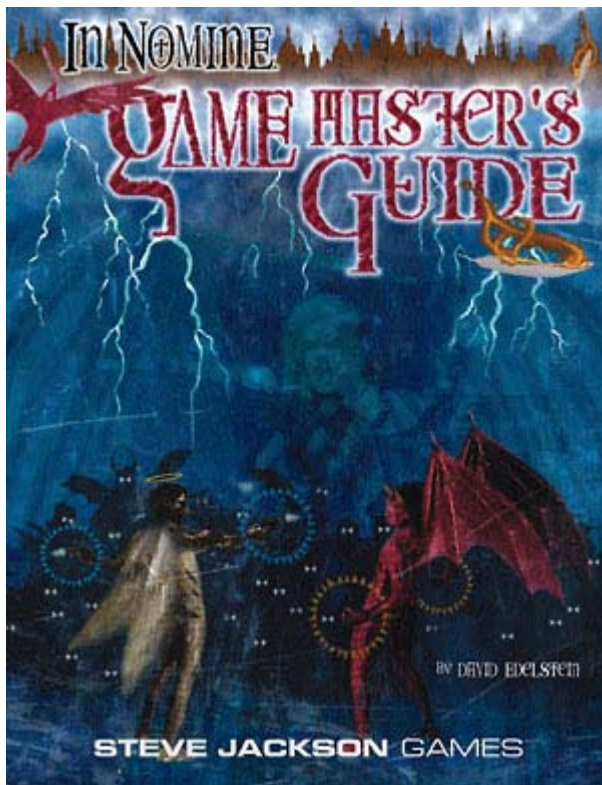# In Nomine Game Master's Guide Designer's Notes

by David Edelstein

Art by Ken Waters and Philip J. Reed, Jr.

It seems that a *Game Master's Guide* is obligatory for every game line nowadays, so now *In Nomine* can boast one of its own. And I can boast that I wrote it.

Given that there are so many GM's guides out there, though, it would be a little presumptuous of me to claim I can tell other GMs how to run a game, and do a better job of covering such topics as narration, plotting, pacing, atmosphere, and the like, than writers who've taken a crack at it in the past. Honestly, I didn't even try. *In Nomine* is cinematic in feel, and almost comic book-like in appearance, but it's not a lightweight game. It raises serious questions (for those inclined to pursue them) about the nature of God and man, and the distinctions between Good and Evil and Selfishness and Selflessness. And for that reason, I've noticed that *In Nomine's* hardcore fan base tends to be very well-read and philosophical . . . and generally veteran gamers. Having been a gamer for nearly 20 years now, I tend to skip past the sections on "How to Deal with Problem Players" in most GM's guides, and look for the stuff specific to the game for which I bought the book. I want "toolkits" that give me stuff I can use or not as I see fit. I want a lot of resources and plot hooks that I can just drop into my game, and I want to get a glimpse at how the game designers see their universe; not necessarily to emulate them, but to know what adjustments I'll need to make if I want to make my version of their universe a little different.

Speaking of adjustments, here is the Campaign Checklist which took up too much space to be included in the book. While useful (especially to someone who *isn't* an experienced, improvisational GM), it was cut because it's basically just a summary of topics that are covered in more detail in the book. By perusing this list, you can see what sorts of things the *GMG* describes for *In Nomine* world-builders.

Setting Up the Campaign

A campaign doesn't have to be mapped out in elaborate detail before it begins — you can run a pick-up game of *In Nomine* with just the basic rulebook. However, when you start thinking about all the details discussed in this chapter, you will probably want to do some planning. What follows is a guide that will take you step by step through all the decisions you'll want to make when setting up your campaign. Remember that many of these decisions are *optional*, and some can be left until well after the campaign is underway.

I: Establish a Mood (pp. 35-36)

Decide on the overall mood for your campaign. Remember these are *not* rigid definitions from which your campaign cannot deviate!

- Brightness
- Contrast
- Humor

II: Choose a Setting (p. 37-41)

Where is your campaign set? If it's not the modern world, describe it. Otherwise, is it a localized campaign or a global campaign?

Characters (pp. 37-38)

Make decisions (and lists) addressing the following:

- Important Word-bound characters
- Other important NPCs (immediate supervisors for the PCs, important humans, ethereals, etc.)
- Is there an unusual relationship between any influential NPCs?

Tethers (p. 40)

- In a local campaign, what Tethers exist, and who owns them?
- On a global scale, how common are Tethers? (Average of 1 per _____ humans/Approximately _____ worldwide, or an average of _____ per Superior)
- List some of the important (worldwide) Tethers in your campaign.

III: Choose a Theme (pp. 41-43)

Decide on what kind of campaign premises you want, and what style of play.

- Mythic
- Realistic
- High Concept (Quest, Crusade, Premise, etc.)

Canon

- How closely do you intend to stick to canon? (p. 59)
- Are you playing a variant campaign? Describe how it differs from a standard *In Nomine* setting.
- List any rule changes

IV: Superiors (pp. 43-45)

What role will Superiors play in your campaign?

Politics (pp. 43)

- High Politicking
- Low Politicking
- No Politicking

Influence

- Which Superiors are most important? Who will you focus on in the campaign?
- Describe any changes from published descriptions, and/or Superiors you are adding or removing.

V: Celestials on Earth (pp. 46-48)

How do celestials interact with the corporeal world?

Frequency (p. 46)

How common are celestials on Earth?

- The celestial/human ration is about 1/_____; There are about _____ celestials on Earth.

Intervention (p. 47)

- Open Intervention
- High Intervention
- Moderate Intervention
- Low Intervention
- Non-Intervention

Mundane Matters (p. 48)

- Are Roles required? What happens if you don't have one?
- What kind of ID can a celestial have without a Role?
- What possessions are celestials allowed? How hard is it to acquire new stuff?
- Is money a consideration? Do celestials have an allowance?

VI: Humans (pp. 49-54)

What role do humans play in the campaign?

Exceptional Humans (p. 49)

- How can a human gain a 6th Force? What percentage of humans have more than 5 Forces? What percentage of humans are Symphonically aware?
- How many Soldiers are active in the campaign? Which Superiors have Soldiers in the area? Are there any Soldier organizations?
- Describe other exceptional humans (pagan and rogue Soldiers, sorcerers, Saints, undead, etc.) who will figure into the campaign.

Human Agencies (pp. 49-54)

Consider the *competence* and *participation* (see below) of any major human agencies. Remember that some agencies are too large to be classified as a single group; describe those organizations that will play a part in your campaign.

- The Government
- The Law
- The Military
- Intelligence Agencies
- Business
- The Media
- Academia
- Religion
- Organized Crime

Competence (p. 50)

- Inept
- Average
- Competent

Participation (p. 50)

- Unaware
- Misled
- Informed

VII: Canon Doubt and Uncertainty (pp. 59-61)

These questions don't *have* to be answered in your campaign, in the beginning or ever. The items below are just a few of the metaphysical topics you *might* want to think about.

- God's nature
- Religion and Messiahs
- The afterlife
- The Higher Heavens and the Lower Hells

VIII: Creating Characters

Now, decide what information needs to be given to your players. Then let them create characters. (First check out Chapter 1, *Characters*, p. 5-20.)

Player Character Types

- Are all PCs celestials?
- Are human PCs possible?
- Other PC types (ethereals, Remnants, etc.)?

Allocating Resources

Any changes from the basic *In Nomine* rules?

- How many Forces are allotted to starting PCs?
- How many points to buy Resources?
- Any free skills, special bonuses, or other rules?

Party Composition

Are there any special considerations you need to take into account? Such as:

- Rival Superiors (p. 55)
- Mixed groups (angels & demons) (p. 56)
- Mixed humans and celestials (p. 58)

I wrote the *In Nomine GMG* with that attitude -- I assumed that most *In Nomine* GMs are fairly

experienced, and don't need lessons in basic GMing.

They want to know more about the *In Nomine* universe, and how to fit it all together to make a campaign that captures the mood and style they're looking for. This doesn't mean the *GMG* won't be useful for novice GM's; I certainly hope it will be! But I didn't devote a lot of pages to the craft of GMing itself. I dove right into both the nuts and bolts and the atmosphere and philosophy of the *In Nomine* universe.

This book has required more research than anything else I've written for *In Nomine,* since I devoted an entire chapter to religion. *In Nomine* is a game about angels and demons, after all; shouldn't we say something about the billions of people on Earth who actually believe in such beings? First of all, I wanted to give a summation of various religions for those who might not be knowledgeable about such things. It's my hope that even if you have no use for religion yourself (I'm an atheist personally), you'll see that real-world religions are far more interesting, complex, and full of plot hooks and fascinating characters that any fiction. Secondly, I wanted to tie real religions into *In Nomine's* history; Archangels and Demon Princes *had* to be interested in how humanity worships. But while religion is rich territory for *In Nomine,* I had to be careful of the twin traps of making celestials *too* influential (lest too many major developments in human history turn out to be the manipulations of supernatural beings, thus making mortals superfluous as in a certain other game line), or worse, writing something inaccurate. These are *real* religions, after all. While I don't mind if someone gets offended by satirical implications (indeed, the most amusing playtest complaints came from pagans, who wanted *their* beliefs treated with special reverence, even though the beliefs of monotheists have been run through a blender in *In Nomine*), I don't want anyone accusing me of being ignorant!

Here are the fruits of some of my research which also couldn't be included in the book . . . not because we feared that someone might be offended, but because such interesting personalities deserve more space than a one-line blurb to cover their *In Nomine* significance. Hopefully I'll get a chance to go into more detail in a future book . . .

Jews in the War

- Abraham (c. 1900 B.C.) -- the original Hebrew Patriarch. Descended from Noah, through Shem and Eber (after whom the Hebrews are named).
- Moses (c. 1300 B.C.) -- A prince of Egypt and a prophet of God, who led the Israelites for 40 years in the desert, gave them the Ten Commandments, and brought them to the promised land.
- Deborah (c. 1200 B.C.) -- A prophetess, one of the first Hebrew judges, a military leader, and a Soldier of God.
- King David (c. 1000 B.C.) -- Second King of Israel, Soldier of Stone, slayer of many diabolical servants.
- King Solomon (c. 960 B.C.) -- David's son, one of the most powerful sorcerers ever (and one of the few known "white" sorcerers), and builder of the First Temple.
- Elijah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Jeremiah (8th to 5th centuries B.C.) -- The greatest of a slew of Hebrew prophets who received revelations directly from God. Some of them were active Soldiers as well.
- Judah Löw ben Bezulel (16th century A.D.) -- Also known as the "Maharal of Prague"; a rabbi and enchanter who was the first mortal in modern times to learn how to make golems (see *Constructs*, **Corporeal Player's Guide**, p. 49).
- Shabbetai Tzevi (1626-1676 A.D.) -- A charismatic student of the Kabbalah who was deluded by Servitors of Dark Humor into believing he was the Messiah (one of many "false Messiahs" in Jewish history). He amassed a large following, but in 1666, captured by Turkish authorities, he converted to Islam. Kobal got even more laughs out of Tzevi's followers, as Shabbetaianism continued for over a century. They became willful apostates, engaging in nihilism and orgies, rationalizing that "sacred sins" were in fact the best way to

honor the Torah. Shabbetai Tzevi was one of the greatest embarrassments to Judaism in history.

- Israel ben Eliezer (c. 1700-1760 A.D.) -- A devout Jewish mystic who taught religion and Kabbalism to the common people, and founded the Hasidic sect. He impressed Eli enough to make him a Soldier of God; thereafter he was known as the Ba'al Shem Tov ("Master of the Good Name"), as he supposedly knew the ineffable true name of God (p. 66). Whether Eli actually taught him that name is unknown, but it's rumored that the Ba'al Shem Tov is still an active Saint of Creation.

Christians in the War

- Jesus Christ (c. 6 B.C. to 30 A.D.) -- Prophet, Soldier, Saint, or celestial? Or bonafide Son of God? To this day, even the Archangels don't know for sure.
- Saul of Tarsus (10 A.D. to 67 A.D.) -- Better-known as Paul the Apostle. A Jewish Soldier of Judgment who converted to Christianity after having formerly been an enemy of the sect. He wrote many letters which became books of the New Testament, and was one of the most influential figures in the early Church.
- St. John of Patmos (1st century A.D.) -- Also known as John the Apostle, or Saint John the Divine; he was one of Jesus' companions, and wrote one of the Gospels. He was also a prophet who received the Book of Revelation. His skull has become a sacred relic (***Liber Reliquarum***, p. 90).
- Montanus (c. 170 A.D.) -- A former pagan Soldier who was turned into a false prophet by Lucifer. Convinced that he was a divine avatar, he preached bloody martyrdom and apocalyptic battle with the forces of evil. Montanism lingered in Asia Minor and North Africa until the 9th century.
- Pope Joan (9th century A.D.) -- The medieval tale of a woman who was elected Pope in 855, reigned for 25 months, and then was exposed (and stoned to death) after giving birth during a Papal procession, was considered factual even by the Church for centuries, until it was disproven . . . incorrectly. Pope Joan *did* exist -- she was a Soldier of Dark Humor. (And she was set up by Kobal, and *did* get stoned to death.) Kobal's Servitors thereafter kept the legend alive, while creating inconsistencies that later led to the story's being discredited.
- St. Francis of Assisi (1182 A.D. to 1226 A.D.) -- One of the Roman Catholic Church's most venerated Saints, founder of the Franciscan order, and a Soldier of War while alive. Since his death, he has served as a Saint for centuries, under many different Archangels (but most commonly Michael, Jordi, and Zadkiel).
- Martin Luther (16th century A.D.) -- Though he was "nudged" by Laurence, he was not actively aware of the War. Heaven regards him with mixed feelings; he sparked the Protestant Reformation, which is considered good by some and terrible by others. Luther was also a vicious anti-Semite. He didn't arrive in Heaven or Hell after his death, so many believe he met his destiny *and* his fate.

Muslims in the War

- Muhammad (c. 571 A.D. to 632 A.D.) -- Heaven still does not know whether he was a true prophet or merely Gabriel's mouthpiece. Like Jesus, he didn't show up in the Lower Heavens after his death, and he has the same aura of ineffability believed to have been placed by Yves.
- Muhammad al-Mahdi al-Hujjah (9th century A.D.) -- Also known as Muhammad Al-Muntazar. The 12th Imam of the Shiite sect (p. 75), who disappeared in 878 A.D. Most Shiites call him the "Hidden Imam," believing that God concealed him until the day when he will return and bring truth and justice to the world.
- Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani (1077 A.D. to 1166 A.D.) -- The founder of a major branch of Sufiism (p. 76), and the most revered of Sufi saints. In fact, he *is* a Saint, working among the Muslim community under the guidance of Archangel Khalid to this day.
- Salah al-Din Yusef ibn-Ayyub (1138 A.D. to 1193 A.D.) -- Better-known as "Saladin," the great Muslim sultan and military hero who recaptured Jerusalem and balked the Third

Crusade. He was so virtuous and resolute in his faith, both Laurence and Khalid wanted him in their service . . . consequently, the rival Archangels had to agree that neither would recruit him, but both appointed Servitors to guard him.

- Nasir al-Din al-Tusi (1201 A.D. to 1274 A.D.) -- A Persian Shiite philosopher and mathematician, and a Soldier of the Game. Pretending to be an Isma'ili (p. 75), he took up residence in the Assassins' mountain fortress; by betraying its defenses, he was instrumental in the destruction of the Assassins by the Mongols. Asmodeus ordered this so that a group of Renegades hiding within could be extirpated, and because the Assassins had killed several of his agents. Tusi now holds a relatively comfortable position in Hades as a historian and scribe.

So, what else is in the *Game Master's Guide* besides building blocks for your campaign, and a history of religions in the *In Nomine* universe? How about complete guidelines for roleplaying Superiors? (And how do they reward and punish player characters?) Want to add new Archangels or Demon Princes, or shake up the existing hierarchy? What can Superiors *do*, and what are the limits (if any) on Lucifer's power? What happens if a Demon Prince takes on an Archangel in battle? And where does GOD fit into the game?

You'll also find practical advice for managing character development, especially things that Superiors hand out, like vessels and additional Forces. There is an entire chapter on the Word-bound, and how Words grow or shrink. You'll also find loads of optional rules, both for variant campaigns and for streamlining game mechanics.

Here's one more item that was cut from the book; a Random Discord table. It's not necessary for experienced GMs, but it does handily list all of the new Discords that have been introduced in supplements following the main rulebook.

Random Discord

The Random Discord table in *In Nomine*, p. 89, includes only the Discords found in the basic rulebook. Several other sourcebooks, notably the *Corporeal Player's Guide*, the *Angelic Player's Guide*, and the *Infernal Player's Guide*, provide new Discords, including some that are particular to specific Choirs and Bands. If you have access to these books, the table below provides more variety when rolling Discords randomly.

Note that some Discords, such as Geas (*In Nomine*, p. 88), Selfless (*Infernal Player's Guide*, p. 105), and various Discords particular to Seneschals (*Liber Castellorum*, pp. 26-27) are not included here, because these Discords do not normally manifest at random.

Corporeal and Ethereal Discord

Roll 2 dice on one of the tables below (choose one, or roll 1 die: 1-2 = A, 3-4 = B, 5-6 = C)

Table A	Table B	Table C
2 . . . . Pallid	2 . . . . Discolored	2 . . . . Stink
3 . . . . Obese	3 . . . . Covetous	3 . . . . Pity
4 . . . . Stigmata	4 . . . . Twitchy	4 . . . . Addicted
5 . . . . Vestigium	5 . . . . Nocturnal	5 . . . . Diurnal
6 . . . . Aura	6 . . . . Hatred	6 . . . . Ugly
7 . . . . Choose a Corporeal or Ethereal Discord from the Choir- and Band-specific	7 . . . . Choose a Corporeal or Ethereal Discord from the Choir- and Band-specific	7 . . . . Choose a Corporeal or Ethereal Discord from the Choir- and Band-specific

Discord list (below)	Discord list (below)	Discord list (below)
8 . . . . Berserk	8 . . . . Guilt	8 . . . . Jaded
9 . . . . Bound	9 . . . . Tongue-Tied	9 . . . . Obsessed
10 . . . . Fear	10 . . . . Cowardly	10 . . . . Paranoia
11 . . . . Vulnerable (chosen by the GM)	11 . . . . Crippled	11 . . . . Damaged Sense
12 . . . . Roll on the Celestial Discord table	12 . . . . Roll on the Celestial Discord table	12 . . . . Roll on the Celestial Discord table

Celestial Discord

Roll 2 dice

2 . . . . Angels may try again on the Corporeal and Ethereal Discord tables; demons must roll again on this table and add 1 to the level of the Discord!
3 . . . . Celestial Blindness, Deafness, or Muteness (choose, or roll randomly)
4 . . . Gluttonous
5 . . . . Greedy
6 . . . . Lustful
7 . . . . Choose a Celestial Discord from the Choir- and Band-specific Discord list (below)
8 . . . . Merciful
9 . . . . Murderous
10 . . . . Need (chosen by the player, with GM approval)
11 . . . . Slothful
12 . . . . Demons may try again on the Corporeal and Ethereal Discord tables; angels must roll again on this table and add 1 to the level of the Discord!

Choir- and Band-Specific Discord

Seraphim

Painful Lies (Corporeal)

Truthfulness (Ethereal)*

Forked Tongue (Celestial)*

Cherubim

Life-Linked Attunement (Corporeal)

Ritualized Responsibilities (Ethereal)*

Trenchant Bond (Ethereal)

Overzealous (Celestial)*

Ofanim

Combustible (Corporeal)

Claustrophobia (Ethereal)

Hyperactive (Celestial)

Elohim

Emotional Static (Ethereal)

Oversensitive (Ethereal)

Empathy (Celestial)

Malakim

Burning Touch (Corporeal)

Evil Warning (Ethereal)

Binding Oath (Celestial)

Kyriotates

Balseraphs

Forked Tongue (Corporeal)

Truthfulness (Ethereal)*

Burning Lies (Celestial)

Djinn

Apathy (Ethereal)*

Obsessive-Compulsive (Ethereal)*

Distracting Attunements (Celestial)

Calabim

Pain (Corporeal)

Aura of Entropy (Celestial)

Indiscriminate (Celestial)

Habbalah

Mutilation (Corporeal)

Pity (Ethereal)

Unshielded (Celestial)

Lilim

Chained Geases (Corporeal)

Generous (Ethereal)

Deteriorating Geases (Celestial)

Shedim

Contrariness (Ethereal)	Oozing (Corporeal)
Inner Echoes (Ethereal)	Cold-Blooded* (Ethereal)
Fractured Forces (Celestial)	Driven (Celestial)
Inseparable Forces (Celestial)	
Mercurians	**Impudites**
Unnerving Stare (Corporeal)*	Reduced Essence Capacity (Corporeal)
Oblivious (Celestial)*	Infatuation (Ethereal)
	Tainted Essence (Celestial)

* These Discords are most common among the indicated Choir/Band, but may sometimes manifest in others (but usually not randomly).

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