simply a hunch. An accurate hunch, but a hunch nonetheless.

Only Knocks Once (Yearning 4) The character first determines what situation he wants or needs to create. This can be as vague as "I need money" or as specific as "I need transportation to Miami." A character cannot say that he needs a foreign sports car or a winning lottery ticket—that kind of demand is simply out of the scope of this power. After determining the situation that he needs to create, the character burns a point of Imagination and rolls Yearning+Perception+Mental Die. The result of the roll determines

how effective the Pathos is, as follows:

<u>Degree of Success</u>	<u>Example Effects</u>
Success	Someone just happens to be driving the character's way and offers the character a ride, the character finds five bucks on the sidewalk, the character is perfectly qualified for a promotion that happens to pop up.
1 Degree	The character wins a bus ticket to where he needs to be, finds 20 bucks in a pair of pants or folded into a book, or the character discovers that he's so impressed the boss that he's created a position for the character.
2 Degrees	The character wins 50-100 dollars in a small-stakes lottery, poker game, or from Bingo, wins a free plane ticket to where they need to be, or he gets a sudden, massive promotion.
3 Degrees	The character suddenly comes into 1,000 dollars, wins a dozen flight vouchers, or is promoted to absolute sinecure.

*"People only see what they are prepared to see."
-Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Note that the effects of this Pathos may take a week or two to take effect, and the benefits are by nature temporary. Even with a promotion, the improvement is short-term before the character's pay and authority is reduced, or the character is so overwhelmed by the workload that he has to step down.

Persuade (Yearning 4) At the cost of one point of Imagination, the character can make a highly persuasive argument to a small group of three or more people in his presence. He makes an Yearning+Imagination+Mental Die roll with a Target Number equal to the combined Yearning+Imagination of all the people he's attempting to convince. If he succeeds, the group is convinced of anything from accepting a product in a corporate boardroom to engaging in peaceful protest. Note that this power only works on groups of people, not individuals, as the power appeals to the combined interest of the group. Also note that this power appeals to their *interests*, thus blatantly unprofitable propositions ("You should give me all of your money now.") or violent actions are out of the question unless the targets were already inclined to such action (a televangelist's audience or a rioting mob, for example).

Potence (Yearning 4) The character spends a point of Imagination and rolls Yearning+Imagination+Mental Die against a target's Yearning+Resilience+Physical Die. The character activates this Pathos when he witnesses someone using a substance (knowingly or unknowingly) that has some physiological or psychological effect on the character using it. If the character using this Pathos is successful, the target then becomes addicted to the substance for a day, willing to go to truly frightening extremes to get his fix. Each Degree of Success extends the duration of this addiction. The target takes a penalty equal to the character's Imagination to any action in the presence of the substance to which he is addicted that does not directly contribute to him being able to consume that substance.

<u>Degree of Success</u>	<u>Duration</u>
1 Degree	Additional day.
2 Degrees	A week.
3 Degrees	A month.

Purify (Yearning 4) The character burns a point of Imagination in order to suppress an addiction or compulsion in himself or another (whom he must be touching) for one hour. This Pathos allows a character to temporarily overcome Pathos such as Fad and Potence, as well as to temporarily ignore certain Consequences. If this Pathos is used to nullify or circumvent an existing Pathos, the character using Purify rolls

Imagination+Yearning+Mental Die against the initial activation roll of the Pathos being nullified. Degrees of Success may, at the Narrator's discretion, allow the character to ignore his addiction or compulsion for longer periods of time, or even overcome them completely. Note that Consequences *cannot* be permanently overcome by means of this Pathos, no matter how many Degrees of Success a character accumulates.

Tagging (Yearning 4) The character burns out a point of Imagination and touches an object, making an Imagination+Yearning+Mental Die roll with a Target Number of ten. If the character succeeds, he has an instinctive understanding of the direction in which the object lies for a number of subsequent days equal to his Yearning. This power is not affected by range, however, if the object is destroyed, the character immediately knows. Note that this does not tell the character the location of the object he has tagged, merely its direction from him.

Bloodhound (Yearning 5) The character burns out a point of Imagination while searching a room or small building. For the remainder of the scene, the character is able to make a Perception+Observation+Mental Die roll with his Yearning applied as a bonus. If the roll is successful, the character finds anything in the room that has been hidden. The Narrator rolls secretly for the character, basing the Target Number of the roll on the relative difficulty of finding any particular object, crevice, passage, trap, surveillance tool or security device. (A hollow panel in a wall would have a Target Number of 10, for example, whereas a wiretap hidden in a false-bottomed safe inside a hollow panel would have a Target Number of 15. Degrees of success may give the character further information about hidden objects or locations, such as how they're powered, what they do, how they're triggered, and possibly even where they come from.

Fugue (Yearning 5) The character begins speaking sonorously to his target and engages in a contested Imagination+Yearning+Mental Die roll with him. If the Liminal using this Pathos is successful, the target is temporarily forced into a state of high suggestibility for a round. The target's connection with his memories is entirely severed—he will have no idea who or where he is, and will be unable to use any Skill that is not entirely dependent on muscle memory (over learned behavior like driving may, at the Narrator's discretion, be retained). The target is not panicked by this sudden loss of identity, but instead finds himself in a state of dreamy, bovine lassitude. He will obey any instructions that anyone gives him for the round that do not directly endanger his physical well-being, though his ability to perform is severely limited by his nearly-catatonic state. Degrees of Success will extend the duration of this effect.

<u>Degrees of Success</u>	<u>Time</u>
1 Degree	Additional round.
2 Degrees	Five minutes.
3 Degrees	One hour.

Identification (Yearning 5) The character burns a point of Imagination and rolls Yearning+Imagination+Mental Die to change a piece of identification. The Target Number for this roll is based on the type of identification the character is attempting to imitate. The card will immediately appear to take on the changes the character wishes, from showing a character's security clearance in a government installation to showing an altered name or out of state driver's license. This Pathos operates for a scene. Suspicious individuals may roll Perception+ Yearning+ Mental Die against the Liminal's initial activation roll in order to see past the thin veil of misperception covering the identification.

Note that this Pathos does not actually physically *alter* the identification, merely how people perceive it. Purely mechanical means of checking the identification (magnetic strips, security codes, etc.) will *not* be fooled by this Pathos. Similarly, any copies made of the identification will initially reveal the information the character wishes to convey, but will later revert to its true appearance. Wise Liminals use someone else's identification for this Pathos for precisely that reason.

*"Come Fairies, take me out of
this dull world, for I would ride
with you upon the wind and
dance upon the mountains like
a flame."
-William Butler Yeats*

<u>Target Number</u>	<u>Type of Change/Identification to Be Imitated</u>
11	Simple Change (change of name, information, home state).
13	Change in type (driver's license to military ID or movie rental card to driver's license).
15	Security Change (Armored car driver ID, corporate employee badge).
17	Severe Security Change (Police badge, Bar Association membership).
21+	Top Secret Clearance.

Lie (Yearning 5) The character burns out a point of Imagination and makes an Imagination+Yearning+Mental Die roll, opposed by his target's Perception+Yearning+Mental Die roll. He then makes a statement, such as "I'm really the President of the Dominican Republic, traveling in disguise." If the lying character wins the roll, he shores up the apparent veracity of his statement with raw Passion, making it irresistibly believable. Note that obviously false statements such as "I'm invisible," will be disbelieved; this Pathos isn't that powerful. However, a statement such as "I'm usually invisible, but on the full moon I can be seen," will be believed, as long as the explanation seems to account for all factors. Ultimately, the line between merely implausible and manifestly untrue is up to the Narrator.

Territory (Yearning 5) When a character with this Pathos wants an additional degree of security for objects or places he considers "his" (the actual legal ownership of the location or item is irrelevant) he may designate an area (whose radius may not to exceed his Yearning in yards) by delineating its boundaries in some way (a chalk outline, tape, or thread for example). The character then rolls Imagination+ Yearning+ Mental Die against a Target Number of 11. If the roll is successful, whenever someone (or something) enters the character's territory, he instantly knows that he has been invaded. The effects of this Pathos do not wear off unless the character deliberately renounces his hold on an area (or his Yearning rating decreases, for whatever reason). The character may have as many of these "territories" as he has points in Yearning, however, the character is unable to determine which of his territories have been invaded without direct investigation—his mental alarm does *not* inform him. Degrees of Success double the area that can be affected by this Pathos.

Sadistic Need (Yearning 6) The character burns out a point of Imagination and engages in a contested Imagination+Yearning+Mental Die roll with a target he is physically touching. If the character succeeds, he pushes his own Yearning into the target, doing an amount of (invisible) damage equal to his Yearning score for a single round. This sudden influx of unadulterated *wanting* is so intense as to approach and even, by some accounts, exceed physical pain. At the end of that round, all damage assessed by means of this Pathos heals. At no point does the target appear to be actually *injured*, he merely behaves as though he is. Though a character may lose consciousness by means of this Pathos, he will never die or be permanently injured. This is a brutally effective form of torture, as a person can undergo a nearly infinite amount of these "treatments" without physical ill effect. At the Narrator's discretion, use of this Pathos may give a character a bonus equal to his Yearning on Intimidation or Interrogation rolls against a victim. Degrees of Success increase the amount of time that the "damage" from this Pathos remains.

<u>Degrees of Success</u>	<u>Duration</u>
1 Degree	Full day.
2 Degrees	Two days.
3 Degrees	One week.

Skeleton Key (Yearning 6) By spending a point of Imagination, the character is able to turn any standard (non-electronic) key into a precise fit for a certain lock. Note that this only works for that particular lock; using the key on other locks requires additional uses of the Pathos. However, once a key has been "imprinted" with the pattern for a certain

"I hope our wisdom will grow with our power, and teach us that the less we use our power the greater it will be."
-Thomas Jefferson

lock, it will always hold the ability to open that particular lock. Frequent use of this power on a single key can render it able to open a staggering number of doors, safe-deposit boxes, and trunks. This Pathos can also be used to create a key that will start a car, but the door and the ignition count as two separate uses, even if the car uses only one key for both.

9/10ths (Yearning 7) The character burns a point of Imagination and makes a contested Yearning+Retention+Mental Die roll. If the roll succeeds, the character is able to convince his target to give him a single item, whether it be a house, car, or gun. If asked, the target will remember willingly giving up the item; the character's possession of the item is perfectly legal, if a little odd-looking. The target will, at his earliest ability, sign over any property and go through the proper paperwork if prompted (and necessary).

If the target succeeds in a reflexive contested Perception+ Yearning+ Mental Die roll, he will feel something strange about the transaction, and may Burnout a point of Retention to break free of the suggestion, refusing to sign over the item in question. The character may, of course, try to convince the target again, but it is still subject to the same roll. Obviously, this Pathos is only safe to use on those without any Yearning (or those without any Perception—ideally, both).

Note that after giving up ownership of an item, many people will feel that the character is obligated to them, and may go out of their way to remind the character of the obligation.

Sour Grapes (Yearning 7) The character spends a point of Imagination and consoles the target. With a successful contested Yearning+Imagination+Mental Die roll, he manages to strip his target of any desire the user of this Pathos wishes. The desensitization will last one day, longer with Degrees of Success. A character may only be desensitized to one thing at a time, and cannot be subject to this Pathos again while still under the influence of another use. This power is ineffective against Consequences, and any attempt to override the effects of the Pathos must beat the initial Pathos activation roll. Also note that while this power can strip a person of any desire, they may still *need* to engage in the activity. Thus, while a character may no longer feel hungry, he may still eat (with great disgust) because failure to do so is actively dangerous. This is most useful when used on heat-of-the-moment desires, such as an insulted biker's need to pound a character into the pavement. Degrees of Success increase the amount of time that the character loses the urge. If the desire would have naturally expired in the intervening time, the wish disappears entirely.

<u>Degree of Success</u>	<u>Duration</u>
1 Degree	Additional day.
2 Degrees	A week.
3 Degrees	A month.

Ride Sympathy (Yearning 8): After stepping into a puddle, mirror, television, shadow, closet or other suitable area/device, the character burns out a point of Imagination and rolls Yearning+Imagination+Mental Die against a Target Number of 14. If the character succeeds in the roll, he is able to travel a number of miles equal to his Yearning through a means he must choose upon purchase of the Pathos, stepping out of a similar area or device at the other end. This Pathos can be purchased additional times for multiple means of transit. Additional Degrees of Success increases the possible distance traveled by a factor of ten (one Degree of Success equals Passion times ten miles, two Degrees of Success equals Passion times one hundred miles, three Degrees of Success equals Passion times one thousand miles.). Failure results in the character failing to step through the device or area. Degrees of Failure may result in the character arriving in the wrong location, with greater Degrees of Failure resulting in increasingly embarrassing or dangerous arrival locations.

If the character has the proper full name of the individual or location to which he wishes to travel, he receives a two-point bonus to his roll. If he has a picture, likeness, social

"One often hears of a horse that shivers with terror, or of a dog that howls at something a man's eyes cannot see, and men who live primitive lives where instinct does the work of reason and are fully conscious of many things that we cannot perceive at all. As life becomes more orderly, more deliberate, the supernatural world sinks father away."
-William Butler Yeats

security number or handwriting sample he receives a four-point bonus to his die roll. If he has a physical sample of the individual or location to which he wishes to travel (paving stone, blood, tears, hair clippings), he receives a six-point bonus to the roll.

The trip is itself supernaturally fast, lasting less than a minute as the character is pulled by the force of his intention to his goal. The character will arrive at his destination in twelve turns minus his Yearning rating. The character of the trip is determined by the means by which the character travels. Mirrors are a funhouse tour of warped images and inverted light; while zipping through televisions, the character is confronted with jeering celebrities and overwhelming vistas of prime-time-news destruction. The Narrator is encouraged to make the journey as traumatic as possible.

The character can carry up to 100 pounds times his Intensity with him when he uses this Pathos; this extra weight can consist of equipment or living matter.

Whispers (Yearning 8) The character spends a point of Imagination and whispers the suggestion of a course of action into the ear of his target. The suggestion must be whispered, it cannot be spoken at a conversational level or shouted. This suggestion can be as innocuous as "Wouldn't a cheeseburger be great right now?" or as dangerous as "Why don't you go snort coke until you pass out?" With a contested Yearning+Imagination+Mental Die roll the victim will be suddenly overtaken by this compulsion. The character is speaking directly to the urges of the victim without intermediary conscience or intellect standing in the way. Degrees of Success will extend how long and to what extremes the victim is willing to go to fulfill his artificial desire. The intention must be whispered before the roll; failure with this Pathos makes a character look foolish at best.

Degree of Success

Limitations

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Within moral regards of the character; the effect lasts for the scene. |
| 2 | The character will act in any way that doesn't endanger him; the effect lasts for an hour. |
| 3 | No act is too extreme; the effect lasts for a day unless the desire is fulfilled. |

Deal (Yearning 9) The character extracts an agreement from another individual, touches that character, and burns out any amount of Imagination that he chooses. If the person who made the agreement fails to fulfill the letter of the agreement in any way, that person makes all rolls with a penalty equal to the amount of Imagination the character using Deal burned out at the time of the agreement. Misfortune follows the penalized character as all the forces of random chance and personal disaster align against him; car accidents, power outages, random lawsuits and nosy neighbors plague him. This penalty lasts until the character who welched on the deal fulfills his obligations (in many cases, an impossible task) or a number of years pass equal to the Intensity of the character using Deal. If the character using Deal fails to set time limitations on the agreement, ("You hereby agree to kill Stephen Viet.") the character is able to avoid any negative repercussions by simply procrastinating. Many Liminal individuals who use Deal write elaborate contracts, full of clauses and subclauses, preventing their "customers" from weaseling out of the agreement.

Note that the individual against whom the character uses Deal must agree of his own free will, though bribery, blackmail, and outright physical threats are commonly used as "incentive."

Trespass (Yearning 9) The character burns a point of Imagination and rolls his Yearning+ Imagination+ Mental Die against the Target Number of the building he wishes to infiltrate. If successful, he can enter the building, easily bypassing all mechanical security measures. Locks fall open at the character's touch, lasers fail to trigger when the

"Take from the church the miraculous, the supernatural, the incomprehensible, the unreasonable, the impossible, the unknowable, and the absurd, and nothing but a vacuum remains."
-Robert Green Ingersoll

character passes through them, and cameras fail to pick up anything. Motion sensors will not activate, and pressure plates will not register his passage.

Degrees of Success may, at the Narrator's discretion, enable to character to flawlessly find his way through even the most unfamiliar building. Only a character with Intensity may see the character while he is using Trespass—other individuals will simply fail to register his presence, even if the observing Liminal draws attention to the Pathos-using character.

This Pathos automatically stops when and if the character takes hostile, physical action against another individual—otherwise it lasts for a scene.

*"The supernatural is the natural not yet understood."
-Elbert Hubbard*

<u>Target Number</u>	<u>Building Security</u>
12	Small Business with one alarm.
15	Small Business with motion sensors.
18	Small Bank with a small security suite.
21	Police Station will full security system.
23	Bank, complex or well-protected manor.

Made of Stars (Yearning 10) The character burns out a point of Imagination and touches a willing target. The character then rolls Imagination+Yearning+Mental Die against a Target Number determined by the degree to which the character wishes to change his target. If he is successful, he is able to move the specified number of points among Qualities as the character using the Pathos wishes. If the character is attempting to move two points of Qualities and succeeds, he may take one point out of Resilience and put it in SES and another point out of Imagination and put it in Retention. Or the character may take two points from Resilience and place both in SES. Characters may also choose to move any Factor, worth any number of points, provided all the points are either removed from or added to Factors in a single Quality. Negative and Positive Factors can both be moved in this way, though Negative Factors demand that another Negative Factor take their place, and Positive Factors require the same. Negative and Positive Factor Points may cancel each other out using this Pathos, however. In the end, though, all Factors changed must relate in some way to a single Quality.

In any event, while this Pathos can create massive, life-altering changes, the change has to come from somewhere—the wealth, talent or health granted by this Pathos isn't created *ex nihilo*. The changes the character creates are instantaneous and inexplicable. Bank accounts simply develop a few extra zeros, a character's eyes become sharper, or his whole body responds in ways it never has before.

If the character attempts to use this Pathos on an unwilling target, the character must still touch his victim and win an opposed Imagination+Yearning+Mental Die roll. The character is generally only able to move one point in Qualities or a single Factor when using this Pathos on an unwilling target, though, at the Narrator's discretion, this Pathos may be effective for a number of additional points or Factors equal to the character's Degrees of Success.

This Pathos may only be used successfully once every 28 days on a single target.

<u>Target Number</u>	<u>Change</u>
16	Movement of one Quality point/one Factor.
19	Movement of two Quality points/two Factors.
22	Movement of three Quality points/three Factors.
24	Movement of four Quality points/four Factors.

Chapter VI: St Augustine

The Lovely, Deadly Land of Florida

Sometimes I can't hear myself think over the waves, but after I stopped hurting I felt power in them. Sometimes the people by the ocean can hear me, and they run away. I think I'll be able to go home soon if only they keep coming here. So I'm quiet now, I'm quiet and I let the fishers come here to catch many fish. But sometimes I have to let them know I'm here. I have to make them remember me. And that's when I tell them to speak to me. To tell me stories. I tell them to speak up so I can hear them over the waves.

Over the course of its long life, the city has been attacked by Sir Francis Drake, looted by other pirates, burned, once on purpose and a few times by accident, and endured nearly every other disaster a city can possibly survive. Whether through stubbornness or faith in the future, St. Augustine still stands, if not strong, then at least determined.

St. Augustine has an astonishingly low crime rate; especially considering the fact that official census count of 12,000 people does not include any Liminal who has any degree of Fade. Given the fact that the Faded are more likely than anyone else to be behind unexplained murder, vandalism, and theft, this low crime rate is even more impressive. Of course, the low crime rate, for its part, doesn't include any Liminal-on-Liminal violence—there's no record or evidence in most cases to make a case.

A significant part of this low crime rate is directly due to the police. They aren't particularly skilled or driven. They are, however, extraordinarily well funded. As a tourist town almost totally dependent on people having fun when they come in, the appearance of safety is a high civic priority. The police are also extraordinarily *bored*. Anything that even begins to smack of suspicious activity is going to have the authorities on it in a heartbeat. They're able to call equally fast, equally bored and equally well funded, too. Characters may have access to Pathos and Noumenal pockets, but the police have access to guns, armor, cars, handcuffs and SWAT teams. As a general rule, police should have a total of eight plus d6 to roll in any combat-related situation, an initiative modifier of eight, and a Natural Defense of eight. For the sake of simplicity, whenever a police officer (or any NPC whose precise Qualities are inconsequential) burns out or takes Trauma, subtract the Trauma or Burnout from all applicable numbers. Practically, this means that an NPC like this has a single Quality with a rating of eight and no Skills.

Anastasia Park

Events

Anastasia Island has been host to many bitter engagements. In 1837 two prominent Seminole leaders, Osceola and Coacoochee, were captured when they came under a white flag, along with seventy unarmed warriors. The Seminoles were quickly seized and imprisoned at the Castillo de San Marcos, at that time called Fort Marion, for several weeks. Over time, they became emaciated due to the poor living conditions. Feigning sickness, Coacoochee and Hadjo, another imprisoned chief, along with a small band of warriors survived on medicinal roots and nothing else. Eventually they became small enough to fit out of the slot-like window of the Castillo prison and drop into the moat below to escape from the "inescapable fort".

Unfortunately for the Seminole, Coacoochee was captured again in 1942. His recapture marked the end of the Second Seminole war; he and most of the Seminole nation were forced to move west past the Mississippi. Several other tribes in the area were even more unfortunate, facing disease, forced labor, and a quiet end as they Faded out.

Small Pox infected one such tribe in spring. Just as the tribe began to gain strength, winter settled in and destroyed their ability to resist. About of loggers methodically finished all those who they believed managed to survive, then looted the bodies before the tribe Faded out fully. Several members of the tribe survived the onslaught, consumed by their Passion.

Many, now-Liminal, tribes began to gather in Anastasia Park, bound to the island, consumed by their Fury at what was done to them and the Anguish of losing everything. Establishing themselves among the other tribes, an uneasy truce was brokered. The survivors couldn't afford internecine conflict—St. Augustine and its occupants made a much more immediate threat.

Recently, the largest and most powerful tribe among the inhabitants pulled together all of its members and vanished. Without a faction clearly able to step up and fill the position, the truce among tribes has become shaky at best. Each group seems to be turning toward watching their own territory and scraping up the Emotion of prey that happens to come through. With the disappearance of the tribe a few other things have become noticeable in Anastasia Park.

The night the tribe disappeared, throughout the Park, pools of rich Emotion, without apparent source, sprang up, irregularly dotting the landscape. With no discernible pattern, and the precious sources of energy appearing to be very limited in nature, some tribes have altered their territories to absorb nearby pockets. Areas previously uncontested are now hotbeds for powerful Liminals who roam the park where prey has already become an issue. Some groups have sworn off hunting prey in the traditional sense, raiding these pockets exclusively. The origin and effects of these energies have yet to be determined, making several of the conservative very skittish about them. Some tribes have set up defenses around them, determined to study or save them for emergencies.

Location

Anastasia Island is a massive break of land that houses a portion of St. Augustine itself, including the 1,700 acre national park. The island, accessible by several bridges, is a prime location for tours, weekend visits, or scheduled events. Anastasia Park is open year-round from 8am to sundown, and is popular enough to require that campers reserve a site up to a year in advance during the busy summer months. The park features two hundred parking spots, one hundred thirty-nine campsites, miles of trails accessible by beach or forest, and marked off-road areas away from other scenic and wildlife-sensitive

*“There’s nothing no one can do
in Anastasia but die – and me
and mine aren’t dying for it.”
-Swamp Cat*

locations.

The park maintains four miles of sandy white beaches and dunes, closed to vehicle access, which are often used for many events by active citizens. Many events, fundraisers, and wildlife enthusiasts flock to the park grounds annually, around a quarter million per year. The beach is home to nesting turtles, dune mice, and a menagerie of birds and crustaceans. Past the beachfront, low brush and grasses have gained root and given rise to dunes that taper into groves of oak, southern magnolia, and red bay trees.

Also included within Anastasia Park, there is a tidal lagoon, Salt Run. This isolated inlet serves as a prime fish hatchery, drawing in fishermen among other water enthusiasts. Many forms of sea life can be found here, sheltered from the harsher elements of the Atlantic Ocean. Visitors can bring their own equipment to windsurf, canoe, or kayak here, or rent from the local sporting goods store. The island also features an outdoor supplier for any other equipment, making this a popular family venue, along with newly constructed children's playgrounds and picnic areas at Sea Turtle Pavilion.

Blue Circle Drive

Events

Fade has taken away Robert Atwater's reputation in his neighborhood, along with his family and the belief that he could ever live a normal life. He attended the local elementary school before dropping out in fourth grade and never returning. For a while, speculation ran wild; notes were sent home, and friends paid him visits. Classmates that stopped by to check up on him went home terrified and inconsolable, attempting to color their rooms blue. This sort of behavior was hardly tolerated, and the cause of these symptoms was obvious: the Atwater's child was to blame. One parent after another barred their child from visiting Robert until none were allowed to pay him any visits. Soon after, no one came around.

For a few months, Robert Atwater became a name spoken in hushed tones away from the children. His own parents, his only remaining link to the world outside his room, were haggard and drained from taking care of their isolated child. Talking about Robert was best avoided for all parties around town, eventually making this sort of arrangement routine. His parents refused to bring up Robert's condition outside of the house, and the family fell from public view. A few years later, Robert himself disappeared from the town's mind and thereafter the world at large. No one thought twice when his parents moved out, leaving him behind in a room they ceased to realize existed.

When Bloody Mary no longer visited Robert, he finally emerged from the house a disheveled, unsocialized, and unbalanced figure. His Intensity was so high that only children who were plagued by Bloody Mary as he had been could see or understand him. Gathering those that Bloody Mary terrorized together and promising them safety, children previously abandoned by parents or the social system found a new home. Robert, for his part, found a new purpose.

Location

The Blue Circle is a once-proud suburban home in the middle of a neighborhood that has fallen to impoverishment. Little notice is paid to the cluttered yard, littered with all sorts of oddities, all blue. Anything that the children could move, drag, and secure has been fixed into the yard, forming a large circle around the perimeter, encompassing the house and a well at the rear. The brick well, the house's only source of water, has been modified with a hose and hand pump. Cluttered about the spigot are all manners of bottles and jugs that have been painted blue. No water is allowed to pool inside the house for fear that Bloody Mary may use it as a passage into the house. All reflective objects have been

*"The belief in a supernatural source of evil is not necessary: men alone are quite capable of every wickedness."
-Joseph Conrad*

stripped, covered or destroyed and removed from the premises upon Robert's command.

The house itself is two stories tall and built in the mid-seventies. Its original brown-ridged siding shows through beneath sloppy, blotched coats of blue paints and crayons. All windows have been replaced with plywood, cardboard, excess scrap, and anything they could scrounge up to secure their sanctuary.

Inside there has been an effort to transform it completely blue. The furniture, rickety chairs, handsewn cloth beanbags, mattresses and blankets, are all in patchwork blues. All residents wear one exclusive color and only feeling safe when they venture out while it is raining, believing that the devil is hurt by fresh water. Their rituals and day-to-day practices are based upon Robert's word and necessary survival.

Of the rooms inside, many have been converted to sleeping quarters for those that live there. Robert's old bedroom is now the shrine to the Blue Lady, adorned with the doll as a centerpiece. All surfaces of the room are covered in blue, even the flooring where the carpet was removed to allow direct application of markers, crayons, and paint.

An old, weatherworn crate, filled with tarnished canned goods, candles and other gifts, is collected by the children each Thursday. No one seems to know the source of these gifts, although many, including Robert, himself, attribute it to the Blue Lady's favor.

In the house there are many rules, all enforced by Robert. All water must be kept inside a sealed blue container, those who wear blue are safe from Bloody Mary, gifts to the Blue Lady must be gathered and stored in the crate out back, and perhaps the most important—no reflective objects are allowed near or in the house. Joseph was the last person to accidentally break this rule, bringing in a mirror that Robert looked into. Upon doing so Robert clutched his face, screaming in terror as the mirror shattered against the tile floor. None of the children know what he saw and no one has been able to pry an answer out of Robert, who suffered from nightmares for days after.

Robert Atwater

A scraggly youth of 18, with blotchy patches of facial hair he regularly needs to trim or shave; Robert is an exuberant caretaker. As the owner of the Blue Haven and father figure of all the wayward children that end up there, he is a tireless perfectionist and strict authoritarian. His rules in the Blue Circle are inviolable and all those who enter are made aware both of these and the consequences that come with ignoring them. One would never expect such resolute and absolute responsibility from an individual of his nature. Most often found smiling and joking with the children, he truly is a tender spirit, hardened by the necessities of survival. Every child who stays inside the Blue Circle looks up to Robert as a leader and means of day-to-day existence.

It was common practice for children to challenge the 'myth' of Bloody Mary for any number of reasons; Robert himself was no different. What was different was that Bloody Mary appeared. As the creature slid through the bathroom mirror and raked out at him, Robert fled from his bedroom across the house. With no one home, Robert was considered easy prey. As she closed in on him, he took refuge in his mother's downstairs guest room. Still haunted by the nail marks she left in his arm as he escaped her grasp, he was thankful to later realize the blue tinted room was his only salvation. Unable (or unwilling) to cross the blue threshold, Bloody Mary retreated.

Surviving Bloody Mary, Robert refused to leave the blue room that his mother had set up. Violently opposed to even the suggestion of stepping close to the door, his parents moved his bedroom downstairs, trying to relieve his terror. His parents could not understand their son any longer; he destroyed any mirror he ran across and slowly colored any spot in the room with blue crayons. Unable to afford intensive psychotherapy and unwilling to send Robert away, he was allowed to continue his practices with fewer and fewer attempts to dissuade him. Slowly transforming the entire room around the only doll his

*"Your ability to rationalize your own bad deeds makes you believe that the whole world is as amoral as you are."
-Douglas Coupland*

mother owned, a small porcelain figurine with golden locks and an immaculate blue dress, Robert created a ritual to ward off Bloody Mary. There was no doubt in his mind that it was the Blue Lady's influence within the doll that had kept him safe the entire time.

Robert eventually felt the threat of Bloody Mary fade. By this time his parents had abandoned him, his desire to survive forced him to finally leave the blue room. Finding other children who were faced with the terror he had fought off, he was able to confront his own fear. Establishing his home as a fortress against Bloody Mary, other children were invited to dwell with him. Under his ever vigilant guidance, the children of the Blue Circle band together to escape the mirror witch's tyranny. Still haunted by his run in with Bloody Mary, Robert has unknowingly grown up giving the one thing he dreads most a reliable source of food.

Description

Robert is tall and rail thin, with gaunt and haggard features from a life of worry and stress. Wearing a pair blue jeans and a blue shirt that is often too big for him, he seems out of place in most any setting. His awkwardly lying brown hair looks as if it is trimmed by one of "his" kids.

Robert Atwater, the founder of the Blue Circle group, is an 18 year old survivor of Bloody Mary. While he is too old to reliably see her, he is determined to keep up the fight. He has shackled up in an old house on a seedy, unkempt street where he runs an unofficial halfway house to help protect children who have seen Bloody Mary.

*"Don't take it on yourself.
Forget now. Live."
-Arthur Miller*

He is becoming a creature of superstition. The children are there to be protected, but he makes them perform a plethora of small rituals. Their Dread of what will happen if they don't perform these rituals is what he will inevitably feed off of.

He has an Intensity of six. Years of careful living and talking to "the Blue Lady" have allowed him to reduce his once much-higher rating, which he believes was due to a curse that Bloody Mary, the Devil or one of his minions placed on him. He thought that the only way it could be reversed was by killing the individual who "cursed" him. When the "curse" subsided on its own, it left him confused but grateful to his benefactor, whom he believes is the Blue Lady herself.

The stress from his theories is dealt with by smiling and remaining positive. He is deathly afraid of Bloody Mary - both to deal with her himself and what may happen to whomever he sends after her. Should he continue following this path then his cause is a lost one.

Robert recognizes that there are two types of magic: holy and unholy. There is a fine line between good and evil that he nervously judges. He will do irrational things to "keep the children safe." Good, helpful magic is from the Blue Lady; bad magic means the practitioner is in league with Bloody Mary.

The Blue Lady is a doll the leader received when he was younger. The two brothers gave it to him after discovering that he had been attacked by Bloody Mary. They aren't dumb - they know what she does. The boy put so much hope into the doll that it became a lucky charm of sorts. It became a goddess when he prayed for help and food was delivered. His second attack came a few months before he turned 13. When he wasn't attacked again, and rarely saw Bloody Mary thereafter, he attributed it to the doll's protective powers.

The Kids

Stacy Grzywyski, Ellen Weaver, Dakota Tanner, Joseph Stevenson and Malachi Goodman were all students at St. Augustine Southwest Elementary over the previous years. All of these students were either foster children or orphans who had taken up

residency in the St. Augustine Children's Home. Inside the halls of the underfunded establishment, nothing prevailed but the conflagration of children, toys, and the droning of the television. The children were ushered through by one social worker after another, none ever managing to reign them in for long. At the urging of Ellen, the group assembled late one night to test Malachi. With his reputation on the line, he stepped up to the top floor bathroom mirror and called out six words: Bloody Mary, Bloody Mary, Bloody Mary. Unfortunately for Malachi, she answered the call. All five children were in the room when she broke from the mirror in a bloody wailing heap, latching upon Malachi. Abandoning their companion, the others managed to escape to the hallway. Stacy, the last one to flee, paused to look back upon Malachi's fate only to catch sight of his body disappearing into the mirror.

That night, the remaining four children fled the orphanage in terror. Surviving upon their own for a few days by banding together, they were found by Robert. Immediately bringing the children into his home, he listened to their story of Bloody Mary. When they found that Robert too had seen the mirror demon, and survived, they took up residence with him as their protector and mentor. Adopting Robert's teachings, they are fiercely loyal, obeying his requests with a near militaristic fanaticism. Robert promised them that one day they would get back at Bloody Mary, and they believe him.

Flagler College

Events

Flagler College is an accredited university that has been educating students for over a quarter-century. The building started construction in 1885 and wasn't finished until 1888. The college offers 20 majors, 26 minors and two pre-professional programs. The school has emphases in liberal arts, education, and business with an average class size of 21. The tuition is relatively affordable, making it a prime educational institution. Its charm is only slightly marred by poltergeist activity, unexplained disappearances, and an unusual number of students being admitted into therapy.

The school is housed within a sprawling complex of red brick Victorian architecture that was once the impressive Ponce de Leon hotel in downtown St. Augustine. The hotel used to house rich and famous New Englanders on their winter excursions, and the structure shows it. Not even the ever-present haze of chalk dust and dry-erase marker fumes can obscure the feeling of affluence and privilege that hangs over the building.

The original name of the hotel has been relegated to the girls' dormitory, Ponce de Leon hall, where the majority of the school's supernatural activity has been witnessed. Detractors and skeptics among the student body point out that dormitories are notorious for being full of bored students looking for an opportunity to pull a prank or use the historical significance to their own ends.

One of the most popular stories among the students is that of the death of Henry Flagler's mistress. Flagler built the hotel and enjoyed vacationing there, himself. One winter while he was staying at the Ponce de Leon with his mistress, his ailing wife, Ida Alice, came to visit.

The mistress was fed and had servants to take care of her needs while Flagler kept her out of sight, persuading her to stay on the fourth floor as the solitude slowly took reign over her. She turned to heroin and spent most of her time in the "mirrored suite". One evening, she hung herself from a chandelier where her lover found her swaying during his midnight rendez-vous.

Flagler had the room boarded over, hoping to lock away the past. Not long thereafter Ida Alice became too emotionally unstable to aid him in running the Ponce de Leon. He quietly sent her to a sanatorium where she became worse and finally passed away.

*"Some are born mad. Some
remain so."
-Samuel Beckett*

In 1913, at the ripe old age of 84, Flagler fell down a flight of stairs at Whitehall. He never fully recovered from the fall and died shortly thereafter. One of his last requests was to hold the funeral at his hotel, insisting that all the doors and windows be open during it. A janitor that didn't know about the request went through the hotel and shut everything he could find. Many people believe that a gust of wind during the proceedings was Henry Flagler, trying in vain to escape in time, only to be trapped in a tile after hitting the closed windows.

Location

Flagler College is a massive, sprawling campus. Originally built with 540 rooms, the grounds have been encroached upon by parking garages and additional campus facilities. Passing through the iron gates adorned on either side with the gaping maws of marble lions, students and faculty are greeted with an impressive two-story fountain and a well-tended courtyard overlooked by the Ponce de Leon Hall.

The Ponce de Leon Hall rises to a foreboding four stories with the white red-trimmed arching terracotta designs that make all of the hotel's architecture so distinctive. The structure forms a horseshoe with the leftmost wing making up the girls' dormitory. The interior is as decadent and immaculate as the grounds themselves.

Inside the Hall the first three floors are used as dorms, the fourth floor having been marked off-limits to students. While the entire fourth floor was not barred with the death of Flagler's mistress and, in fact, housed the college's print shop and campus radio station; it has since been deemed unstable and converted to storage. The mirrored room, or Psychomantium, which was once used to alter the mind and call spirits, is still closed to residents, and is padlocked against intrusion.

It is in this hall that many have spoken of odd noises, experiences, or dreams plaguing them. Chandeliers have swung as though bearing the weight of a body, grossly that some speculate to be the mistress herself. Others have complained of nightmares involving terror-filled funhouse mirrors, strangulation, or an inescapable void that slowly consumes them.

The Outliers

Barron Johnson

Born to an impoverished family, it was not the hardships he regularly endured growing up that sparked turmoil and rage in Barron. It certainly wasn't the racism that being one of the two-percent minority of the population made him continuously encounter. While both of these factors were important to his development, they were everyday occurrences. It was hardly the day to day striving for funds his family pinched and saved up to afford him a decent living. He rectified that at an impressive age, dancing into the ranks of the technical elite and computer savvy with ease. Beating out local competition for scholarships was easy. Investing, monopolizing and even tripling his earnings was all cakewalk. What really goaded him however was the lack of recognition and, more particularly, feminine attention, he received for all of this.

It seemed that no matter where Barron turned throughout his accelerated high school, and then his early start into college, that girls were not interested in him. Senior classmates were loath to be affiliated with the obstinate, cantankerous youth who looked younger than the local freshmen. Barron's sense of pride was beyond reason; he would often raise his hand to point out erroneous information in his teacher's lectures or even their grammar. His exceeding brilliance proved to alienate him, even in college when he was again nearly three years younger than any classmates. There was no level of interaction that a typical seventeen year old could hope to achieve with Barron. Worse yet, his overbearing sense of self-worth nearly demanded that those in his presence elevate him to

*"There is a pleasure, sure, In
being mad, which none but
madmen know."
-John Dryden
Spanish Friar*

a near-deific status.

It was after hours in the computer lab when he picked up Lucy's paper on Calabi-Yau spaces and enfolded 12th dimensional phenomena. Thrusting the paper at her, he demanded she correct the grammatical mistakes he had found, rephrase the awkward sentence structure, and in short rewrite the thesis. Lucy instead invited him to coffee to discuss his points and ideas on the topic. Lucy was the first person he was truly able to relate with intellectually or that took his harsh criticism with ease. The deal only became better to Barron when he met Lucy's roommate Sarah. Soon after that they formed the Outliers, a reference to the groups' academic proficiency and obvious intelligence, under Lucy as the group President. Things were great until Sam showed up: how the girls tolerate this lax, slack-jawed grease monkey Barron still doesn't understand.

Despite his abrasive contentiousness, Barron really does think that Lucy and Sarah hung the moon. Of all of them, Barron is the most intelligent. He also funds the group's every activity, and does so uncomplainingly.

Description

Barron is self-assured the way Liberace was eccentric. Standing at five foot eight inches tall his emaciated frame barely holds on his clothes. His chosen attire, consisting of khakis, expensive clothing, polos, suit jackets, and all the flashy accessories he could muster, made him a poster child for corporate chic and success. Unfortunately, they also looked awkward and ill suited for a youth that isn't even old enough to purchase alcohol.

Sarah Neely

Sarah had two hobbies; getting high and redefining the world with arithmetic. Fortunately for her, the latter was a highly regarded skill and the former wasn't discouraged. In fact, few things were discouraged or encouraged by her father; he'd have to be sober enough to pay attention to her for either to occur. This was just fine with Sarah. She's always been a little withdrawn from normal interaction, driven instead by mathematical compulsion. Numbers had always been her friends, constant, predictable companions to whom she could relate. Numbers never seemed to betray or concern themselves with everyday life. Numbers were an absolute: right or wrong, positive or negative, real or imaginary. Even with their simplicity and her devotion to understanding them, she always felt empty; lacking. It turns out, she stumbled across the other half of what made her whole downstairs in her own house.

In addition to alcohol her father was more than willing to expand into other drugs. The basement was home to an amateur marijuana farm complete with flood lamps that hung, jury-rigged, from the ceiling. Her father was not impressed with Sarah's desire to edge into his production, let alone meager stashes. Nor were her math teachers thrilled with her venture into the world of drugs. Her friends were all "D" students, and it seemed that Sarah was destined for the same failure. However, with the insight garnered, at least in part through marijuana-fueled introspection, she was able to dramatically excel at understanding mathematics. The day-to-day squabbles of the world fell away and the problem presented itself before her, rendered and dynamic. With overnight success in academia, Sarah withdrew from her friends, diving more and more into a narrow focus of consciousness, addressing every problem and theorem she could find. The criticism fell away and her teachers turned a blind eye on their baked but brilliant *wunderkind*.

Joining Flagler was a natural progression. It was close to home, and had an award-winning mathematics department. Even there, few students could even be considered her equal. Then there was Lucy. It wasn't a surprise that the pair would become roomies at the dormitories. It was however, a surprise that Lucy seemed keenly aware of *something* that she exclaimed was not in any textbook. Sarah really didn't care particularly, but what Lucy was interested in caught her attention in one regard; her ideas went against the grain. The idea that there was *more* than they could see was interesting, something new to calculate and define; something no one had said to her before. It was this venture into the unknown that snared her focus, that blur at the edge of her senses where drugs had not yet managed to take her.

*"For those whom God to ruin
has designed He fits for fate,
and first destroys their mind."
-John Dryden
The Hind and the Panther*

Soon after, the others joined the group. Barron was nothing but slime no matter how she looked at it. He was always condescending, and he clearly expected her to capitulate to his desires. The very idea was nauseating, making Sam a welcome relief – and in some regards a kindred spirit. His introverted soft-spoken approach and quiet intensity was fascinating, or at least comforting, in contrast to Barron's advances. Lucy only held out for so long against her quiet demands to incorporate Sam into the group; she too seemed to understand the need, if only for Sarah's benefit.

Description

Sarah is the shortest of the bunch at five foot two. Appearing the most counter-culture with long well kept dreadlocks that dangle to her lower back, she often chose relaxed jean dresses, pants, and shirts with a design that was impulsively purchased at the time. She usually wears a old pair of worn hiking boots that are her favorite.

Sam Dezendorf

Sam is a reserved individual who often only voices himself on matters after taking a moment to weigh the options and assess what is necessary to complete an objective. His soft-spoken but direct method has earned him a spot with the group, even if his intelligence isn't quite up to par. Statistically, that's no surprise—not very many can be. He is often the only member of the group, despite his relative lack of brilliance, to be able to come up with a solution. Common sense is like that, sometimes. He tends towards a more empathic outlook on any given situation than any of his companions.

Most of Sam's creativity takes form back at his home, roughly fifteen minutes drive from campus. The downtrodden mobile home has earned him the condescension of the more well-to-do students at Flagler; snobs, and sophisticates all of them. Particularly Barron. However, those that know Sam will vouch that despite his sorry-looking estate and laconic exterior, there is a sincerity to him that many lack. He is known for his hardworking dedication to projects and his mechanical savvy. There are few things Sam can't produce, given the materials, time, and tools necessary.

As an engineer, gearhead and dyslexic who hates reading, he was a far cry from the group's intellectual stalwart. Chance took him where nothing else would have. Driving home from Park Avenue one night, he drove by Sarah's broken-down car. Barron, who was along with Sarah at the time, could offer little assistance besides loathing the malfunctioning vehicle. When Sam arrived on scene and offered his assistance, Sarah was more than grateful for the help, and for the protection he offered against Barron's advances. Barron wasn't so enthused. With some work, Sam managed to get the automobile working again, but lacked a few parts necessary to ensure it would stay that way. He offered his services when the parts arrived. Sarah accepted. It wasn't long before Sarah convinced Sam to meet Lucy, who promptly made him a part of the group.

It turns out Samuel's ability to fabricate and tweak almost any device was the final reagent the Outliers needed. Barron is not pleased.

Description

Sam seems to be the average small-town grease monkey, weighing close to two hundred pounds at five foot eleven. His short blond hair is often mussed and ill-kept. His favorite outfit, a pair of overalls and comfortable (read, worn to near-transparency) t-shirt doesn't help the impression he gives. He's muscular, but it's practical muscle, not the sculpted vanity of most of his bodybuilding classmates.

Lucy Kroger

Lucy has been a die-hard weirdness-chaser since as a kid she caught the end of a television special on ghosts and conspiracies that haven't aired long since. She never caught the name of the show, and no one else remembers it, but Lucy can't forget. From that point on, she strove to see and understand the inexplicable. It didn't help that her intelligence allowed her to point out the flaws in the explanations she often got for what

*"The alleged power to charm
down insanity, or ferocity in
beasts, is a power behind the
eye."*

*-Ralph Waldo Emerson
Conduct of Life – Of Behavior*

she found. She soon found, as many occultists do, that those she loved and lived with did not find her interests healthy or productive. After her parents discovered her practicing a summoning of Bloody Mary, she outwardly regressed from such interests. Going to St. Augustine, with its endless supply of weirdness, was a given once she graduated high school.

Moving to Florida was a godsend. With the time and freedom available to her, she took to her old studies with a new vigor. It was in this pursuit she met Gabe, who told her about the Psychomantium. The entire mysterious fourth floor, with its habitual manifestations of the supernatural was a dream come true.

Falling in with Sarah was one of the best things to ever happen to Lucy. Sarah's intelligence and attitude made sure that the pair were coupled perfectly, more so than staffing realized. Sarah is lethargic but persistent and Lucy had enough enthusiasm for them both but little follow-through.

Barron's involvement was nearly accidental, his brooding nature and scathing attitude making him unapproachable under normal circumstance. Thankfully, their common intelligence and a research paper left in a public printer offered the opportunity. Inviting Barron out for coffee and a discussion on enfolded space, they found a common bond in the yearning to understand the undiscovered, if for different personal reasons. It was soon after that Lucy founded the Outliers. The name was Barron's idea. Barron wouldn't stand for the group without a formal structure with himself at least the official second in command. Lucy, for her part, really didn't care. Sarah wasn't so happy with this new commingling and soon after that, Sam was brought into the fold, partially to appease her. Lucy recognized the talent Sam had, even if his presence rubbed Barron the wrong way. She knew keeping the two from one another's throats would be difficult, but she liked them both, and she couldn't afford to lose the skills that either of them had.

With her ties to Gabe, their experiments began to take on a life of their own. Gabe's interest in the Psychomantium where Henry Flagler's mistress hung herself brought the group a new field to research. Secretly involving themselves in his rituals, they began to test Gabe's limits as well as other students in the dormitories beneath the closed fourth floor.

Park Avenue

Events

Park Avenue has a poor reputation, largely deserved. During the beginning of the anti-drug crusades of the 70s, the club provided sanctuary for runners and addicts. Even though there have been numerous raids, and now puts on pretensions of being law-abiding, the club still retains elements of its previous *risqué* nature. The bar has changed ownership several times since the 70s, and now belongs to either two or three people, depending whom you ask. Due to the general acceptance of these activities by the crowd and locals, it has continued to cater to the traditional crowd while quietly accepting its less lawful inhabitants.

There are a number of regulars that frequent the club at any given time. College students filter through on the weekends, mingling with the rebellious high school dropouts with fake identification, yuppies, and other...things. A plain woman with mousy brown hair and a 70's throwback beaded jewelry ensemble comes every few days to dance with the crowd. She is selective with her company, but when she finds a partner she never lays eyes on anyone else the entire night. No one has been able to figure out her name and somehow it always slips her partner's mind to ask. She never dances with someone for more than a night, but that one night always leaves her dance partner exhausted at a table, mumbling inaudibly to himself by closing time.

Location

*"But the devil when he purports
any evil against man, first
perverts his mind."
-Euripides
Fragment (25)*

Park Avenue is a popular nightclub. Its dark interior is lit by neon signs in a variety of colors with dull, low hanging lights over the tables scattered throughout the east half of the club. Across the floor from the bar, on the west half of the club, the stage is subtly marked. A two foot black rise from the dance floor is a prime location for many of the bands and acts who are eager to get a foot in the industry door. The dance floor is only separated by trim lighting and bouncers during events. The wooden floor has been painted over black to clearly mark the distinction between the seats dabbled along the wall and the mass of bodies.

Opposite the stage and taking up the length of the east wall, the bar is a luminescent island of chrome, lighting, and color. Beneath the bar's thick, bubbled Plexiglas surface is a mirror. Inlaid with soft fluorescent lighting that casts its surface in a dazzling cascade of color, the bubbled surface becomes a startling assortment of shapes and colors. Plexiglas cabinets on the other side of the psychedelic bar give way to a soft purple from well-placed black lights, allowing the staff to distinguish themselves from the patrons. The soft purple hues used in the shelving illuminates the bottles of liquor that seem to rotate almost as much as the crowd. There aren't many ways to make a well lit bar appealing, but Park Avenue manages all of them.

*"Mad as a March hare."
-James O. Halliwell
Archaic Diet*

The interior as a whole is sparsely lit. Neon signs are placed randomly about the walls to provide direction. The soft lighting of the ceiling spots are changed to fit the current event or mood of the club. The club is a routine hangout for many of the Flagler students and the masses who won't give up the drug scene.

Jack Daniels

Jeff Hainline is, or rather was, a freelance reporter. He finally managed to sell his one big story, and after years of scrimping and saving, he bought Park Avenue with two of his old college buddies. The three of them turned it into what it is today. Aggravated at all the time he wasn't spending with her, his wife left him in the early stages of the business. The combination of loneliness, endless work, and the easy availability of liquor quickly turned him into a raging alcoholic.

He went farther down the path than anyone expected, and it wasn't long before Fade started in. First, his contracts with his partners disappeared. Thinking they were trying to force him out of the bar, he dove deeper into the bottle. Before long, even his best friends seemed to forget him, which only sent him deeper. These days, Jeff abuses the open tab that is the only reminder of his time as part owner of his favorite bar, and garnishes his drinks with the despair of those who've come to forget their lives. Making friends with complete strangers, he wallows in their misery and comes out feeling strangely refreshed.

Jeff isn't an idiot, and he knows that some of the things he's doing aren't natural. He hasn't faded completely yet, but he's pretty far down the road. Since no one remembers anything about him other than his favorite drink (Jack and Coke), he's decided to start going by the name Jack Daniels, and dressing the part as well. In for a penny, in for a pound; the only thing that seems to make him happy anymore is sharing the misery of others.

Jordan Montaigne

The part owner of Park Avenue, along with Jeff Hainline (AKA Jack Daniels), and Sean Thatcher, Jordan has undergone more in the past quarter-year than most people face in their entire lives. Three months ago, Jordan came home from a trip to see his teenage daughter tearing his wife's throat out with her teeth. Without thinking, he grabbed the poker by his fireplace and beat her off of his dying wife. Needle-sharp teeth clicked as she snarled and leapt at him. Racked with horror and grief he blindly struck out until the thing was nothing more than a smear against the bricks.

When the police came, they chalked up the attack to wild dogs; Jordan's babbling about his "missing" daughter was eventually attributed to extreme grief. After searching the house for pictures or hints of her whereabouts, the investigators found no evidence that the Montaignes had ever had children. Devastated and disregarded, Jordan's whole life had collapsed within the space of less than an hour. Worse, no one even seemed to realize what all he'd lost.

Jordan knows that there are unholy creatures out there, and he's seen what they can do. Now that he knows how to look, he's seeing them everywhere. After the third abomination he killed, he realized that they don't leave traces behind, that there's nothing to stop him from killing them all. Thus far, he's been lucky; none of the creatures he's gone after have been expecting him, or really, expecting any sort of fight. He realizes he won't always be lucky--every night he goes out just a little better armed, a little more experienced, a little more deadly.

He also knows better than to talk about what he's doing. People who talk about killing demons in the night get locked up – and he can't continue his one-man crusade from jail. During the day and early evenings he does the paperwork for Park Avenue, but late at night, he hunts.

Now that he's a little more familiar with the creatures he's killing, he realizes why Sean doesn't remember that they had a third partner once upon a time. He, quite frankly, doesn't know how to deal with the fact that his best friend has become someone he should be butchering. For the moment, he can ignore the situation; Jeff doesn't seem to realize that Jordan knows who he is. Still, Jordan knows that one of these days, he's going to have to figure out what to do about the man calling himself Jack Daniels.

"He appears mad indeed but to a few, because the majority is infected with the same disease."
-Horace
Satires

Description

Physically, Jordan is an unintimidating, somewhat overweight middle-aged man with thinning brown hair, usually dressed in Dockers and a polo shirt. His shoes are scuffed but expensive, often worn with tube socks. He looks, in general, like a man whose wife has dressed him for the past fifteen years, but who now has to pick out his own outfits in the morning. He's recently taken up smoking again; his wife made him quit ten years ago. He's getting more exercise than he's ever gotten in his life, so his clothes hang awkwardly; he recently punched a new hole in his belt. He hasn't bothered to go buy a new one.

Townsend Books and Livewire Café

Townsend and Livewire share the same building, with two entrances - one for Livewire at the north end of the building and one for Townsend on the South end. Run by a staff of 30-50 employees at any given time, the bookstore and café are the largest in St Augustine. It is a walking distance from the Ponce de Leon Mall, making it an attractive place for college students to hang out at for a few hours after the mall has closed at 7 PM.

Upon entering either of the doors at the front of the building, visitors are confronted with a display of old black and white photographs of the city and a chalkboard advertising the week's events for both Townsend (generally signings and book groups) and Livewire (such as poetry readings and local musicians' performances). The scent of coffee and baking cookies predominates in the hall and in the coffee shop through the door on the east. The walls behind the displays are dark cream, offsetting the light brown marble of the floor. This decorative theme continues throughout both the coffee shop and the bookstore.

Livewire, on the east side of the building, is a frenetically paced hotbed of bohemians, yuppies, artists, and tired college students just looking for a quick caffeine infusion. Though the noise is constant, it's low-key, and even the most irritable customer finds

himself relaxing under the influence of quiet local music and friendly barristas. Unless, of course, Jacob is working. Along the bar, a half-dozen laptops, open to the public, give the coffee shop its name; wireless internet access is broadcast through both stores. Wood and faux-sandstone tables take up the center of the café; two of the walls are taken with booths, and a small, short condiment counter, decorated in the same wood and sandstone motif as the tables, squats opposite the registers.

Townsend Books, like its neighbor, is quiet and comfortable, with beige, overstuffed chairs scattered in nooks and along the walls throughout the store. Sandstone-colored pillars support the ceiling and flank the information desk in the center of the store. A small section in the back sells CDs and DVDs and a massive kids' section takes up almost the entire west half of the store. The staffers, while often abrupt to the point of rudeness, are tremendously competent; they are rarely, if ever, seen using the computers to find books. Their encyclopedic knowledge of published work is often put to the test by customers loudly declaring that they should be able to find a book based on what color the cover was, words that may or may have not been in the title, or how tall the author is. Amazingly, they usually can.

Bloody Mary

When Laurie Harrison ran away from her husband because she was afraid he was going to start beating her, she surprised everyone, especially her husband, David. He'd never hurt a single person in his life, and in the year that they'd been married, never raised his voice once. Or even disagreed if he could avoid it.

Truthfully, David had been worried for quite a while by her increasing paranoia. When he got a call from the police that his wife had filled their car with gasoline and driven off without paying, he knew she'd finally lost it. His suspicion was confirmed when he discovered their savings and checking accounts emptied, most of her clothes gone, and the bathroom cleaned out.

Meanwhile, Laurie, frantic at the thought that David might be following hot on her heels, was speeding through a school zone when she saw a little girl crossing the street. She swerved out of the way and into a ten-foot-deep ditch. That last act of desperation was enough to send her over the edge of humanity and into something else. Fade grabbed her life and *twisted*.

David forgot who she was, and only knew that his car had been stolen. The girl Laurie almost ran over only remembered that someone nearly hit her. The ambulance that came for her labeled it a hit and run. Laurie, less than a dozen feet from the paramedics, called for help, but no one could hear her.

She listened to the girl tell everyone about the crazy lady who tried to hit her and drove off. Then she listened to the paramedics report it to the police. Finally, she heard the people living close to the school talk about it amongst themselves. Somewhere in this mess, some of Laurie's fear turned itself into hate, but her Dread had already claimed her.

John and Edward Blackfield

One June 6th 1849 John Blackfield was born to an upright, well to do British family. His parents, dreaming of having a large family, brought Edward Blackfield into the world May 14th 1854. The pair were an odd mix growing up. John carried his father's natural merchant presence and ambitions, while Edward, quiet and withdrawn, was gifted with his mother's creativity. Even so, the pair remained quite close, looking after one another as they grew up.

Pressing through the University system, John found more than just books. In 1869 John became the father of Phineas, born of Elizabeth Blackfield. It was a momentous occasion for the family, who were quick to seal the deal before birth with a wedding and generous sum for the new couple. Edward had shown a startling talent for doll making and

*"Go, madman! Rush over the
wildest Alps, that you may
please children and be made
the subject of declamation."*

*-Juvenal
Satires*

awarded his first-prize-winning creation to the couple at the ceremony. John quit schooling to take up a place in his father's textile business in 1874 to provide for the family.

A few years later, tragedy struck the blossoming couple quite suddenly; Phineas was crushed during a factory accident in one of John's mills. John grew steadily more absorbed in his work, unable to face his pain, instead allowing greed to consume him. Elizabeth, for her part turned to alcohol. Oddly, Edward had warned John of this, quietly, a few months before the tragedy struck. Speaking in soft tones that his doll had told him it would happen, he returned to his craft, having long since withdrawn from all but John himself.

Once again, the Blackfields were stuck with loss as Elizabeth's drinking consumed her, bringing her to an early death in 1880. A stony and turbulent John bid her farewell, marking her passage at the funeral with a bitter tirade against her failures to better herself and move on from tragedy.

Unbeknownst to those attending, John was once again warned by Edward as his fascination with dolls began to manifest unhealthy side effects. Ignoring Edward's request to abandon the textile business, John's leg was caught by pant leg and drawn between gears, horridly mangling it.

With the loss of his wife and his leg twisted, he finally turned away from the business and poured his assets into Edward's dolls. Opening a little shop with the now-eerily-perfect creations, they soon began to rake in money from the parents of local children. While many were suspicious of the brothers' motives, none could doubt that their dolls were, bar none, the most beautiful that anyone had ever seen. The Blackfields' family, for their part, withdrew their support from the brothers in disgust, unwilling to deal any longer with the rumors and humiliation their sons brought on them.

In 1885, a close friend of the family and fan of Edward's work was found dead. Police were quick to blame the brothers and sought evidence to convict the pair. Unable to bear the strain, so they said, the brothers fled the country, retiring to St. Augustine. Promptly reopening the doll shop, they settled in again, this time for fifty years, before anything noteworthy occurred.

With the eruption of world war one and the following depression, the pair began to fade from the public's eye. Closing up shop in 1935, the enigmatic brothers weren't missed. Keeping low from the town dealings, Edward's work would still pop up about town here and there, but little else could be said of their activities during this period.

Apparently tired of the isolation, the Blackfields purchased a small manor closer to town in 1982. Relocating once more, they settled into the spacious estate, where they remain today. While the pair does not keep a formal shop open anymore, those seeking to have a rare and expensive item crafted by Edward are still welcome to visit. Recently, John has once more began to emerge into the world of politics and power among Liminals. Pulling strings behind the scenes and selling information, John is quickly becoming a power player in St. Augustine, and with well over a century of experience, there's no limit to how far he can go.

Luis Estaban Solana II

Luis doesn't remember much of his life before this: the endless series of favors, faces and money that have become his obsession. He knows that he has to be over a hundred years old; sometimes-murky memories of dingy factories and cheap cigars, labor and consuming desire for more come back to him. Somehow, he really can't make himself care. These days, all Luis cares about is finding out what people want and giving it to them. What they do with what he gives them doesn't matter as much as what they do for

"It is a common calamity; at some one time we have all been mad."

*-Baptista Mantuanus
Eclogue*

him in return. Luis survives off of the high of Yearning fulfilled, no matter how temporary; if his customers end up coming back for more, all the better.

For anyone with the Intensity to see it, Solana is actually covered in smooth copper scales and always seems to be surrounded with a haze of heat.

Manolito Campero

Manolito is actually Maria's great uncle. In the late 1800's, he was the oldest son of a large family and was making a comfortable living as the captain of a fishing vessel. When a hurricane blew him off-course and into an area he'd never seen before, it destroyed his ship and killed nearly all of his crew. In the middle of nowhere, what few of the fishermen remained slowly died of exposure, disease and starvation as they attempted to make a raft of what they had left. Manolito survived, barely, for the next year, mapping what would later become southern Florida and attempting to make and provision a raft that would bring him home. He feared, at first, that he wouldn't make it. Eventually his fear turned to a despair that folded endlessly on itself until it was all he could do to go through the motions.

Meanwhile, back in Cuba, his family succumbed to the effect of Manolito's Fade. By the time he finally made it back, they had all forgotten that he existed at all. That was all it took to send him over the edge of Anguish. At first, he just tried to make them remember. When that failed, he tried to make them regret, and he still does.

Manolito has transformed into what his family calls a *mar phantasma*. His liquid form is that of a large puddle of seawater, and he has the ability to see through the eyes of his three seagulls: Pensamiento, Memoria, and Pesar using the Descry Pathos. Though he could form a bond with more seagulls, he chooses not to, as he has become particularly attached to these three.

Manolito, when not in the form of a puddle, appears as a handsome Hispanic gentleman in his early to mid twenties, tall, well built, and clean-shaven. He speaks with a pronounced Cuban accent, though his grammar and vocabulary are impeccable.

Chapter VII Storyline Revelations: A City Visible but Unseen

All the myriad selves that I could have been grab at me while I sleep, pulling me down deeper as I struggle to get to the surface. Cold, clammy hands tighten around my throat while I beg for mercy from them all That's when I wake up with my hands wrapped around my own neck. Lately I've been leaving bruises; it won't be much longer now.

The following is an explanation of some of the potential conspiracies, alliances, and situations that may be in place in St. Augustine. Sample stats have been provided for the handful of Liminals presented here. Narrators are encouraged to use as many or as few of these as they wish.

John and Edward Blackfield

Edward is content to make his dolls and take care of his children. He has the ability to see through the eyes of the dolls and regularly keeps track of how the clients are faring that way. He feeds off of the Yearning children feel for his dolls and imbues them with a special want when particularly hungry (he considers himself doing it when he feels "down" and needs to see the owner appreciate what he has made). This is rarely done due to a past incident of a Liminal setting his doll alight after almost discovering the link. Since then, he has been especially careful about how he feeds.

John is far more ambitious. While he still has some care remaining for his younger brother, he mostly protects Edward because of the mutual benefit gained from Edward's uncanny ability to know much of what is going on in the city. John is wanting to claim St. Augustine as his own domain and feels this is possible with Edward's help (among others). He will go out of his way to make contacts who may be interested in purchasing the dolls in the hopes of getting a wider range to see out of.

There are obviously suspicions about what the dolls do, but no one has ever openly accused them of spying. Edward doesn't have any public connections, but he has a full view of the halfway house because of one of his dolls being in there. His dolls have also

gone on display in tourist shops, giving him openings to other old haunted buildings.

While John is a very prominent Liminal in St. Augustine, Edward isn't well known at all, and is generally referred to as "John's brother."

Edward isn't stupid and knows that his brother is planning on taking charge of the city (something his brother has been attempting to build on for decades). The only time a city take-over is mentioned, John speaks as if the pair will be running it. Edward also knows better than that. However, he's well aware of the fact that John needs him in order to pull this off. That in and of itself means that the pair are still fully capable of relying on one another.

Should John succeed, Edward will be a of power behind the throne (much to Manolito's and Luis' dismay, who wouldn't mind holding that position).

Edward is content never to leave the house (sometimes not even the basement) and simply sees/feeds through his dolls. His lack of ever leaving has led a great deal of others to believe that Edward doesn't actually exist, and is used by John as a means to look more powerful than he actually is.

Edward Blackfield

Mental Die: d6
Physical Die: d6
Initiative Base: 2
Natural Defense: 4
Mental: Imagination 5, Perception 4, Retention 3
Physical: Agility 2, Strength 2, Resilience 2
Socioeconomic Status 4
Factors: Ventriloquism, Focus, Real Estate, Artist, Offputting, Mimicry

Intensity: 10
Passions: Anguish 8, Yearning 10
Pathos: Fad, Craftsman, Bump, Descry (Dolls), Deal

Skills

Art: 5
3d: 4
Textiles: 5
Woodworking: 5
Arcane: 4
Conspiracies: 3
Cruptozoology: 2
Parapsychology: 4
Collegiate: 3
Research: 2
History: 3
Social: 4
Kinesics: 4
Observation: 3

John Blackfield

Mental Die: d6
Physical Die: d6
Initiative Base: 2
Natural Defense: 4
Mental: Imagination 4, Perception 3, Retention 3
Physical: Agility 2, Strength 2, Resilience 2

...the reality of human life is made up of a complex structure of absolute opposites – day and night, birth and death, happiness and misery; good and evil. We cannot even be sure that any of the sires will ever triumph."
-C.G. Jung

Socioeconomic Status 6
Factors: Kinesic x3, Analyst x2, Golden Tongue x3, Palsied Limb x2
Intensity: 10
Passions: Anguish 10
Pathos: Shame, Pedant, Glimpse, Framed, Secret Shame

Skills
Art: 5
Textiles: 1
Collegiate: 4
Business: 4
History: 2
Research: 2
Science: 2
Law: 3
Sociology: 3
Social: 4
Intimidation: 2
Kinesics: 4
Lying: 3
Networking: 2
Observation: 2
Tenacity: 4
Technical: 1
Mechanics: 1

*"Everywhere I look they watch me. Please don't think I'm crazy. Please don't think I made these cuts myself."
-Susan Carpenter*

Manolito Campero

If Manolito can somehow be placed in a watertight container (that is also strong enough for him to not break through; unless already weakened, a plastic bag won't work) he's powerless and will eventually starve.

Manolito is mostly interested in protecting his investments—particularly the family he has worked for decades to groom into an eternal fount of suffering from which to feed.

He is no longer just a spirit of the sea – he feeds off of the loss someone feels when they lose everything in life. He is convinced that true beauty cannot be found until everything has been stripped away from the individual. There, in that moment when they realize what it is they have lost, and what they are left with, are they beautiful. He embraces that beauty as an actual art.

He is still related to Maria, and he still feels some anger over what his blood relations did to him. However, this isn't so much vengeance as "keeping it in the family." He finds that the Emotion tastes better when taken from the family.

He is currently in the process of feeding on Maria and actually protects Jessica, though no one knows this. By protecting Jessica he can ensure that she carries on the next generation for him to sustain himself on. Maria is fair game for another few years though. This means that in a storyline involving Jessica and Manolito, there is a good chance that he will pull some strings to keep her or Maria from being physically harmed. Stripping them of their worldly possessions is still fair play.

There are two ways he may handle someone who is attempting to mess with his personal feeding grounds. He may come out and deal with the problem himself (through force, destruction or not-so-veiled threats) or approach the matter as a personal favor done should they back off. Should the latter be used, it is likely that he will either accept it as a favor (the character is powerful or could be useful), or will mark the character as someone he will be doing research on to feed on in the future. As with most Liminals,

Manolito's word is only as good as who he is working with. Although he, and others, obviously won't be going out of their way to look like liars – it's safer to come off looking chivalrous and good to the word.

Manolito is currently suspicious of Luis Estaban's advances. While he's glad to have the other Liminal's good favor, he's not about to believe that Luis is doing it out of the goodness of his heart. He is slowly becoming convinced that Luis is planning on taking over the city, himself, and is weighing the odds of whether it would be better to side with him or with John Blackfield. He is currently leaning more toward John and would probably side with him (even if privately) should it come down to a match between the two.

Should he ever decide to discuss this with John, it would cement John's beliefs that Luis is a threat, who will then work to have him crushed if possible.

Manolito Campero

Mental Die: d6

Physical Die: d6

Initiative Base: 6

Natural Defense: 6

Mental: Imagination 5, Perception 3, Retention 3

Physical: Agility 3, Strength 3, Resilience 3

Socioeconomic Status 2

Factors- Language x3 (English) Artist

Intensity:10

Passions: Anguish 10, Fury 8

Pathos: Liquid Form (sea water), Shapeshift (seagull), Descry (seagull), Evil Eye, Crucible

Skills

Arcane: 2

Eldritch: 2

Sensitivity: 2

Collegiate: 2

History: 2

Research: 2

Social: 3

Lying: 3

Intimidation: 2

Observation: 2

Tenacity: 3

Kinesics: 2

Outdoors: 4

Boating: 4

Exertion: 3

Navigation: 4

Outdoor Stealth: 3

Foraging: 3

Criminal: 3

Security: 2

Sleight of Hand: 2

Urban Stealth: 3

Basic Combat: 3

Unarmed Strike: 3

Block/Parry: 2

Armed Strike: 3

Evasive: 3

"I hate them. I hate them for what they did to me, for what they got away with, for everything they stand for. And I hate you for forgetting me – for letting me rot in this unnatural hell. I'm going to bring you here if it's the last thing I do."

-Candice

Initiative: 3

Bloody Mary

Mary is in league with Luis Estaban. How close the pair are is up to the Narrator – some urban stories say that Bloody Mary is the devil's concubine, others imply no relationship at all. Bloody Mary is, despite her Noumenal powers, still physically just a human being. She can be harmed like any other human being. The only thing that has kept her safe thus far is the fact that she feeds almost entirely on helpless kids under the age of 13.

Bloody Mary is content to spread stories among the children about what she may actually be. Children are easier to hunt, and while her choice in prey was originally born from her desire for vengeance, she is now entertained and amused by their reactions to her. It won't be much longer before they become nothing more than food. Bloody Mary is aggressive toward other child-feeders, hoarding her food source with dangerous possessiveness.

She is currently interested in finding out more about the halfway house, which she knows is somehow associated with the Blue Lady. Thus far, she hasn't been able to pinpoint anything beyond the fact that the children know about her, are familiar with at least one of her weaknesses, and seem obsessed with the color blue.

She is humoring them by trying to refrain from doing anything to anyone wearing substantial amounts of blue. Setting up this false Consequence is a way to deter them from finding out what her real Consequences are. Her greatest Consequence is her level five Barrier Consequence. She cannot cross a barrier of wax—looks like all those crayons did some good after all.

In order to find out more about the house and its denizens, Bloody Mary has begun trying to “recruit” Gabriel Harris. For the moment, she’s just periodically using her Ride Sympathy Pathos for him without his knowledge. If all goes according to plan, she will reveal herself to him and offer to “teach” him Mirrorwalking before too long. While the knowledge that he has not been traveling under his own power will potentially crush him, there is likely little he won't do to Mirrorwalk again.

Bloody Mary

Mental Die: d6

Physical Die: d6

Initiative Base: 4

Natural Defense: 6

Mental: Imagination 5, Perception 3, Retention 3

Physical: Agility 3, Strength 3, Resilience 3

Socioeconomic Status 1

Factors: Long Ears x3, Photographic Memory, Sharp Nosed, Secret Hideout x3

Intensity: 9

Passions: Dread 9, Fury 3, Yearning 8

Pathos: Speak of the Devil, Ride Sympathy (Mirrors), Descry (Mirrors), Huckster's Sense, Toggling

Skills

Arcane: 2

Conspiracies: 1

Eldritch: 1

Sensitivity: 2

Collegiate: 3

Research: 2

Sociology: 3

Logic: 2

“Why are you worried about the ones that appear insane? The ones you should be concerned about are the normal ones you sit beside. They hide teeth and talons you have to look for to see.”
-Keith Sullivan

Social: 3
Intimidation: 3
Lying: 1
Networking: 1
Observation: 3
Tenacity: 3
Basic Combat: 2
Unarmed Strike: 1
Block/Parry: 1
Evasive: 2
Initiative: 1

Luis Estaban Solana II

He used Deal on James. James has quite literally sold himself to the devil for money. What happens if he tries to break this pact? Luis' actual history is a mystery, and quite intentionally left that way. The Narrator should feel free to give Luis whatever characteristics he feels are needed to complete or drive the game. The only things that are not negotiable are Luis' ambition and the way he has his finger in every pie he can reach.

The only thing Luis needs at this point is information; John Blackfield's specialty. Luis does what he can to not compete with John. He knows the other Liminal is vying to control the city and he does not want to be seen as a threat. He has set into motion a counterattack should John take charge of the city and attempt to have him removed as a threat.

He is currently working closely with Bloody Mary, with whom he has formed a long-term arrangement. The pair have carefully, albeit silently formed a cautious symbiosis. The two make a formidable pair – and few people have put together enough of the pieces to even associate one with the other. Luis sees Bloody Mary as a strong ally and is willing to go to great lengths for her. He is more than mildly that one of his consequences has been discovered – and is being spread – by Florida's orphans. They know to look for his golden scales and of his allergy to water.

He is also familiar with Manolito, though only in passing. He is currently building up relations with Manolito in order to make the old Liminal more comfortable around him.

Luis Estaban Solana II

Mental Die: d6
Physical Die: d6
Initiative Base: 5
Natural Defense: 4
Mental: Imagination 4, Perception 4, Retention 3
Physical: Agility 2, Strength 2, Resilience 2
Socioeconomic Status 5
Factors: Artist x2, Golden Tongue x3, Influential Friends x2

Intensity: 10
Passions: Anguish 8, Yearning 10
Pathos: Made of Stars, Deal, Gas Form (Smoke), Lie, Only Knocks Once

Skills-
Arcane: 3
Eldritch: 3
Conspiracies: 1
Sensitivity: 2

"Voices in the darkness scream away my mental health. Can I ask a question to help me save me from myself?"
-A Perfect Circle
Diary of a Madman/Lovesong

Collegiate: 3
Law: 3
Business: 1
Logic: 2
Research: 3
Criminal: 2
Forgery: 2
Urban Stealth: 2
Social: 4
Networking: 4
Lying: 4
Kinesics: 4
Obsevation: 2
Tenacity: 3
Basic Combat: 3
Unarmed Strike: 2
Block/Parry: 2
Evasive: 3
Initiative: 3

Jack Daniels

Jack Daniels is going to the very edge. He isn't irredeemable yet, though. If someone begins to take him back from his drinking/despairing binges, he can begin rebuilding his life. One by one, his connections will reappear as he begins to become more human and less "other." He can be convinced of the danger in his situation by pointing out the examples of other Liminals. Without player intervention, however, he will become yet another hungry creature of the night.

Jordan is becoming a well known thorn in the side of St Augustine's Liminals and Jack may begin working by himself or with others to remove him. If he does, Luis Estaban is a likely candidate to ally with.

Jack may be able to be coaxed into hunting other Liminals if someone is able to persuade him to take a different path.

Jack Daniels

Mental Die: d6
Physical Die: d6
Initiative Base: 5
Natural Defense: 7
Mental: Imagination 3, Perception 5, Retention 3
Physical: Agility 3, Strength 3, Resilience 4
Socioeconomic Status 2
Factors: Artist, Offputting, Resistant x3, Designer x3

Intensity: 8
Passions: Anguish 8, Yearning 3
Pathos: Descry (Inebriates), Framed, Impression, Next Topic

Skills

Art: 3
Photograph: 3
Computer Art: 2
Collegiate: 3
Business: 3
Law: 2

*"I hear a sound, the ticking of
clocks. I remember your face,
remember to see when you are
lost. I hear the sound, the
ticking of clocks. Come back
and look for me, look for me,
when I am lost. Just a whisper,
a whisper, a whisper, a
whisper."
-Coldplay
A Whisper*

Research: 3
Sociology: 3
Social: 3
Kinesics: 3
Lying: 3
Observation: 2
Tenacity: 1
Basic Combat: 3
Armed Strike: 1
Evasive: 2
Unarmed Strike: 3
Projectile Strike: 2
Initiative: 2

Robert Atwater

Who is bringing the food? Robert Atwater could himself be doing it to keep the children's hopes up. The Blue Lady may be a real creature (or Thought Form), responding to the prayers of the Blue Circle. Edward Blackfield may have people delivering the supplies when he sees through the eyes of the doll that the children need something. A neighbor who is Intense enough to see some of what is going on may be leaving the supplies – until he decides to call the euphemistically named Division of Family Services.

What happens if the food stops showing up?

What happens to the group if Robert vanishes, is killed, or becomes a creature? Who will the children go to for help?

What happens if Bloody Mary finds a way to get inside (someone brings a mirror in, an area is cleaned and she is able to walk through the broken barrier, a severe storm damages part of the house and allows her access)?

Robert Atwater

Mental Die: d6
Physical Die: d6
Initiative Base: 3
Natural Defense: 7
Mental: Imagination 4, Perception 3, Retention 3
Physical: Agility 3, Strength 3, Resilience 4
Socioeconomic Status 2
Factors: Sixth Sense x3, Innovator, Focus

Intensity: 6
Passions: Dread 6
Pathos: Hypervigilance, Somnia, Last Ditch

Skills

Art: 2
Instrument: 2
Textiles: 1
Vocal: 2
Woodworking: 1
Criminal: 3
Forgery: 1
Security: 3
Sleight of Hand: 2
Urban Stealth: 2

*“There were ages dead to time,
and lands lost out of space;
there were adders in the slime,
and a dim unholy face. Oh, the
heart in my breast turned stone,
and the brain froze in my
skull—But I won through, I
alone, and poured my chalice
full of horrors and dooms and
spells, black buds and bitter
roots – From the hells beneath
the hells, I bring you my
deathly fruits.”*
-Robert Howard
The Song of the Mad Minstrel

Urban Survival: 3
Social: 3
Lying: 1
Observation: 3
Tenacity: 3
Outdoor: 2
Foraging: 2

The Outliers

The Outliers would be an excellent group for beginning characters to have contact with. Alternately, they may be great sympathetic antagonists. Following are some ideas for the use of the Outliers.

They may be using classmates for experimentation, forming new Liminals with disturbing ease.

The group may accidentally summon something, or awaken a slumbering Liminal/Noumenal creature.

Another student hears about the students' activities and begins sabotaging their work, or worse, trying similar experiments—without the ethical boundaries or intellectual power of the Outliers. Disaster.

The Outliers reach important conclusions about the Liminal state that the characters are able to use to help either themselves or another character. This is a great way to bring in Jack Daniels, Robert Atwater and the kids.

Sam Dezendorf

Mental Die: d6
Physical Die: d6
Initiative Base: 2
Natural Defense: 5
Mental: Imagination 4, Perception 3, Retention 4
Physical: Agility 2, Strength 4, Resilience 3
Socioeconomic Status 2
Factors: Designer x3, Dyslexic, Innovator

Intensity: 1
Passions: Yearning 1
Pathos: Cry for Attention

Skills

Art: 3
Metalcrafting: 3
Woodworking: 3
Social: 2
Observation: 2
Outdoor: 3
Exertion: 3
Technical: 4
Construction: 3
Mechanics: 4

Lucy Kroger

Mental Die: d6

“It is by no means an irrational fancy that, in a future existence, we shall look upon what we think our present existence, as a dream.”
Edgar Allan Poe-

Physical Die: d6
Initiative Base: 3
Natural Defense: 5
Mental: Imagination 5, Perception 4, Retention 5
Physical: Agility 3, Strength 2, Resilience 2
Socioeconomic Status 2
Factors- Innovator x2, Mad Eyes, Language (French)

Intensity: 1
Passions: Dread 1
Pathos: Tail

Skills
Arcane: 3
Eldritch: 2
Parapsychology: 3
Collegiate: 3
Logic: 3
History: 2
Research: 3
Science: 3
Sociology: 3
Health: 2
Psychology: 2
Social: 3
Kinesics: 3

Sarah Neely

Mental Die: d6
Physical Die: d6
Initiative Base: 2
Natural Defense: 4
Mental: Imagination 5, Perception 3, Retention 5
Physical: Agility 2, Strength 2, Resilience 2
Socioeconomic Status 2
Factors: Innovator, Math Savant x3, Analyst x3

Intensity: 1
Passions: Anguish 1
Pathos: Impression

Skills
Arcane: 1
Parapsychology: 1
Art: 2
Textile: 2
Writing: 2
Collegiate: 3
Science: 3
Law: 2
Logic: 3
Computer: 2
Networking: 2
Criminal: 2
Forgery: 2
Urban Survival: 1

*“An artist is a creature driven
by demons. He doesn’t know
why they chose him and he’s
usually too busy to wonder
why.”
-William Faulkner-*

Sleight of Hand: 1
Health: 1
Alternative Medicine: 1
Outdoors: 2
Foraging: 2
Navigation: 1
Social: 2
Observation: 2
Kinesics: 1
Tenacity: 1

Jordan Montaigne

Park Avenue is mostly dangerous because Jordan is hunting there. Jordan will readily work with other hunters and a group may be forming there.

Jordan is still new at this hunting business, but is perceptive enough to know when Liminals have broken past Intensity five. Anyone who has done so is immediately considered to be spiraling down the path of destruction by becoming one of these creatures.

If a hunting group is formed at Park Avenue it would have a massive impact on St. Augustine. Jordan has managed to make Park Avenue a sound means of hunting Liminals that come inside – which means he is now able to catch people who haven't reached the next stage in the transformation, that being ten. He has several barriers set up around the club, cleverly disguised as decorations. Piles of beer nuts, running water under the dance floor, and similar surreptitious traps explain the stranger décor choices of the club.

Jordan Montaigne

Mental Die: d6
Physical Die: d6
Initiative Base: 7
Natural Defense: 7
Mental: Imagination 3, Perception 4, Retention 3
Physical: Agility 4, Strength 4, Resilience 3
Socioeconomic Status 2
Factors: Sharp Nosed, Accuracy, Ambidextrous, Hip Shot, Athletic, Offputting

Intensity: 6
Passions: Anguish 6, Fury 1
Pathos: Oracle, Shameless, Lock & Pound

Skills

Art: 2
Instrument: 2
Textiles: 1
Vocals: 2
Arcane: 1
Cryptozoology: 1
Sensitivity: 1
Collegiate: 2
Law: 2
Business: 2
Science: 1
Criminal: 2
Security: 2
Urban Stealth: 2

“It means the world’s about as solid and as reliable as a layer of scum on the top of a well of black water which goes down forever, and there are things in the depths that I don’t even want to think about.”
Rose Walker-
Lost Hearts

Social: 2
Observation: 2
Tenacity: 2
Basic Combat: 2
Unarmed Strike: 2
Evasive: 2
Projectile Strike: 2
Initiative: 1

Anastasia Park

Liminals have found the park grounds to be even more extensive than the public, or the Phenomenal itself, knows. Locations and distance have collapsed upon themselves in points, only accessible to Liminal and Noumenal creatures who can scout the way or recognize these disturbances. The tortured history of inhabitants and thronging masses of visitors to the park has given rise to an elite crop of Noumenal predators in the area. Many of those who pass through the park leave drained as the unwitting meals of emotion hungry Noumenal (*not* Liminal) creatures, or simply disappear. The park itself is quite Noumenally barren due to the previous abundance of predators which has thinned with the inevitable power struggles and brutal territorial contests, leaving only the most crafty, violent, and powerful inhabitants.

As the Liminal population has grown, the influx of emotionally substantial prey has not managed to keep in step with their numbers. Often manifesting as to prey upon their victims they have assumed the guise of deadly creatures, convicts, hoodlums, diseased animals, and even faeries and spirits.

One of the more powerful Liminals in the park appears as a thick, massive fog. Lacking any physical form, this creature passes from location to location or just vanishes completely in a dense, low-hanging bank. Slowly ebbing along well-traveled pathways and campgrounds, the fog lures anyone who can see it off the path. What happens after that is anyone's guess. Here are a few possibilities of what the fog may be.

The fog may be some sort of Thought Form that may or may not have a purpose.

It could be the eyes and ears of a powerful Liminal (Ethos or Pathos magic).

It is the now-natural form to an ancient (or possibly not so ancient) Liminal.

A failed (or successful) experiment – what it is intended to do is up to the Narrator.

The fog may be the collected spirits of the powerful tribe that disappeared not all that long ago.

The fog may be the remains of a dead, hugely powerful Noumenal predator that drips like the slowly seeping blood of a corpse.

Sample Beginning Scenario

This story begins with the characters at Park Avenue. James is talking in a corner with a man dressed in a zoot suit, smoking thin menthol cigarettes. The man is named Luis, and James made a deal with him two years ago; a future favor in exchange for money. Lots of it. He got the money, and Luis has come for his payment. He doesn't have a chance to tell him what the payment is, as a man dressed all in black steps behind him and pulls a piano wire across his throat.

At this point, the other characters should notice the scuffle. Before anyone has a chance to do anything, Luis erupts into a cloud of smoke, and the man turns and runs out the

*“Demons do not exist any more
than gods do, being only the
products of the psychic activity
of man.”*
-Sigmund Freud

back door.

No one in the bar other than the characters seems to see what's going on. If the characters ask anyone in the bar, they will simply shrug it off and say it was probably a drunken scuffle. If they mention the man in the suit turning into a cloud of smoke, the other bar patrons will simply nod and back away. The police, if called, will find no evidence of a fight, and will offer to fill out a report. Their dismissive attitude should immediately tell the players that it's unlikely the police will be any help.

If anyone talks to James, he will be reluctant to tell them any details of what he saw, as he, quite rightfully, thinks that anyone he tells will think he's insane. The characters, already pushing the bounds of possibility, should be able to easily convince him to tell what he saw. Of course, if James is a PC, he should follow whatever course of action the player dictates.

If the characters attempt to contact Luis through James, he will refuse to talk to any of them. He will only meet with James alone. If James attempts to meet him, Luis will agree to coffee. After a brief discussion, Luis will reveal that he's going underground for a while. If asked if it has anything to do with the man who tried to attack him, Luis will admit that he's a customer "whose deal didn't turn out quite the way he'd have preferred." Luis will not, under any circumstances, reveal any further details. He will, however, say that if James "takes care of the problem," he will consider the slate wiped clean. Luis will not give any more information on what exactly he means by that. If James offers the help of the other characters, Luis will agree to give them "a favor" as well, and will agree to a meeting with them.

If the other characters meet with Luis, he will tell them everything he knows (relatively little) about Jordan, Park Avenue, and, if pressed, the process of power. Luis knows that he used to be human, and that he has certain powers. He doesn't remember much of his life as a mortal man, and he's reluctant to share what he does remember. He will not reveal his Consequences, or the fact that he feeds on Yearning. After he's told the characters everything the Narrator thinks they should know, the characters should see the man who attacked Luis walking toward the location of their meeting. When the characters turn around, Luis should be gone. He will not answer any phone calls or appear again until the situation with the man who attacked him is addressed.

Within a day or two, the other characters should see the man who attacked Luis out of the corner of their eye—hiding in alleys, grocery stores, and parks. He won't attack unless the characters use some form of Pathos in his presence. If they do, the man will regard them as the enemy and immediately press the offensive. If a character attempts to engage him in conversation, even during a combat, he will begin a long, rambling diatribe about the "creatures of the night" and how they must be stopped. If allowed to finish his speech, he runs at the end. At first, Jordan will only engage the characters briefly, testing their limits and defenses.

After the third sighting, it should be obvious to the characters that they must stop this clearly homicidal maniac. Inaction is a recipe for disaster. At this point, there are two options: attempt to talk the man down or stop him. Attempting to contact the police will result in them offering to file a report. They will tell the characters to call if there are any more incidents. They may be taken down to the station to give a description of the man, but there's little they can do, and even less they're inclined to.

At encounter number four, the man becomes more talkative. If the characters refrain from hostile action, he will begin a discussion with them. Other than his insane worldview, the man, who introduces himself as Jordan Montaigne, is a nice guy. He may offer to buy the characters a drink at his bar, Park Avenue, or a cup of coffee. He will gladly tell the characters about the limitations and feeding of the creatures of Passion. He has a vague idea that not all Passionate creatures are evil, but with the exception of his former business partner, Jeff (AKA Jack Daniels) he takes the "kill 'em

"All Bette's stories have happy endings. That's because she knows where to stop. She's realized the real problem with stories – if you keep them going long enough, they always end in death."
-John Dee
Passengers

all, God will sort out his" approach. He's also beginning to realize that becoming a creature of the night causes people to "fade out" of reality, though his understanding of the process is tenuous, at best. Given half an opportunity, he will warn the characters that they are themselves approaching a danger point. He seems totally unaware of the fact that he's traveling down the same path. If it's pointed out to him, he will deny any such thing. Possibly violently.

There are multiple solutions to the problem of Luis and Jordan. The characters may ally with either Jordan or Luis, attacking, killing or driving off the other. Killing Jordan, unfortunately, should have profound implications for the futures of the characters. As Jordan is a man, unfaded and with a real life, characters killing him will almost certainly be caught and charged with murder. Though the characters can probably get away with saying that they acted in self defense, given Jordan's recent history of stalking (he's been taken into the police three times in the past month) and stockpiling weapons, any or all characters involved will almost certainly spend some time in jail.

Killing Luis has fewer legal consequences, but is a much more difficult proposition. Actually killing Luis leaves no witnesses, no corpse, and no paper trail; the police, even if notified of his murder, will "file a report" and simply let sleeping dogs lie. Luis is, however, a very old and very powerful Supernatural, with a number of tricks up his sleeve; killing him should be no easy task. With that being said, his Consequences are all fairly straightforward and common in folklore. They should be assigned by the Narrator as appropriate—and particularly clever attempts by players to discover or exploit them can and should be rewarded by a discovery or reaction. With a concerted effort, the characters can probably kill him. If attacked, he will fight only long enough to escape. If he escapes, the characters won't hear from him for a very long time. Of course, when they do hear from him, there will be Hell to pay.

It is possible, though difficult, for the characters to arrange a kind of "cease fire" between the two characters. Provided Luis agrees to leave St. Augustine, Jordan will simply let him walk. Luis, for his part, is wary of anyone who can hunt him with something approaching his own tools. While not eager to leave his infrastructure in the city, he will, if pressed, agree to skip town. Whether he does so without taking out a contract on Jordan and/or the characters is entirely up to the Narrator.

Once the characters have addressed the problems of Luis and Jordan, there are a number of story seeds they could follow. The Narrator could introduce the Children from the Bloody Mary storyline, having the children ask the characters for help. If Jessica, Brad, or Heather is played, the characters could confront Ana, possibly against Heather's protests. Finally, if Maria or Jessica is played (or even involved as an NPC), the characters could find themselves facing down Manolito Campero.

Of course, the Narrator could have the characters chase Luis, or he could ignore all of these plot seeds and place the characters in a whole new situation. Bloody Mary could be a good woman, trying to stop a horde of demon children from slaughtering people who they claim are their parents; Manolito could be hunting down Jack Daniels, whose feeding has ratcheted up from despair to death. Any number of options present themselves to the creative Narrator. Feel free to play with any or all of them. Never forget, the point of a role-playing game is enjoyment. Have fun.

Chapter VIII Pre-Made Characters: Unbroken

Some days it was all I could do to keep from smashing that smug sneer off Angler's face with his own damn "Supervisor of the Year" paperweight. Days like that, days when the need to scream and howl and tear the office apart until someone, anyone understood, they were the worst. On days like that, instead of standing on my desk with the pistol I snuck in fifteen years ago, I dreamed. I dreamed how I'd finally get up the balls to give some bum a bottle of booze and a hundred bucks to strangle the cocksucker as he walked out to his Bimmer three damn hours early on a Friday. I knew I'd never get up the balls to do it, but it helped. Turns out I didn't need the balls. This wild-eyed guy showed up on my doorstep last night wanting his hundred bucks.

Ten ready-to-go characters have been included within this chapter for immediate play. With the character sheet is a brief description and a first-person encounter that can be used to promptly get everyone on the same page.

As with everything else, take what you want with the contents of this chapter and modify the rest.

Gabriel

The burning hemlock and wormwood blend smelled like battery acid; my already small bedroom shrank with the stench. Swallowing hard to clear my mouth and sinuses, I traced a seal of Solomon above the SATOR square I'd drawn on a full-length mirror. "Arepbo. Imor dial hectega; oro ipaah." I croaked out the first few words, feeling them whisper dryly against my throat. "Tzaobath." The last word rocketed through my head, reverberating in the smoke until I could almost see it traced in the air.

Or was that my imagination?

"Atah, malkut, v'gevurah, v'gedulah, li-ohlam." The incantation came faster now as the urgency built inside my skull: a pressure finding its way out through my eyes, my nose and my ears almost more than it through my mouth. "Yehaushuah adonai, ehehieh aglah."

The mirror seemed to ripple and shift on the floor as the air abruptly cleared. Something moved beneath the surface, raising it like the swell of ocean above something enormous before it crested. I steadied myself against the beating of my heart. Every other time I'd no sooner felt my spirits rise in elation than the illusion cleared and I found myself straddling a mirror in a ridiculous black robe among the stubs of half-burned candles. I would close my eyes and strain to recapture the feeling of immanent wonder, so close it made it hard to breathe, but it was useless; I was stood up by a date who never really planned on coming and who, in fact, may not exist. Magic was a fickle bitch, if she was anything at all.

Don't hope Gabriel, just be.

I groped until I found the candle I'd been looking for: blended with my own blood; and cast on the hour and day of Saturn. Holding it over the mirror, I dripped wax onto the center of the square, barely managing to contain myself when the drops disappeared beneath the surface. I clutched the candle tighter in my fist.

"And when all the phantoms are banished, thou shalt see the holy and formless fire, that fire which darts and flashes at the edge of the universe." As if on cue, all the light in the room seemed to shift a millimeter closer to the ground, giving the glass a flickering illumination that seemed to come from somewhere inches below the surface. "Touch now the face of Fire." In for a penny, in for a pound; I closed my eyes, stretched my arms wide, and fell onto the mirror.

Gabriel Harris has spent his life looking for something in which to believe. Something always seemed wrong with the idea of a universe built of inert matter hurtling past and through itself at speeds determined by the time of the big bang. After dabbling in seances, table-tapping, psychometry, remote viewing, and a brief stint at a Buddhist monastery, Gabriel has settled into the comfortable routine of buying the reprint of a grimoire, plowing through the rituals spells with implacable, hopeless determination, and walking away as empty as he came.

Harris is a psychology major, near graduation, so he's familiar with what major depressive episodes look like, but he can't bring himself to do anything about it. Alone in an apartment full of alchemical equipment, an endless proliferation of ritual implements and bookshelves near-bursting, he manages to stagger through the routine only by making himself believe that there may be something True around the next corner; his capacity for self-deception is reaching its limits.

*"As they took his soul they stole his pride, and as he faced the sun he cast no shadow."
Oasis-
No Shadow*

Mary

There was no one left to die, but someone was going to. I squinted out the window, hoping that there was one more seagull flying with them just beyond the stark halogen circle of the station light. One more would make it four. Please I thought please make it four. Three gulls meant death. My breath caught when one perched just outside of the window on the other side of the desk. It turned and cocked its head at me, seeming for all the world like it was grinning.

I saw three seagulls the day Howard died. I dismissed it then, thinking, with the smug certainty of youth that I knew I knew better than the generations that came before. I knew then that the legend I heard at Mama's knee, her thick Cuban accent carefully treading around the edges of unfamiliar English was just that. I legend. Sometimes I wish I knew now what I knew then. An angry spirit of the sea didn't haunt us. Manolito Campero was a myth; seagulls weren't omens, they were rats with wings. Later, when I received the notice--soulless bureaucratic euphemisms expressing its regret that my husband was killed in the line of duty, I remembered the day, I remembered the gulls.

Three gulls were picking along the beach together outside of the country club where I was working six months later. One of them waddled curiously to the table, picking at scraps on the table before I shooed it away. I saw a flash of gray on one of their faces and suppressed a shiver of superstition. Twenty minutes later, I got a call from Cassandra that Joey was in the hospital. She had taken a call in the other room while he was in the bathtub. When she came back in, he wasn't breathing.

A month later, I saw three seagulls flying together while I got another call at work. Cassandra had killed herself. At the funeral, Jessica blamed me for her becoming an only child; it was the last time she talked to me. I started to believe then, and I still believed, sitting in the police station beside the window, watching three seagulls

circling the building. I was going to find Manolito Campero; whoever or whatever he was, and kill him. But the officer trying to process me didn't care about that, and wouldn't believe me if I told him.

"Miss Hines?" The man at the desk snapped his fingers in front of my face. "Ma'am, where did you get this license?"

"The DMV." I sat quietly, trying not to draw attention to the packets of herbs, charms, and animal bits in my pocket; they take that away from you if they see them.

"Well, Mary, I've gotta be honest with you: I just checked the system, and there's no record of anyone with this license number." I wanted to wipe that smug expression off of his face with my fist and keep wiping until there was nothing left. Instead I kept my silence.

He fidgeted idly with his pen while he waited for me to incriminate myself. I'm homeless, not stupid, and I could play the waiting game better than he could; I'd had more years of practice. I stared at a point just over the top of his head, schooling my expression into a perfect poker face.

Outside the window, the gulls settled onto the ground. Seconds later, a man in a suit coat the color of old sea foam strolled into the perimeter of the light. As he came closer, one of the gulls took to the air briefly and settled on his shoulder. He stroked its neck and whispered something to it, coming closer to the window. Weren't the cops supposed to patrol the building or something?

He stopped less than six inches away from the glass. He leered at me, then laughed. There was no doubt in my mind who this was, and there was no way for me to reach him. His eyes never left mine as he reached into his pocket and pulled out a crumpled photograph before pressing it to the window.

Oh, my God. Jessica.

*"All of us get lost in the
darkness, dreamers learn to
steer by the stars."*

*-Rush
The Pass*

Maria Hines is trouble's child. She lost her husband, her youngest child, her middle child, her sanity, her job, and her home. She has become convinced that a spirit of vengeance calling himself Manolito Campero from her family's days in Cuba is causing all of her tragedies. She might just be right. Freed of her obligations, and with even her oldest (and now only) daughter refusing to have anything to do with her, nothing is stopping Maria from finding Manolito and killing him. She doesn't know what variety of spirit he is, but she has time and generations of family stories. Something is bound to work.

Maria is in her mid-forties, though under all of the grime, she looks much younger than that. She habitually mumbles charms, incantations and prayers to herself, both as practice for when she really needs them and to banish any little nasties that may have shown up. She dresses in filthy, cast-off clothing and usually pushes around her cart of "ghost hunting" gear.

*"I'm on the outside, I'm
looking in. I can see through
you, see your true colors.
'Cause inside you're ugly;
you're ugly like me. I can see
through you, see to the real
you."
Staind-
Outside*



Name _____ Experience _____

Character Maria Hines Session _____

Imagination

Perception

Retention

d6 Mental Die

4 Initiative Base
Factors
Mad Eyes
Language (English)
Focus

S. E. S.

Factors
Secret Hideout x3

Physical Die **d6**

7 Natural Defense
Factors
Deceptive Strength
Double Jointed

Agility

Strength

Resilience

Liminal Appearance

Intensity

Anguish	Dread	Fury	Yearning
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Magic
Cowed
Righteous Indignation

Consequences

Skills
Social

Intimidation

Kinesics

Lying

Observation

Tenacity

Skills
Health

Alternative Medicine

Skills
Criminal

Security

Sleight of Hand

Urban Stealth

Urban Survival

Skills
Basic Combat

Armed Strike

Evasive

Intimidation

Unarmed Strike

Skills
Arcane

Cryptozoology

Sensitivity

Skills

Skills

Skills

Jacob

The alarm rocked through the dream like a spike through my skull. I rolled over and flopped at my clock until the beeping stopped. I braced myself for one more day as my stomach growled, reminding me that there were reasons to go through the motions.

I groped around in the gray half-morning until I found the "clean" pile; scooping up the wrinkled mess, I staggered into the bathroom, carefully avoiding hitting the couch. My illegal roommate rolled over in his sleep and mumbled something at me as I passed, one arm thrown carelessly across the upright back of the futon. It looked like he passed out still wearing his shoes and hat; a good sign that he had probably already blown his paycheck. No help for rent this month.

The water went cold halfway through washing my hair. Cold water is supposed to wake you up, but instead it gave my exhaustion a shivering edge that refused to leave as I crawled, clammy, into my work clothes. I tiptoed into the kitchen to see if there was anything left of the spaghetti I made last night, but apparently my roommate hit that, too.

I grabbed a couple of slices of bread and smeared them with peanut butter before I slumped down the stairs and through the rain to my car. When it finally started, it made a quiet whine that scared me all the way to work.

In the store, no one was in a better mood than I was, so we opened in silence. Our customers took their coffee and bagels with barely a nod to me and scurried away. No one decided to stay in the cafe, which, I supposed, was a blessing. Then James came.

Everyone knew that he was trying to recruit for some con, but he wasn't doing anything obviously illegal and he spent a lot of money. No one could accuse Townsend Books, Inc. of not looking at the bottom line.

He oozed his way to my register, all smiles and fresh-pressed dress clothes. This was the kind of man that Lee Iacocca had wet dreams about; a walking advertisement for clean-cut Asian American industriousness.

"How are you doing this morning?" He lit up a grin at me.

"Can't complain. What can I get you?" I flashed him a grimace.

"Hey, if you can't complain, it's a good day, right?" I could almost hear the ching in his smile this time.

"Actually, if I can't complain, it's a day where I'm bound by company policy to keep my mouth shut." I pasted a deliberately vapid smile to my face and shot it at him. "Half-caff cappuccino?"

"Umm, yeah." He actually forgot to grin at me that time. Good.

"Three dollars and fifteen cents. It'll be waiting at the end of the counter." I dropped all the fake brightness out of my voice and pointed. "You know the drill."

"Yeah."

When his eight-o'clock showed up, I wasn't any nicer to him.

"I don't know, sir. The deciding part is your job." He fidgeted and ummed for a while before deciding on a caramel mud mocha, large. He was a tall, awkward kid, obviously wearing the only set of dress clothes he owned; I could still see the lines from where the shirt was folded in the package. Poor chump didn't stand a chance. When he picked up his drink, I scowled at him, wishing him a good morning in that tone of voice I know tells people precisely the opposite.

"Yeah, thanks," he said. "I will." He gave me a spooked look from over his shoulder as he skittered away. At least this one didn't laugh. I hate it when they do that nervous, bullshit giggle. Like there's anything to laugh about here. Made me sick every time I heard it.

"Those who dream by day are cognizant of many things that escape those who dream only at night."

-Edgar Allan Poe

When he got to James' table, I couldn't hear exactly what he said, but his body language was all about apology. He never sat down, either. James nodded, thin-lipped, and fished for a business card.

Then the kid booked it out of there like someone stapled a rare steak to his neck in a home for starving dogs.

Good. The poor sucker got away.

Jacob Azzai is, or rather was, an art student, working at the LiveWire Café in Townsend Books to (barely) cover the bills. He's intensely idealistic, creative, a fairly talented poet, and convinced that everyone has a purpose in life; he just doesn't know what his is, and he's despaired of ever finding it. He has little patience for pettiness or stupidity, a poor choice in vices for someone working at a coffee shop. Despite his gruff, sarcastic exterior, Jacob is genuinely kind and deeply wounded by the callousness of the world.

He has dark brown hair, trimmed short but growing out, and brown, limpid eyes. He's just under six feet tall on those rare occasions when he stands without slouching, which isn't often.

He wants to fulfill his purpose, whatever that is. He knows in his heart of hearts that there's just no way for him to accomplish anything the way things stand now, and he can't think of any way to fix it.

Jacob is beginning to suspect that there's more to his life than meets the eye; strange things have been happening lately, kids appearing and disappearing—kids only he sees—odd customers giving him odder looks over their coffee, and unearthly whispers coming from just around the corner. Though he knows that he's probably just going crazy, he has to wonder whether what he's hearing is perhaps the call of his future.

“They tell us that we’re savages who haven’t got a hope. We’re burning in the furnaces, we’re choking at the smoke. They say we haven’t got a choice, refuse to recognize our voice. Yet they enjoy comissions from the proceeds of the joke.”
-Keith Reid

Abeo

Name _____ Experience _____
 Character Jacob Azzai Session _____

Imagination

 Perception

 Retention

Mental Die **d6**

 Initiative Base **4**
 Factors
Artist
Rhythm

S. E. S.

 Factors
Golden Tongue x3
Low Capital

Physical Die **d6**

 Natural Defense **7**
 Factors
Catnapper x2

Agility

 Strength

 Resilience

Liminal Appearance _____

 Consequences _____

Intensity

 Anguish Dread Fury Yearning

Magic
When You Cry, You Cry Alone
Lock and POUND
Habituation

Skills
 Social

 Kinesics

 Observation

 Tenacity

Skills
 Outdoors

 Exertion

 Animal Care

Skills
 Art

 Writing

 Visual Art

Skills
 Arcane

 Sensitivity

 Cryptozoology

Skills
 Criminal

 Urban Survival

Skills
 Technical

 Electronics

Skills

Skills

James

My eight-o'clock was five minutes late. Sloppy. I wanted to tell him that he'd never make any money with those habits, but I didn't. Instead I smiled while he fidgeted at me, then let the smile drop while he made some lame excuse about why he had to leave. I gave him my card and reminded him that the only way he was going to find success was by seeking it aggressively.

I admit it, I overreacted when I went to chew out the poor schmuck who served the coffee, but he needed a dose of reality. When he looked like he finally got the point, I went back to my reading, but I hadn't gotten more than two pages into it when the slam of a heavy stack of books landing on my table jerked me back into reality. Pointedly ignoring the introduction, I tried to continue reading.

"Business motivation, James? Do you really need that?" I didn't bother looking up; I'd recognize that aggressive, smoke-roughened voice in a hurricane.

"No, Samantha, I don't need it, but some of my clients could use some of the advice. You, for example, would do well to try to muster some enthusiasm for your own future." I stretched my feet under the table and gently closed the book.

"There are more important things out there than investment portfolios, Jimmy-boy." She grabbed the chair across from mine, tilted it back, spun it on one leg, and flopped down straddling the back, all in one practiced motion. "Like, what good are retirement plans going to do anyone if we don't have any breathable air when it comes time to use them?" She Cheshire-catted a grin at me like she hadn't made that point dozens of times before.

"I doubt it's that bad, Samantha." I avoided sighing out loud. I was proud of that. "Besides, I didn't think you cared about breathable air, the way you poison yourself."

"Sammie. My name is Sammie. My smoking is my business. And if you'd listen to me one of these days and actually look into the statistics instead of just blowing me off, you'd see what I'm talking about." She blew a stray chunk of wheat-blond bangs out of her eyes. She was pretty, if a bit butch for my tastes.

"Sammie, I've listened and I've looked. I've heard all about ecosystems," I began ticking things off on my fingers. "Women's rights, animal rights, economic

exploitation, the plight of the Native American, the spotted owl, and the blue whale. I've listened until my ears nearly bled, but you've never answered the question I asked when we first met: how does caring about any of that put food on my table or clothes on my back?"

"I can't believe this." Her voice popped an octave higher. "Jesus, James, your great grandfather probably came over here, practically a slave, to build a railroad. People died building for rich people just like the one you're trying to become."

I felt my voice drop and pull her attention to me, away from the details of the lie I was about to tell. "Actually, I'm not Chinese. I'm Vietnamese. The only reason I'm here and not in some rice field, wading through mud and human feces is because a family of yuppies—your word, not mine—decided they wanted to work hard enough to buy nice things, and then decided to shell out to adopt me. Don't talk about how evil wealth is to me."

That made her miss a beat. Good. She needed to rethink her world a little. She didn't have to know that everything I just said was a line, and if there's anything I've learned how to do, it's lie convincingly. She licked her lips and whispered. "There are more important things, James, than your next Rolex."

"Not to me there aren't. But that's not the point. Think of it this way: how much good are you doing for all of your causes right now?"

"What?" She twisted her upper lip in skepticism, but unconsciously leaned forward to

"After all, it's what we've done that makes us what we are."

-Jim Croce

One Less Set of Footsteps

hear what I had to say next. Excellent.

"Right now, what good are you doing? Skipping from protest to rally to boycott, you're not doing anything but losing your voice." She drew in a breath to interrupt me, but I held up a finger and started talking just a little louder, a little faster. She shut her mouth and settled her chin into her arms on the back of the chair.

"Think about it; what if instead of waiting in the rain for someone in a corporate office hundreds of miles away to notice you, you were able to talk with your wallet? You've said it yourself. Money is all we corrupt types care about, eh?" Her skeptical expression was already starting to fade. If I could get this chick, I could recruit anyone.

James Yiu is a mid-twenties young urban professional with a golden tongue, sticky fingers, and Teflon skin. His love of money is second only to his love of his own status. A few years ago, he discovered a small pyramid scheme operating as an insurance company. Since then, he's been happily fleecing everyone who'll give him the time of day. Needless to say, he doesn't have very many real friends, but that's okay with him. Just fewer people that will try to manipulate him out of his money. He grew up in an upper-middle class family; his father was a doctor and his mother was a housewife. All the parenting books say he should have grown up to be an upstanding citizen; a credit to his family and his community. The parenting books lied, and now, so does James. Professionally.

Two years ago, James met a man named Luis Esteban Solana the II. Luis offered him the opportunity and talent to make money, and lots of it. James thought he was crazy, but the guy was obviously fairly well off himself, and he didn't think there was any danger in taking him up on the offer. Now, Luis has called him again, and wants to meet for drinks at Park Avenue to discuss his favor. He didn't give James any details, and something makes him wonder if he's perhaps made a literal deal with the Devil.

James is 5'10, with close-cropped hair and a lean, active physique. He always wears tasteful, perfectly chosen outfits; crisp slacks, perfectly straight ties, and the kind of cat-in-the-cream grin that makes investors clutch their wallets even while they're pulling out their checkbooks.

"All I want is everything. Am I asking too much?"
Def Leppard-
All I Want is Everything



Name _____ Experience _____
 Character James Yiu Session _____

Imagination
 Perception
 Retention

d6 Mental Die
4 Initiative Base
 Factors
 Designer _____
 Innovator _____
 Kinesic _____

S. E. S.
 Factors
 Secret Hideout _____
 Golden Tongue _____
 Labeled _____
 Money to Burn _____

Physical Die **d6**
 Natural Defense **7**
 Factors
 Teflon Skin _____
 Negative Wildcard (4) _____

Agility
 Resilience
 Strength

Liminal Appearance _____

 Consequences _____

Intensity
 Anguish Dread Fury Yearning

Magic
 Avarice _____
 Allure _____
 Bribery _____
 Socialize _____

Skills Social
 Intimidation _____
 Kinesics _____
 Lying _____
 Networking _____
 Observation _____

Skills Computers
 Devices _____
 Networking _____

Skills Collegiate
 Business _____
 Logic _____
 Law _____
 Sociology _____
 Research _____

Skills _____

Skills _____

Skills _____

Skills _____

Skills _____

Sammie

If I could make James see, then I could show anyone. I wanted to beat him to death with his own self-satisfied smirk sometimes, but my God, the good he could do with that charisma... "I'm not saying it's all you care about, James. Just that you care more than you should." After that little gem of family history he dropped in my lap, I couldn't stay mad at him.

"Well, I'm saying it now. He who dies with the most toys still dies. But he still had the most toys, too." He steepled his fingers on the table. He smiled that perfect, calculated smile I can almost see with my eyes closed by now. "Samantha, I'm worried about you," Cue the sincerity, Maestro. "You're a bright, beautiful girl with a big heart. There's more out there for you than secondhand t-shirts and torn jeans. Just give me a chance to show you the rest of the world. Please."

"Tell you what," I stood up, straddling the chair. Resting my elbows on the table, I leaned forward almost far enough for him to see down my "This is what a feminist looks like" shirt. Almost. The great thing about men was the way you can watch their brains shut off the moment they think they can see the two lumps of fat you carry on your chest. Girls, take note. You have better siege engines growing in your training bra than Alexander the Great ever dreamed of.

"Spend a day, just one day, without spending any money. None. Stay away from your nice car and your nice apartment. Don't wear your nice clothes, either. I'll give you an outfit." He drew in a breath to interrupt me, but I raised one finger and started talking a little faster. He shut his mouth and sat back against his chair, listening. "At the end of that day, if you can watch how people react to you, and still..."

Pain. First there was pain like someone was playing every nerve in my body with a white-hot hammer. It rocked my whole body at once, sending me rigid.

"And still...Oh, God." The hurt didn't have edges. It didn't sting or throb. There was no differentiation, no flavor as my synapses shriveled and curled against the heat of it. "You need..."

I may have fallen out of the chair, but it didn't matter; I couldn't feel anything but agony. There wasn't room in my body for the pain and me both, and I could feel myself being slowly squeezed out. My muscles clenched against each other, spasming frantically as I tried to bite off and swallow mouthfuls of air.

"Samantha, are you okay?" I opened my eyes, and the colors had run together, falling in great globs of light and shadow and perspective, dripping off of the window and onto James' face, melting it into a surrealist nightmare. The light started to fade, falling across the swirling walls and tables like a curtain. As the darkness rose, the pain fell away, gradually subsiding into an ache centered behind my teeth.

The smell hit me next; filthy beaches, unwashed bodies, mud. It was like the stink of a hundred backwoods retreats and concerts rolled together, then shoved into my sinuses. I shook my head, closing my eyes against the impression of the store wobbling like gelatin around me.

"Are you okay? I'm sorry about that." I had already opened my mouth to shoot back an angry response when I realized that it wasn't James' voice that asked. Not at all. Hesitantly cracking my eyes, I saw a little girl, seven or eight years old, sitting between James and I at the table. She was soaking wet, and by all indications, the smell was coming from her as much as it was coming from my pickled brain.

James just stared at her, mouth opening and closing dumbly. He looked at me questioningly, then at the girl. When I shook my head, at least as confused as he was, the girl hopped off of her chair and tugged at my shirt.

"Can you help me?" She looked pleadingly into my eyes. "I'm real scared. Please don't get mad at me for bugging you."

*"No excellent soul is exempt from a mixture of madness."
Aristotle-*

James finally got over his silent spell. "Where did you come from?"

She looked at him pityingly. "From the bookstore." She pointed behind her. "Where else would I have come from?" James pressed his fingers against his sinuses and shook his head.

"What can I do for you, sweetie?" I swung my chair around so I was sitting with my back actually against the backrest. I sank my elbows to my knees to make eye contact. "Did you lose your mom?"

The girl was trying hard not to cry, I could tell. Poor thing's probably been lost for a while. I reached out to give her a reassuring pat on the shoulder, but as soon as my hand made contact with her, the flashback hit me again.

I jerked my hand away as it spasmed into a fist. Glass. There was glass everywhere. The previously liquid world around me warped and shattered into a hundred thousand razor edged pieces.

I was covered in blood and angry.

I was young and scared; I was going to get rid of a monster. I was hungry and lonely and my parents didn't remember who I was.

I was me again. And the girl was gone. James shook his head and looked at me quizzically.

Damn acid flashbacks.

Sammie Pecenka logged more protest hours in 2004 than her parents did in the entirety of the 1960s. She is deeply ashamed of the affluence into which she was born, and has spent her entire adult life attempting to make up for it. She researches continuously, attempting to discover the newest, greatest wrongs to be righted. Though she hopes to someday cross the invisible line separating the oppressors and heroes, every word she reads and hears drives home just how good she has it, even at her worst.

Sammie is 24 years old, 5'11", and athletic. She keeps her dishwater-blond hair in a short pageboy that she seldom bothers to comb or trim. She's athletic and deeply tanned from all of her time in summer marches. She usually wears t-shirts from activist organizations and cutoff shorts. She's careful not to drink anything but fair-trade coffee, and doesn't wear anything from any companies that utilize sweatshop labor; her choices are limited, which suits her fine. She chain smokes menthol cigarettes, even though she knows the kind of evil empire they support: a two pack a day indulgence that leaves her racked with guilt even as she reaches for her lighter.

"Schizophrenia is a brain disorder that affects one percent of the population. That means over two million people in the US – only the US – have it. Makes you wonder how a million people can be wrong."
-Chad Otteni

Barron

"No."

She was breaking my heart, and she knew it.

Maybe I didn't ask right. Did I maybe break some stupid sorority rule? Miss some idiotic little step in their vacuous mating dance?

"Okay, how about later?" I leaned my elbow against the bookshelf, straining to look cool, in control. "It's playing at least until this weekend."

"Um, no." She crossed her arms and leaned away from me, laughing uncomfortably. Settling back into the corner she stood up taller, forcing her breasts higher in her arms. Then she looked over my shoulder like she was waiting for a date. Probably some wide-shouldered grunting ape with a grudge and the genitals of a hamster. She was decked out like a high-class college prostitute: short black skirt, shiny blouse, heels and some light, fruity perfume that almost choked me, but left me wanting more. Oh yeah. She was waiting for someone alright. Me. I shifted to the side, blocking her view.

"Hey, well, here's my number, give me a call when you want to go out." I pulled out a business card; high rag content bonded stock with raised lettering.

Barron Johnson
21337xr@gmail.com
904-555-5793

Si hoc signum legere potes, operis boni in rebus latinus alacribus et fructuosus potiri potes.

When she took the card out of my hands, her fingers brushed mine briefly, and I felt a little shiver go up my spine. I moved out of her way and bowed. A little bit of Old World charm never hurts when trying to woo the borderline retarded. "Well, I've monopolized your time enough. Have a good night."

She didn't say a word, just mallwalked a straight line away.

I stared after her, boring holes into her empty little skull with my eyes. If there was any justice in the world, the rude little slut would burst into flame, or have an anvil land on her head, or something. Die. She needed to die. I continued to look at her, and couldn't help laughing when a pile of books someone had stacked carelessly on a high shelf nearly landed on her head. At the last second she skittered out of the way and ran into some big dumb ox rounding a corner.

Her face, oh her face. It was classic.

A girl, maybe seven or eight, sitting in a chair next to them smiled and looked at me. She laughed, but it was an angry thing: pure schadenfreude. I understood, and I grinned at her understandingly and cocked a finger at them, pulling an imaginary trigger.

Barron Johnson, a Computer Science major at Flagler University, is an angry young man. He's not angry about the racism he's routinely subjected to in the South, the fact that he was born into an economically disadvantaged family, or his lack of opportunity. He sees all of these things, but has come to the conclusion that those are minor issues for someone of his brilliance. Barron is primarily angry at the ignorance and stupidity of the world at large, and women in general. He's furious that no one will acknowledge his genius, and that the girls he wants to date don't want to date him just because he's skinny, awkward, and doesn't care about their inane interests. Unfortunately for the rest of the world, Barron really is a genius. At 19 years old he's already nearly graduated college, and brilliant investments have

actually made him more monetarily successful than many established professionals. For all of his curmudgeonly exterior, Barron is really trying to make a connection with

"I find that the sensation of myself as an ego inside a bag of skin is really a hallucination."
-Alan Watts

another human being. While he may not have the best way of going after his goals, he only wants to be liked.

Barron trusts luck and his own instincts; right now his instincts are telling him to look in the dark corners of the world. By keeping his eyes open and paying attention to the coincidences that surround him, he's come to the conclusion that there's a whole new world to discover, waiting just below the one he knows. Still, he knows better than to throw himself into his hypothesis wholeheartedly; there's not enough data. He could, after all, just be going insane. All the same, he doubts that he's losing his mind, and he patiently waits for the next revelation to yield its secrets to him.

He is a 5'8", excruciatingly skinny African-American man who looks at least three years younger than he should. He has short-cropped hair and dresses in corporate chic; expensive clothes, khakis, polos, suit jackets and accessories. He never really looks at home in them; they're more billboards of his success than something he wears for their look or comfort.

“I cry a lot. My emotions are very close to my surface. I don't want to hold anything in so it festers and turns to pus – a pustule of emotion that explodes into a festering cesspool of depression.”
-Nicholas Cage

Braddock

Heather plowed into me full-tilt, almost knocking us both over in a flurry of books. I saw the instinctive apology on her lips wither and die, then rise as a sneer. Oh God, what did I mess up this time?

"Can we leave?" She pushed herself away and straightened her skirt.

"The reading hasn't even started yet." I tried to keep it from sounding plaintive, whiny. I think I failed. I'm supposed to take control here. That's what guys do. Control.

"God, Brad. That is so gay." She's more than a foot shorter than me, but it's easy to forget that when she stretches as tall as she can and looks down her nose like that. She's beautiful, my girlfriend. But cold. "And I don't mean stupid. I mean full-on, leather chaps, flag-waving G -A-Y. A poetry reading?"

I tried to look into her eyes, but I couldn't make it. So instead I talked to the top of my shoes. "Where do you want to go, then?"

"I don't know. How about we go get some tapas and catch a musical?" She dangled one hand in the air and described a circle with little, mincing steps. "I think that's be just fabulous." She threw her head back and roared with laughter. The people around us stopped their conversations and stared. "What did you say Brad?"

"Nothing."

"It didn't sound like nothing. What did you say?"

"I..."

"What? I can't understand you when you mumble."

"People are staring at us."

"Maybe they should." She pulled her blouse down and straightened her skirt again. Heatherese for a change of topic. "Where's Jarrod? Maybe he's found something entertaining to do here."

"He's over in the sex books. I think Jessica and Blaine are with him."

"If we're not still there when you're done," she bit of the words individually, spitefully, and tucked an artfully stray hair behind her ear, "we've probably gone and done something more interesting. Seeya." She stood on her tiptoes and pecked me on the lips, but it was a mechanical bit of stage work: what a good girlfriend does. It was getting to be all that I really expected.

After she left I wandered to the cafe and found a table in the corner no one was using. A guy about my age was setting up a music stand so old that the black finish had fallen away in chunks and even the silver underneath had tarnished to a dull grey. He looked like a poet: slouching posture and sad eyes, brown corduroy all over and a newsie hat he kept on while he read.

"I'm Jacob Azzai." He didn't look up from his paperwork, and his voice sounded hollow and joyless, like it was coming from a corpse that was only still here because no one had bothered burying it yet. "William Ernest Henley wrote a poem called 'Invictus' while he was in the hospital for tuberculosis, getting his legs amputated. It's about what he calls his 'unconquerable soul.' Well, we don't all have one of those. Here's a poem for the rest of us. I call it 'Victus.'"

As he started to recite, he looked up at the few of us sitting in the cafe, and I felt my whole world fall away in bits and pieces. He never once looked at the paper he'd set up on the stand, but dropped the poem onto us like it was a nightly prayer or a mantra he'd been repeating for years.

They came in twos
Star-crossed and storied

"Whatever the scientists may say, if we take the supernatural out of life, we leave only the unnatural."
-Amelia Barr

*With glory poured out on them like
Haloes on the burning burdens of saints and heroes.*

It wasn't the words, but something about the way he said them that made me want to find a hole to crawl into. Every syllable was an accusation against the world, spat with the last, dying curse of a man starving in the midst of plenty. There was nothing worth breathing for as long as what he said was true. I wanted to disappear, just to get away...

*What words my lips will fail to form
And leave my echoes cracked and torn
What envy called by traitor fear
Stalled and halted, left me here
To watch them go in twos,
Then threes?*

The whole thing had lasted maybe ten seconds, but it was the longest ten seconds of my life. Then, like a light turning on, I surfaced from the sadness. Instantly, without any in-between, it was over. I still had the memory of the feeling, and that was enough by itself to drape my mood in greys, but nothing remained of the hurt itself.

I wiped my eyes surreptitiously against my sleeve, barely aware that I had been crying before making sure that no one saw me. Heather would have a blast with that one, crying because of a poem. Not that Jarrod or Jessica or Blaine would be any nicer about it. But no one was looking at my little corner. Safe, for now. God, what kind of weak, stupid kid cries in public?

Jacob sat down, and some hippie chick with short hair and a bandanna read something about the dying world, and responsibility--the usual crap you hear at protests. It bored me, honestly. I was thinking about getting up and getting a cup of coffee when some woman sat down on me.

"Ohmigod, I am so sorry." Her voice had a nasal twang that set my nerves on edge, but she looked horrified. "I totally didn't see you sitting there. I am so sorry."

"Don't worry about it." My voice was still husky, and rather than say anything else I smiled in what I hoped was a reassuring way and dismissed it with a shake of my head. She nodded and settled into a table a few down from mine, mouthing I'm sorry one more time before I looked back at the stage.

I nearly jumped out of my skin when I saw a little girl sitting across from me.

When she saw me jump in my chair, she let out a little peep of fear. She looked like she was wet, even though it hadn't been raining for hours.

"I'm scared." She squinted as she said it and pulled herself into a ball. "Please help me?"

Braddock "Brad" McLeod is scared. Of not doing what he's supposed to do, of failing, of dying alone. Most of all, Brad is scared of being different. Unfortunately for Brad, he's got a poetic soul and quite a bit of sensitivity, which is a bad match with a football scholarship and a model girlfriend. The people that he spends time with enjoy making him the butt of their jokes, and he's bound by his own "normal" code of behavior to antagonize the people with whom he'd get along best. He's diffident, quiet, shy, and tries his best to disappear whenever he's in public. He has a core of rage, though, that is slowly building to a head. One of these days it may release.

Brad was at his friend Jessica's apartment a couple of weeks ago when he saw it. Her. He doesn't really know, but whatever it was, it terrified him. It introduced itself as Ana Mills, and it was his girlfriend's agent. Ana was beautiful, ethereal, and somehow, subtly wrong. When Jessica ran out of the room, Brad followed. Holding Jessica's hair back as she vomited, Brad caught a glimpse of Ana in the mirror, and it was nothing at all like what he saw with his eyes. A shriveled, emaciated husk, hair falling out in clumps, sipped bottled water with his girlfriend in the living room. Brad and Jessica hid in the bathroom until the other two went out for coffee. Neither Brad nor Jessica has mentioned the

*"If you understand
hallucination and illusion, you
don't blindly follow any leader.
You must know if the person is
sane or insane, over the abyss."
Marguerite Young-*

experience since.

He is a large man: 6'3 and approaching 300 pounds of muscle; his physical presence and athletic talent alone would be enough to gain him entry into the "in crowd" he admires. Unfortunately for him, his sheepish nature invites the very ridicule he so fears. Blond-haired with electric blue eyes, considerate, handsome and secretly artistic, it's no wonder he's dating the hottest chick in the school. With all the right friends, the perfect girlfriend, a full-ride scholarship and a bright future ahead of him, he doesn't understand why he's so scared of the things to come.

*“Students of perception have
for a long time accepted the
idea of an ordinary
hallucination, by which they
meant some extraneous image
superimposed on what was
being perceived in the normal
way, but hallucinations of even
this kind were regrettably
seldom studied.”
-Celia Green*

Abeo

Name _____ Experience _____
 Character Braddock MacLeod Session _____

Imagination

Perception

Retention

Mental Die **d6**

Initiative Base **7**
Factors
 Rhythm x2
 Marathoner
 Juggernaut

S. E. S.

Factors
 Secret Hideout

Physical Die **d6**

Natural Defense **9**
Factors
 Athletic
 Accuracy
 Sprinter x2
 Allergy (Peanuts)

Agility

Resilience

Strength

Liminal Appearance

Consequences

Intensity

Anguish	Dread	Fury	Yearning
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Chameleon

Magic

Skills
Basic Combat

Initiative

Unarmed Strike

Evasive

Skills
Arcane

Sensitivity

Skills
Outdoors

Exertion

Skills
Social

Kinesics

Skills
Art

Writing

Skills

Skills

Skills

Heather

Why am I so mean to him? I wanted to tell him I was sorry, that I shouldn't have said that to him, but he should know. So instead, I kissed him, tried to say everything with my lips that the rest of my mouth wouldn't let me say, and ran away.

I saw all the other girls, the skinny, pretty ones, looking at him. I saw the way they pretended to read their magazines or the backs of paperback romance books, looking over the tops at my man. Mine.

I couldn't blame them. Brad was on a football scholarship, and you could tell. He was tall and broad and blond and wide in all the right places. I kept telling him that he should be a model. He'd be a better model than I am.

No, that's not what I told him.

I told him that he spends too much time looking at himself. I called him a pretty boy.

Why am I so horrible?

By the sex books, Blaine and Jarrod leaned heavily on the bookshelves, talking, and Jessica sat cross-legged on the floor, flipping through copies of the Kama Sutra, laughing at the illustrations. Jessica smiled at me and pointed at something in the book. She tried to hide it, but I could tell she pitied me. She could be a model, too. She had that perfect olive skin and long, thick midnight black hair. She looked like Catherine Zeta-Jones. She was beautiful, and she always had better clothes than me. She was wearing a shimmery, pastel button-down blouse that hugged her just right. Classy, but sexy. I need a blouse like that.

"Hey Jessica." I paused and squinted at her. "Have you been wearing that shirt all night?"

"Yeah, why? Is there something wrong with it?" She craned her neck and tried to examine her own back.

"No, not really. But," God, I hate myself. "Don't you think it's a little...revealing?"

"You think?" She's so sweet, too. But gullible.

"Yeah, a little. You wanna borrow my car and go change before we hit Park Avenue? You're seriously gonna get something put in your drink wearing that."

She looked down again, eyes tightened in thought. A moment later she had decided. "If you don't mind."

"Go for it. Be back here in half an hour?" I hate this, but at least she won't be wearing the blouse.

"Yeah. I'm gonna go to the bathroom real quick and come back for the keys."

"Cool. Hey, why don't you wear that brown spaghetti strap we bought at the mall last week?"

"You don't think that's too tacky for Park Avenue?"

"Nah."

"Okay. Seeya in half." She bounced away, and Blaine and Jarrod were too busy talking about something with football for me to really care. I flopped into one of the big stuffed chair with a copy of some fashion magazine and just zoned for a little while. My head was pounding. Aspirin would help, but I didn't deserve aspirin. I earned my headache.

I'd be prettier. I had to keep that in mind. You never knew when a scout or somebody who knew somebody would be hanging out. I couldn't afford to be eclipsed by a girl who didn't even care. I already lost one opportunity this week.

I turned pages, not even really paying attention to the pictures, trying not to hear the

*"A darkness grows inside me in
fading shades of grey."*

*-Stabbing Westward
Torn Apart*

photographer in the back of my head. Yeah, we were supposed to shoot today for Flaunt, but my schedule is a little weird, he said. The message on my answering machine seemed so loud, like everyone down the hall could hear it. I'll call you when we can shoot. Don't call me.

I'd fought so hard for that, got so close. The layout people didn't seem impressed by my head shots or my portfolio. I called them personally and talked until they listened. I had to go through so many secretaries, so many little games of phone tag. By the end, I felt stretched thin, achy, like there was nothing left of me.

Kind of like I was feeling now.

I put down the magazine and rubbed my temples.

"Hey pretty lady." Some little girl was looking at me, sitting in the other chair. "Can you help me? I need your help."

"You really think I'm pretty?" I smiled at her. "You're very pretty...too." She wasn't, really. She was dirty and smelled bad, and she was wearing a little kid dress that clung to her like an old banana peel to the inside of a trash can. She was even wet. How? It wasn't raining. But I gritted my teeth and pretended. She was such a sweet girl, after all.

"Yes, and I don't think you're fat or stupid or ugly or mean at all. Will you help me?"

I just stared at her, openmouthed. "What?"

"You're not mean or ugly, I said. I want you to help me."

"That's... I just don't... What do you want?"

"Help." She bounced off of the side of the chair and ducked down behind it like she'd dropped something and needed to pick it up. When she didn't come back up, I leaned over, wondering what she was doing.

She was gone.

Heather Stubblefield is a Sears catalog model who isn't pretty enough to make it to the big leagues. She knows this, because her agent told her six months ago. Since then, she's been doing nothing but dieting, exercising, clothes and cosmetics shopping, and pricing plastic surgery. In all likelihood, Heather has borderline personality disorder, but does a good enough job of hiding it that no one has any real way of knowing. Other than her obsession with being the prettiest person in the room (a title she competes with her boyfriend, Brad, and her best friend, Jessica for, without them knowing it), she's intelligent, driven, and extremely well connected.

Heather's relationship with her agent, Ana, is strange, to say the least. Constantly egging her to try new diets and fashions, to become prettier, thinner, quieter. Though Heather cringes at her new diet, exercise and clothing regimen, her career has never been better.

She's feared for over a year that Ana would meet either her boyfriend, Brad, or her friend Jessica, and drop her contract for one or both of theirs. Now that it's happened, Heather's seen that Ana isn't interested in either of them. She wonders what scared Jessica so much that night, though she's not about to look a gift horse in the mouth and ask.

She is stunningly beautiful, slender, with bright-red hair and ferociously piercing green eyes. When she walks into a room, there is no doubt in anyone's mind that she is the most important person there, and when she leaves it, everyone feels her absence like a sudden hole in the air. She's 5'6 and weighs 115 pounds on her "fat" days. She always wears the newest, most "in" couture, and never fails to ingratiate herself to those she feels can do her a favor. Those she's already reeled in, however, see her sharper, shriller side.

"Gradually stitched into his world. Wanting not to know better, she gleefully memorized his lies, and recites them to the letter."

*Hannah Rokel-
No Vengeance Taken*

Abeo

Name _____ Experience _____
Character Heather Stubblefield Session _____

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Imagination
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■■■■□□□□
Perception
□□□□□□□□
■■■■□□□□
Retention
□□□□□□□□

d6 Mental Die
5 Initiative Base
Factors
Bad Driver
Designer
Artist
Bullheaded

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S. E. S.
□□□□□□□□
Factors
Golden Tongue x2
Influential Friends

Physical Die **d6**
Natural Defense **7**
Factors
Shrinking Violet

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Agility
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Strength
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Resilience
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Liminal Appearance

Intensity
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Anguish Dread Fury Yearning
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Magic
800 lb Gorilla
Pity
Allure
Creative Genius

Consequences

Skills ■■■■□□□□ Social
■□□□□□□□ Intimidation
■■■■□□□□□□ Kinesics
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Skills ■□□□□□□□ Collegiate
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Skills ■□□□□□□□ Criminal
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Skills ■■■□□□□□□ Art
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Mark

Some woman on the other side of the station was screaming, sounded like something about seagulls and her kids. I crouched lower next to the cabinets, trying to concentrate on filing. The screaming didn't stop, so I prairie-dogged out of the cubicle the filing cabinets were in, trying to see what was going on.

This homeless lady had half the station gathered around her. She was swinging a pair of handcuffs at them like numchucks even though she looked like she had to be fifty years old at least, and I could tell no one wanted to hit her with the pepper spray or anything. She had a crazy look that scared the bejeezus out of me, but I forced myself closer to the action anyway.

I pushed my way through the crowd, apologizing all the way; when I finally got to the front, I saw blood on the pointed end of the cuffs. Hicks had a smaller knot of people around him, and he was clutching the side of his face with a red-stained hand. Couldn't have happened to a better guy. Trying to calm the butterflies in my stomach again, I tried to remember everything my shrink told me about conflict management. I pushed through the last layer of people and moved aside just in time to avoid having my nose taken off by a swinging piece of metal.

Calm. I stuck my head up again. "Ma'am? Are you going to be all right?" My voice carried above all of the shouting and pushing going on around me. I don't know how, but I know it carried, because it felt like oil spreading out over water. First the people next to me, then those on the other side, and then finally, almost a full breath after everyone else had shut up, the crazy lady with the handcuffs. "Can you give me the cuffs? We can talk about whatever you need to talk about after that."

I stretched out my hand, and she reluctantly placed her weapon in my palm. "Now, ma'am, I'm going to take you to Chief Novachek. He can help you get all this straightened out." I had no idea. Hell, I didn't even have the authority to talk to this woman; I was an intern. I filed.

Still, she didn't need to know that. I didn't breathe easily until she was off of the desk, down the hall, and in the chief's office. When the door shut behind her, I took a huge, shuddering breath of fresh air. I nearly hit my head on the ceiling when I heard a startled yelp behind me.

A little girl, looked like she was maybe eight years old, was standing in the doorway to the office across from Novachek's. She was soaked to the bone and barefoot. Poor thing.

When Mark Farrakh got into a childhood fight with his brother, neither of them really expected one of them to die. Tangled in a preadolescent pile of limbs, swinging fists and shouting, when Brian pulled out a gun and accidentally painted his brain across Mark's surprised face, it marked him for life.

He's never really been sure why he chose to go into the Criminal Sciences department at Flagler, and he's even less sure why he accepted the internship at the police department. Since the moment with his brother that he relives nightly, he's had a nearly debilitating fear of violence, so on the surface, it seems that plunging into it with police work is ridiculous to say the least. Something though, keeps telling him that maybe, if he saves someone else's brother from being shot, he can finally lay his ghosts to rest.

Recently, in the shopping mall bathroom, he smelled new cordite and watched the spreading cracks from a bullet hole inches from his head. Whipping his head around, he didn't see anyone who could have shot the gun. Reports at the department confirm that the shot happened recently, and from a gun of the same make as the one that killed Brian. It's crazy, but Mark can't shake the feeling that Brian's trying to tell him something.

Mark is a stocky, six-foot-tall man in peak health. He keeps his hair short, and when he's not in a shirt and tie, he's usually in jeans and a t-shirt. Despite his size and professional

"I must stay calm you know I must be clear. It's gonna take a hundred thoughts to make this one disappear. A train like that could travel a soul for years. A terrible thought could have a terribly long career. What a terrible thought."

-Poe

Terrible Thought

training in handling himself in a fight, he seems jittery and refuses to sit with his back to a door.

*“A vision softly creeping, left
its seeds while I was sleeping.
And the vision that was planted
in my brain, still remains within
the sound of silence.”*
-Simon and Garfunkel
The Sound of Silence

Abeo

Name _____ Experience _____
 Character Mark Farrakh Session _____

Imagination

Perception

Retention

d6 Mental Die

S. E. S.

6 Initiative Base
Factors
 Integrated Memory _____
 Language (Spanish) _____

Physical Die

d6
9 Natural Defense
Factors
 Athletic _____
 Accuracy _____
 Catnapper _____

Agility

Strength

Resilience

Liminal Appearance

Consequences

Intensity

Anguish
Dread
Fury
Yearning

Prey Instinct _____
Pity _____

Skills
Social

Skills
Outdoors

Skills
Criminal

Skills
Basic Combat

Skills
Arcane

Skills
Collegiate

Skills

Skills

Jessica

What the hell is going on? I'm crazy. I'm hallucinating. Clearly insane.

Manolito was asking me if I was all right on the other end of the phone, his rich, purring voice-dripping concern. Not that I can blame him. Five seconds ago I was asking him if I dressed like a slut, and suddenly I'm hysterical. I didn't deserve him. I stopped screaming long enough to tell him I'd seen a rat, then clapped the phone shut.

"Okay, tell me what I just saw." The guy that just, so help me—stepped out of the mirror—kept touching it like it was his long lost lover or something. "Hello?" I waved a hand between him and the object of his affection. "Anybody home?"

The guy looked tweaked out on something pretty heavy duty. He stared closely at me for a second before he said anything. "You saw me?"

"Jeez, I hope not. If so, I need to be committed."

He giggled. "Maybe. But I'm here. Not at home. Which is where I left. Who was that woman? Who are you?"

Whatever he was on, I wanted some. If I hadn't already had it. I'm as crazy as Mom. What did I do to deserve this? Wait. I know.

The guy seemed to calm down a little bit; he'd lost that frenzied look. "Did I really just do that?"

"Yes." The voice came from somewhere behind us.

We both turned around at the same time. A girl stepped out of the middle stall, dripping wet, barefoot and filthy. "You did just what she does. Are you going to try to hurt me, too?"

The guy in the black robe just gaped at her. "No, sweetie. Did somebody hurt you?" The girl just pointed at the mirror behind us.

"Yes." She said, and disappeared.

What the hell was going on here?

She never should have walked out on her mother during her sister's funeral, but Jessica Hines doesn't know how to say that she's sorry. She's managed to carve a life for herself; a job waiting tables, friends, a boyfriend and a sterling, if young, academic reputation. Still, there's a family-shaped hole in her heart. The campus counselor and her boyfriend, Manolito, both agree that she should find her mother and patch things up.

Now that she's started seeing things, small things, out of the corner of her eye, Jessica worries that she may be going as crazy as her mother.

Jessica was having coffee two weeks ago with her friend, Heather, when Heather's agent stopped by. Her name was Ana, and she was a nightmare. Jessica was barely able to introduce herself before she ran to the bathroom and vomited. Ana was elegant, refined, dressed in the latest Prada fashions, and the most hideous thing Jessica had ever seen. The contour of every bone jutted through the weeping sores of Ana's skin; her voice was the dry, harsh whine of sandpaper on chalkboard. She hid in the bathroom with her friend, Brad, until Ana and Heather left.

Jessica is 5'10 with chestnut-brown hair, and a flawless olive complexion. She moves with the easy grace of a born actress, and speaks with clarity and emotion. While not cutting-edge as Heather's couture, Jessica's outfits perfectly accent her form. She knows that she's destined for greatness, but isn't as ruthless as Heather is in pursuing it; she believes she's already hurt enough people.

"Apart from my fairly small population of lucid dreams, I have never had metachoric experiences and I tend to think of myself as a sort of person who would not be easily induced to have any kind of hallucination."

Celia Green-



Name _____ Experience _____
 Character Jessica Hines Session _____

Imagination
 Perception
 Retention

Mental Die **d6**
 Initiative Base **4**
 Factors
 Focus _____
 Languages (Spanish)x2 _____
 Phonographic Memory x2 _____
 Sixth Sense _____
 Easy on the Eyes _____

S. E. S.
 Factors
 Low on Capital _____

Physical Die **d6**
 Natural Defense **8**
 Factors

Agility
 Strength
 Resilience

Liminal Appearance _____

 Consequences _____

Intensity
 Anguish
 Dread
 Fury
 Yearning

Impression _____
 Magic _____
 Floor Effect _____

Skills
 Collegiate _____
 Law _____
 Business _____
 Research _____
 History _____
 Science _____

Skills
 Arcane _____
 Sensitivity _____

Skills
 Social _____
 Kinesics _____
 Observation _____
 Tenacity _____

Skills
 Outdoors _____
 Exertion _____

Skills
 Health _____
 Psychology _____

Skills
 Art _____
 Music _____

Skills
 Criminal _____
 Urban Survival _____

Skills

