

INCARNATE



INCARNATE

You have lived before.

In your heart are the souls of a thousand heroes.
Their minds, their skills, their powers are yours to command.
And their pain and their flaws are also yours to suffer.

There are those who would kill you for this gift,
those who want to tear the souls out of you.
With this power, they will destroy the world.

Alone, you are powerless.
One person cannot stop them.
But you are not one person.

You are many.....

Private Jack Shephard was cold, wet, and pissed off. It was a damp and drizzly night in late November, and he was waiting for the off-license to open so he could buy a bottle of vodka. He had been drinking more and more lately – it helped to drown out the memory of what had happened. He hunched futher into his coat and looked for somewhere that was out of the rain. He spotted the local museum, open late all this week and next week for the special Egyptian exhibition. He went in, shaking the rain from his coat as he did so.

He checked his watch; twenty minutes to go until the off-license opened. He looked around, trying to find something to help pass the time. One exhibit caught his attention – it was a broken and crumbling, but still fairly intact, piece of stone inscribed with hieroglyphics. The description next to the glass case read

‘Stone tablet found in Giza in 1934 by Dr. Edwin Smythe. So far, translation has not been possible’

Jack stared at it, and felt a strange sensation, almost like he was remembering something. As he looked at it the symbols arranged themselves into meaningful patterns in his mind, and he began to read.

‘On the second day of the third month, Khanum, the priest of Ra, began the Ceremony of Atonement...’ Shocked and confused, he trailed off, trying to figure out how the hell he had just read and understood the stone that even the experts had been unable to translate. And then the memories of his past life as Khanum, the priest of Ra, began to resurface in his mind...



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Incarnate was designed in twelve hours at Dragonmeet 2002. Several people survived.

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Introduction

My father once told me that when I was born his world changed; the lucky bastard. My life got turned upside down by some bastard trying to rip my guts out, just coz I killed him in a past life. Since then the world has become so fucked up, there are loads of idiots running around trying to rule the world and they all try and kill me, I mean please! All I wanna do is pay off the loan on my car and get laid.

Welcome to INCARNATE, the roleplaying game of past lives.

In this game, you take the role of Incarnates – normal people, like you and me, who one day discover they are anything but normal. The abyss of the past opens up behind – or beneath – them. Life after life, self after self, the Incarnates have returned to physical form again and again. The Well of Souls churns, the world darkens – and only what the Incarnates were can save them now.

What is a Roleplaying Game?

To be perfectly honest, the chances of someone who doesn't know what a roleplaying game is finding this book is fairly slim – therefore, we'll use this space to talk about what specifically Incarnate is: it's the role-playing game of past lives. An Incarnate character is an accumulating thing made up of dozens and dozens of previous existences. You will take on the role of the current, most recent incarnation of this eternal being. To survive, you will have to draw on the skills and abilities of previous selves without being overwhelmed by them.

In the game, the players take on the role of an Incarnate. Often, all the player Incarnates will be karmically linked, finding each other again and again through time. The GM then presents a plot which will challenge all the characters, and probably force them to draw on and explore their past lives.

Incarnate gives the player a great deal of control over the character. You can adjust your idea of the character easily, by adding a new past life during play. If your character seems too wimpish, toughen him up by having him remember a more heroic past as a Viking warrior. However, you should always take into account the effects of such incarnations. Your characters' past lives aren't just resources to draw on, but vast influences that will deeply change and effect the character's personality.

Who wrote Incarnate? Quite a lot of people. See the credits page opposite. It was designed as part of the Game in a Day event at Dragonmeet 2002. As I write this, it's still several hours before the deadline, and things are going well. If you're reading this after

Dragonmeet, then things must have continued going well, and we ended up producing a workable rpg. Go us!

Rules of the Game

This game uses two types of dice rolls. For most of the game, to make attribute and skill checks, you will be rolling d%. For the mechanics determining Flux (we'll explain that a bit later), and a few other things, you will roll a d10. These are available in hobby stores everywhere. Again, if you're reading this, you know this.

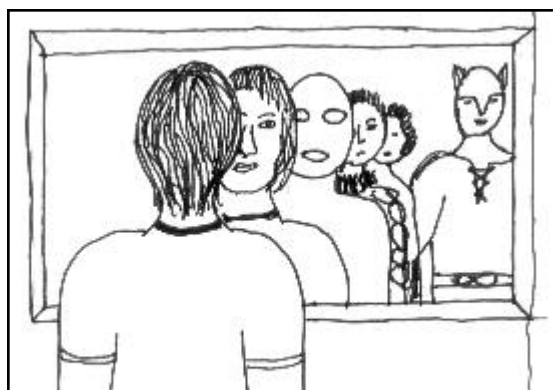
By necessity, the system is designed to be fairly light. With players able to summon a whole range of skills, memories and capabilities from their past with one roll, we needed a flexible rules set so this wouldn't require a lot of figuring out that would slow down the game. If you want to use That Other System, look for the D20 version of this game coming out at next Dragonmeet...

Themes of the Game

Fundamentally, Incarnate is about balancing what you were with what you are. The future is depending on the characters to correct the balance in the Well of Souls, but they can only succeed by drawing on their past selves. The characters will have to be of supreme moral fortitude to avoid the temptations of immortality. Society, language, technology – it all changes and falls away with time, but good and evil are universal.

What were you in the past?

And what are you now?



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The World of Incarnate

In the beginning gods created everything, but in their absorption with their task, they forgot to invite all of their number to join in. They created everything, He breathed life and wonder into the universe, He created the Well of Souls. Tired by their efforts, they fell into a deep sleep. At first, as they rested the universe and the Well were in balance. The first souls created were the divines. Within them burned the pure force of their creator's breath. Each soul becomes incarnated in a mortal form for a mortal lifetime. As the dirt and accumulated memory of successive lifetimes accrete on the brightly shining souls, they tire and fade, becoming the mundane souls that circle the ever-flowing Well of Souls. Eventually, exhausted souls fade and vanish from creations. Fresh souls are added as the creator breathes in and out in his sleep.

The Well of Souls is where we all spring from and when we die we return to it. All souls came from the well and, in the natural course of events, they will all go back to it before being reborn. In the beginning some of the souls were created more brilliant, more vibrant and more powerful; these souls' actions shape the world – they influence mankind.

Whilst the creators slept, something went horribly wrong. Those gods who weren't involved in the creation took their revenge. They took human nature and added greed, jealousy, avarice and all of our baser emotions. This act changed the balance of the Well, and the balance was reflected on the face of Earth. Since then, battles have been waged to mend the damage done but the balance has yet to be been restored.

As time went on the balance became more and more askew. This has been reflected in our recent history; a history that is becoming more and more violent; a history that suggests that in our time we will face a catastrophic final struggle.

The Soul Cycle:

- The Well gives birth to a Soul.
- The Soul finds and inhabits a mortal vessel on Earth. This Vessel/Soul combination is referred to as an Incarnate.
- The Incarnate lives their life as you or I would: adventures, romance, action, etc.

During this lifetime The Incarnate may also recall Past Lives, using their skills and abilities, but also possibly their flaws. The breadth of this Past Life knowledge will vary according to the number of past lives the Soul has inhabited.

If The Incarnate dies for whatever reason, the Soul within, will be automatically recalled to The Well Of Souls, where it will bathe in the soup of its creative energies before being reincarnated.

The Soul Recall occasionally falters (as nothing is perfect, not even the gods) and the soul goes Rogue.

The Well's own power is determined by the experiences that the recalled Souls have had in their various incarnations. Some Incarnates deny the Well's existence and it of its experience, and this of course diminishes the Well which becomes offended and sends out the Soul Police (also known as Chasers) to bring them back.

Houdini, the Rogue Spirit

Seldom seen, yet a thorn in the Well's proverbial side are the Rogue Spirits, continually defying the Well's recall.

There is one Rogue in particular who has caused problems for the Well and its Soul Chaser's, with the unique ability to repeatedly escape from the Well at will. Obsessively dedicated to the destruction of the Well, the Well realises this abberant and insolent Rogue Soul must be stopped whatever the cost... but where in existence is Houdini? Some say Houdini is in fact one of the disgraced Gods?

Soul Police

The balance must be kept between souls and reincarnates, therefore those that would drain the power of another need to be punished. These are the duties of the Soul Police. The Soul Police exist to keep the balance between good and evil. Currently Evil is winning and so in order to rebalance the well the Soul Police generally go after the Evil Incarnates. To most normal Incarnates the Soul Police are unknown to them but as they gain power; travel through multiple lives and begin to affect the balance of the well the Soul Police will come and find them.

Using the Well's Power

An Incarnate may call upon the energies of the Well, though those of less Incarnations will find it easier and more potent whereas those of numerous Incarnations will find its power more distant and more difficult to tap. However, the Well has its own often overpowering influence on the Incarnate.

An Incarnate may attempt to draw upon the energies of the Well, but is also strongly affected by its Balance. If there is a negative or positive imbalance within the Well then this will reflect on Earth and The Bodies.

Factions

Little endures from life to life. Your family, your nation, your very hopes and dreams are all ephemeral things, which are lost as you pass on to another form. There are a few strands, though, which continue throughout time. An incarnate may join a faction time and again in successive existences. That said, factions are often little more than alliances of convenience. Most factions are primarily focussed on locating and controlling the nexus points that influence the Well of Souls. Such nexus points are of immense power, and greed may overwhelm even friendships that have endured a hundred deaths.

In some eras, the factions are actual organisations, with resources to draw on and servants to command. At other times, they are little more than philosophical positions or diabolical plans the Incarnates follow.

[We have described two of the factions here, the Immortals and the Ghosts, and have provided starting points for the others.]

Immortals

Centuries, perhaps millennia ago, a mortal magician possessed of a divine spark learned of a means of extending his life and power by means of magical elixirs. He learned the secrets of the mind, the senses and the heart - and how to create potions from them.

As he and his acolytes lengthened their lives and grew in ability, the scholar discovered what he called the Great Wheel - the cycle of reincarnation - and those who "rode the wheel" - the divine souls. The immortal acolytes clashed with a band of incarnates, the same band again and again over the centuries. In time, the immortal society learned to hide themselves and their powers. Eventually, they were no longer threatened by the divine souls, and their power grew secretly, corrupting others with promises of eternal life and supernatural strength.

In time, their search for power became so overwhelming that the society fragmented, regarding each other as the only threats to their existence. Several acolytes of the magician each claiming to be the eldest living being. However, the incarnates who clash with them now claim that he does not lead any of the societies. Where he is now is unknown.

Now, the immortals exist as fragmented secret societies, lead by acolytes calling themselves elders. Their agents include nearly-human servants with extended lives and powers based on their elixirs, and fully human dupes from all strata of the living world.

The foremost society is ruled by "the elder", a man seven hundred years of age. He in turn was taught the

secret of long life by two true immortals, who has not been seen for over a century. Beneath him are his acolytes, who use a less refined form of elixir. By human standards they are all ancient, but compared to him they are nothing. That said, his own magics are not as strong as those of the true followers of the nameless scholar, and when he is injured he ages for as long as it takes him to heal. While he has superhuman vigour and wisdom, he is as frail as a man of almost a century of age.

Elixirs are created from the sensory organs, minds and hearts of living victims. The heart elixirs contain the power of the soul. The hearts of incarnates are clearly more powerful than those of normal mortals, but the elder's society do not consider the risks worthy of the power. The elder, however, can no longer restore himself to full strength without the power of a divine soul. Even then, the death of an incarnate will only empower him for a year and a day.

Ghosts

Not all who die are drawn back to the well or reborn immediately. They are unable or unwilling to move on due to their attachments and ties to the living world. Instead, they return to haunt humanity as ghosts.

Ghosts have access to all the powers of (will and intellect), but not the powers of the body. They can move through walls, throw objects through the air with their thoughts and whisper in the ears of the living. A small number of them learn to possess the living, which leads to a clash of wills as the living soul tries to cast out the rogue spirit and the ghost tries to push the soul down for the duration of the possession. Some, it is said, destroy the original soul and take over permanently, but these are thankfully rare.

Incarnates with superhuman senses can see ghosts, and those with powers of will can deal with them in kind.

Ghosts are often desperate to resolve their ties to the world, and glad of any assistance. Others dread returning to the well of souls, and will fight to survive even in their unliving state.

Guardians

A loose faction of apparently benevolent and idealistic souls, the Guardians attempt to protect the sanctity of the Well of Souls. They hope to win control of the Well and guide even the most forgetful and weak-willed soul into full memory of their reincarnations. Eventually, the Guardians hope to

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build an eternal society of reincarnating immortals, who slip in and out of a tamed Well of Souls.

Most Guardians are young souls. The faction is appealing to Incarnates who retain a belief in the innate goodness of humanity, who are still bright and pure and unwearied by the weighty matter of the world. A few elder Guardians hope to be the architects and secret masters of their eternal society.

Enslavers

This diabolic group believe that common, forgetful mundane souls are little more than sheep to the Incarnate's wolves. They are the red wave of the invading army, the vicious whip of the slave-driver, the jackboot tread of the secret police. Some have attributed every ill and evil in humanity's history to the Enslavers, and certainly they have been responsible for many of them. The Enslavers' talent for organising and marshalling human agents, though, gives them a huge advantage when hunting for Nexus Points.

Lost

Most souls struggle to remember even tiny fragments of their previously lives. The Lost have the opposite problem - the vast bulk of memory of their previous selves completely overwhelms and crushes the fragile shell of present self. They are incurably insane, shifting from personality to personality at random. Most are treated as madman, but a few escape and hunt down those unfortunates who seem to remind them of another life. However, the Lost's madness is so great, it usually prevents them from successively resolving any of their remaining issues.



Mortals

A few mundane souls, without any memory of their own reincarnations, sometimes discover the secret war of the incarnates. To a mortal who has forgotten his or her own pre-life history, such incarnates are as gods. Some mortals try to learn the secrets of the incarnates, to join them on their great voyage through time. Others attempt to uncover the mysteries of history from those who lived through it. Still others try to trap and extract the spirit energy of souls.

Inheritors

Some wise Incarnates prepare for their next life, by setting up organisations or bequests which they can pick up a few centuries later. The practise began in Egypt - every pyramid has a secret passage leading to the treasure vault, for example, intended for the use of the Pharaoh in his next life. Some Inheritor groups have grown far beyond their original intent, and now search the world over for the current incarnation of the Soul who founded them.

The Soul Devourer

Not all Souls have come back to the Well. This has been happening for ages now, but went unnoticed until the modern era. Some thought it was because of the Immortals, but the number has grown too great to explain away with such a small faction. The Scholars have come to the conclusion that something is destroying souls.

Once they discovered this, they looked around and found that an increasing number of people in the modern world aren't people at all - just hollow shells bereft of a soul, animated only by instinct and blind biology. Something out there is destroying souls. This is bad news, because not only does the crushed soul not return to the Well, it also increases the imbalance. Whatever is destroying the Souls seems to target Incarnates, for they are richest souls of all.

One alarming theory is that there is a soul from outside the Well of Souls; an alien or anti-soul of some kind that is blindly erasing others. Others fear that there is some faction which is wiping out its rivals in order to conquer the Well, or perhaps the rate at which new Souls is being generated is decreasing. Something terrible is out there...

Jane Mackenzie

Born in New York. Her parents were teachers Ann and Carl. Jane had a happy childhood. After college Jane entered the police academy where she graduated with honours. Jane's life seemed to be happy and normal. That is until 15 day ago. It had been a long week and Jane was sat in a dirty motel room staring across at a window in the opposite building. She was beginning to thing the tip off had been bogus when finally movement triggered her mind back to the present. Lifting the binoculars up she peered across at the tall man looking about the apartment. The face was familiar but she couldn't place it. She watched him move over to a wall. He examined the wall thoroughly before removing a small object from his pocket. He played with the device for awhile then the wall in front of him opened up and he disappeared inside. Jane threw the binoculars onto the bed, grabbed her jacket and flew out of the room. She raced down the stairs and out across the street. As she approached the apartment she slowed and pulled out her pistol. The door was ajar so she gently pushed the door open and entered the apartment. Slowly moving through the apartment Jane failed to hear the figure moving up behind her. The next thing Jane knew, she was lying on the floor, her hands and feet chained to loops in the floor. Frantically looking around she saw the figure approach from the far side of the room. Slowly and reverently he knelt behind her head, placing his hands over her temples. The figure seemed to enter a trance. The room dissolved around her. Memories came flooding into her mind. Memories she knew didn't belong to her. Scenes of long ago played themselves out in her mind. She felt herself slipping away. A bolt of white pain hit and all existence ceased. Jane awoke. Her head pounded. A young lady stood next to her, a kind look on her face.

"Who are you?" Jane asked.

"My name is Kira. I almost wasn't in time."

"In time for what?"

"A few seconds later and he would have killed you."

"Why?"

"He was after your soul. I am a chaser. I track and stop soul thieves. Let me get you out of here and I will explain more to you then."

As she got up Jane looked across to see the body of the mysterious figure lying decapitated on the floor.

CHARACTER GENERATION

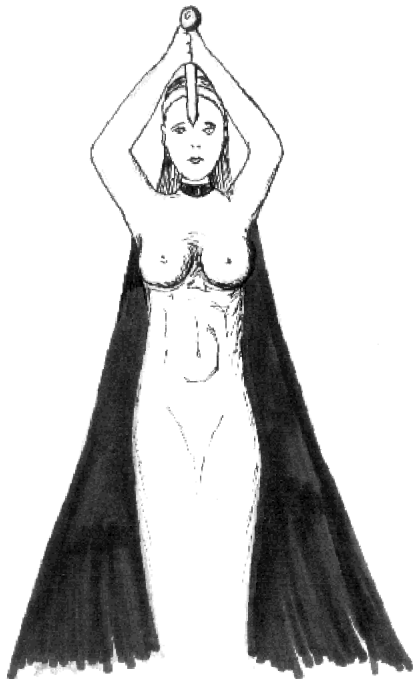
Before you can explore your character's previous Incarnations, you must first know who your character is now. Therefore, you initially describe your present-day form by allocating points to your Attributes. You have 15 points to distribute between the four attributes, and you can then prioritise the various Aspects of the Attributes. Aspects are "specialisations" of the Attributes. For example, both Strength and Speed are covered by your Physique Attribute, but you can choose to make your character especially muscular (by increasing Strength) but correspondingly slower (decreasing Speed).

The four Attributes are Physique, Dexterity, Intellect and Will.

Physique

Physique measures your physical stamina and toughness. A character with a high physique is noticeably fit and strong. A low physique will leave your character weak and sickly. The Aspects of Physique are Strength, Speed and Health. Any increase in any one aspect must be balanced by a corresponding decrease in another Aspect

- Strength covers muscle power and ability to do damage.
- Speed measures how fast your character can physically move.
- Health is used to absorb physical damage and shrug off sickness.



Dexterity

A character with high Dexterity is agile and precise. In the distant past, the character might have been a thief, archer or carver. Today, the character might be an artist, sniper or thief (some things never change). The Aspects of Dexterity are Agility, Coordination and Reflexes.

- Agility is used for feats of physical movement, jumping and dodging.
- Coordination covers fine, precise actions, like picking a lock or disarming a bomb.
- Reflexes measures your "twitch" speed and ability to avoid being surprised.

Intellect

Intellect is how smart your character is and how expansive his or her mind is. Characters of high Intellect have been the guiding light of humanity throughout history.

The Aspects of Intellect are Insight, Perception and Education.

- Insight is your ability to discern patterns of logic and meaning.
- Perception is used to notice things that are out of the ordinary.
- Education is your character's ability to learn and absorb new information - not what your character already knows!

Will

Finally, Will is the strength of your character's innate personality. Your will drives you from reincarnation to reincarnation. The Aspects of Will are Discipline, Spirit and Charisma.

- Discipline measures self-control and focus.
- Spirit is the innate "light of the soul", and is connected to the mystic nature of the soul.
- Charisma covers charm and the ability to command.

To create your character, allocate the 15 points to the attributes however you choose, although no attribute may have a value higher than 5 or lower than 2.

Each aspect is assumed to have a basic value the same as the associated attribute. You may then vary these aspect values by 1 or 2 but the total of the aspects must always be (3 x attribute).

EXAMPLE:

Steve is creating a new character which he named Karen. He has fifteen points to allocate among Karen's attributes. He puts 3 points into Physique. He thinks about dropping Karen's Strength aspect in order to boost her Health, but eventually decides that he's happy to have three in all of the aspects.

He allocates five points to her Intellect, and decides that Karen is an archaeologist. She'll need all of her Aspects for such a role, so he leaves her Insight, Perception and Education all at five.

Next, he allocates four points to her Dexterity. He drops her Reflexes by 2, and increases both Agility and Coordination by one each, for final totals of Reflexes 2, Coordination 5, Agility 5. Karen's fairly agile, and good at careful work, but she's obviously not good at dealing with sudden shocks and surprises.

Finally, he has just 2 points left for Karen's Will, and he leaves the aspects unchanged.



Characters each have a pool of Resonance points, measuring their ability to tap into the abilities they had in their past lives. This begins at 100 Core points. Their Flux points are equal to one-tenth of their Core points (rounded up), so their initial Flux point value is 10.

Note that you may choose for your character to have knowledge of some past lives before you begin play, which will entail losing some of these initial Core points. See the section on "Past Lives" for more information on this.

A player may choose instead to create a character who has had no past lives to call upon. If they do this, they may have 12 more points to allocate to their Aspects (although no more than 3 may be given to any individual aspect). However, they will be unable to call upon the experience of past lives to acquire new skills.

Finally a player should generate the number of hit points their character has in the event that they get into physical combat. This value is generated by multiplying a character's HEALTH aspect by 2 and represents the amount of damage a character can take before they need a new incarnation.

Skills

What? You expect a skill list for this game? You do realise that we had less than twelve hours to design this thing, right? There is no skill list. Live with it.

What you should do is get your favourite game, make a copy of the skill list in that book, and insert those sheets after this page.

Experienced gamers can add their own skills to this list.

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GAME RULES

The GM determines the appropriate skill for the task and the difficulty level.

If the character has the required skill for the task in hand, this is the value used, otherwise the value of the Intellect attribute is used instead. This value is multiplied by the appropriate Aspect to give the target number. The GM may modify the Aspect multiplier according to the difficulty of the task (+1 for easy or -2 for very hard etc.)

The player rolls D100 with a success being a number lower than the target number. A roll of 96-00 is an automatic failure.

If the player rolls a double (11,22,33 etc), this is considered to be an 'exceptional' result (either a success or a failure!) which the GM should take into account when determining the outcome of the task.

For example, Andrew is trying to swim across a river. He has the Swimming skill at a value of 10. If the river was wide, the GM may choose to use Strength as the aspect multiplier. If Andrew was trying to race someone, the Speed aspect would be used instead. In this case, the GM chooses Strength (4) as the modifier. He rules that this is a normal difficulty task, so the player must roll 40 or less in order to succeed.

There are things that you'll always remember: the first time you got blisteringly drunk, losing your virginity and the first time you remember your own death. That really throws you. I've met a few incarnates who just shrug off the experience; I've also met a few incarnates who spent a lifetime in an asylum. The first time I remembered my own death I was in a nightclub, pissed, partially blinded and deafened by the bass. The lights flashed in my eyes and next thing I know I'm lying in the mud trying to hold my guts in with one hand whilst puking into a bomb crater.

The second time I died, I remember the hangman laughing as I suffocated; the lifeguards pulled me off the bottom of the swimming pool. There's always something that sets it off and it's never fun, but I've learnt a few things; the main one being, dying is never fun.

Temporary Modifiers

As a result of external effects, a character's attributes may change. If this happens, all the associated aspects are affected to the same extent. Thus, if Physique is reduced by 1 as a result of combat damage, Strength, Skill and Health are also reduced by 1 until the Physique loss is restored. Only attributes can be affected in this fashion - individual aspects cannot be affected directly.

Resonance

Resonance is both the measure of your past lives and the way you tap those past lives. There are two types of resonance points: core and flux.

Core

Core points are spent to make contact with your past lives and permanently gain skills from those lives. The number of core points you spend determines how strong the link is with your past lives and how much those past lives 'shined'.

To contact a previously unknown past life costs a number of core points. At the moment a new predecessor is contacted the player and GM should create a brief character sketch of this life. This will note the number of core points spent to contact the life and will list the skills appropriate to that archetype. Ten times the core points spent are available to distribute among these skills. The skills are capped to 6 times the core points spent. The skills need not all be defined immediately if this would slow down play.

Example: *Anthony is trapped in a burning aeroplane. He makes contact with one of his past lives. Anthony's player and GM decide that the life he contacts is a Soldier archetype named Iain McNeill, a WWII paratrooper who died at Arnhem. He spends only one point so the sketch for McNeill has 10 points of skills with a max in any skill of 5, which they define as parachute-6, firearms-2, melee-2. If the player had made a five point connection with McNeill, and had 50 points to spend on skills with a maximum of 20 in any one skill, the GM might have chosen to decide the skills apart from parachute after the immediate danger is past.*

Once contact with a past life has been established, you can learn the skills they possessed. This allows you to learn skills at a faster rate than possible by conventional, everyday means. By tapping your past lives, you learn skills at twice the normal rate. Once you have reached the same level as the past life you are tapping, you can continue to improve by conventional learning at the normal rate.

Spent core points can be regained by one of two methods: completing matters that have remained unresolved from your past lives (as determined by the GM with player suggestions) or by draining core points from someone else's soul (an evil act!).

Flux

Flux points are spent to temporarily gain skills from a past life. The number of flux points you have is equal to the number of core points divided by 10 (rounded up). For example, if you have 83 core points, your flux points would be 9. You can spend up to your current number of flux points. Each flux point you spend grants you an increase of 3 points in a skill. However, the process is not automatically successful. Sometimes you fail to tap a past life with that skill. To determine if your attempt works, roll a d10. If you roll over the number of flux points you wish to spend (which equals half the number of skill points you wish to gain), then you're successful. The temporary gain in skill lasts for one encounter or event (for example, one combat or the climbing of a particular wall, as determined by the GM). Note your temporary skill cannot be higher than the archetype you are gaining the skill from.

If the attempt fails, you lose core points. The number of core points you lose is equal to the number by which you failed. For example, if you wanted to gain 7 skills points but rolled a 4 on the d10, you would lose 3 core points ($7 - 4 = 3$).

Example: Anthony attempts to escape the aeroplane by parachute. Tapping McNeill's parachute-6 skill, using 2 points of flux he rolls a d10 and gets a 4. He can then use the skill as if he possessed it himself at level 6, rolling the skill test he passes and parachutes gently to safety and makes a perfect landing. If he had rolled a 1, he would have lost 1 core point. If he had rolled a 2, he would have lost no points. Either way, he is still trapped on a burning aeroplane.

Regardless of success or failure you have spent the appropriate number of flux points. These can only be replenished after a good night's rest.

The hideous act

Draining a soul is a time consuming and dangerous business. Some are willing to risk it though, as it offers a means to access additional past lives. This allows the unscrupulous to gain the services of multiple instances of the same archetype. The irredeemable can take this further and consume utterly the soul of another to boost their own power.

In game terms this allows a character to gain free archetypes, at no core cost, and even rejuvenate their core pool. It is possible under unusual circumstances for this wholesale asset stripping to allow a character to take his core pool above 100.

To achieve this it is necessary to confine the physical body of the victim and then loosen the bonds between body and soul by means of hypnosis, psychoactive drugs, coma, torture or anything else which occurs to the twisted imagination of the GM. Once this is achieved the perpetrator must envelop the victim's soul, or part thereof, with their own and tear it from the rightful owner. This requires the victim to have fewer core points than the aggressor. Several people can work together to attack a stronger soul, adding their core points together. To steal one past life and all the skills that encompasses requires a Will roll against a difficulty of the difference between the victim's and the aggressor's core points. To obliterate a soul requires a Will roll against the difference between twice the victim's core and one times the aggressor's core points.

Failure to steal a life leads to loss of core points equal to the amount by which the roll was missed. Failure to destroy a soul leads to loss of core points equal to ten times the amount by which the roll was missed.

When multiple aggressors succeed in stealing a life the leader of the attack gains the life and their accomplices gain core points equal to the value of that life each. If they manage to destroy a soul the leader gets half of the victims core points and the remainder is split equally among the others involved.

If a core points value goes over 100 a Will check is made against 100 minus the excess. A failure leads to the bloated soul exploding messily.



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Combat

Combat is resolved by two die rolls, a roll to hit and a second roll to determine how much damage is done.

To determine if a character hits their target they should roll equal to or under the multiple of their Coordination multiplied by the relevant weapon skill. If they have no skill in that weapon, they should use their Physique or Intellect attribute as a base, according to the type of weapon. If a character is using a missile weapon then they should apply a range modifier to the 'to hit' roll from the range modifier table (see below). A roll of 96-00 is always a miss. If a double is rolled this has one of two effects, if it is a double-success then the character has scored a critical hit. Roll the damage dice twice. If however a double-failure is rolled, this is a fumble. The GM should invent a suitable screw up.

For example, Jim attempts to shoot Ralph with a handgun. His Handgun skill is 12 and his Coordination aspect is 4 and the range is 10 metres. He must therefore roll $12 \times 4 = 48$ or under on d100.

He rolls 88 indicating a fumble (double failure). The GM says that his gun jams and will take some time to clear the chamber.

The character or NPC on the receiving end of the hit may then roll to dodge provided the weapon used is a melee or thrown weapon only – very few people can dodge bullets! To dodge, a character must roll equal to or under their Agility aspect multiplied by their dodge skill.

After if a hit is scored, roll damage using the Weapons Damage Table. This should be subtracted from the character's hit points. The damage should then be checked against the following table for any side-effects.

This reflects the ability of certain characters to shrug off the effects of damage better than others and also the fact that being hit actually hurts.

If the target is wearing any sort of armour, damage may be reduced according to the type of armour (and the whim of the GM!)

Missile Weapons Range Modifiers

RANGE	MODIFIER
point blank	X 3
under 1 X Weapon range	X 1
1-2 X Weapon range	X 0.5
2+ X Weapon range	X 0.25

WEAPON	DAMAGE	RANGE
Knife	d10/2	5 metres (if thrown)
Baseball bat	d10	n/a
Meat Cleaver	d10	n/a
handgun	d10	30 metres
rifle	d10+2	100 metres
shotgun	2d10	30 metres
SMG	d8	30 metres, 10 shots/round

DAMAGE	SIDE EFFECT
Half victim's Health or less	None. This can be shrugged off.
Half to 1x victim's HEALTH	The victim is stunned for 10 seconds.
1 to 2x victim's HEALTH	The victim is badly injured. Stunned for 10 seconds and all Physique and Dexterity based abilities suffer a -1 penalty.
2x victim's Health or more	Victim is unconscious.

Archetype descriptions

Artist (Aspect: Coordination)

Stand outside the expected, the mundane, the prosaic. You and yours will see beneath the surface to express what lies beneath. You'd prefer to ignore considerations of the next meal or next year; you're happiest immersed in your art.

Your experience will revolve around your creative pursuits. Some artists develop advanced negotiating or commercial ability; this may be a means to an end (more art) or become an end in itself as you move toward the Trader's path.

Assassin (Aspect: Reflexes)

You're better. You're smarter. And for a price, you'll demonstrate it once again. In your game, skill is everything, and down payments are strictly cash.

When not evil, you are hard-bitten and pursue the end over the means.

Athlete (Aspect: Speed)

The athlete is devoted to physical perfection. He is not necessarily the strongest or toughest; he strives to be the most efficient machine at the task he chooses to accomplish.

The athlete excels in physical speed, reflexes and coordination, not to mention the endurance and drive to put these into practice. The athlete may be a mountain climber or a distance runner or even a mad whack voodoo ninja, but whatever his choice, he will aim to be the very best.



Diplomat (Aspect: Charisma)

Fighting is such a waste. The true measure of man or woman is found on the battlefield of the mind.. negotiation. Your eloquent communication and fast thinking can salvage the thorniest problems.

You probably excel at languages and may well know about many cultures. Combat is not your thing, though you may be able to evade and hide with the best of them.

Explorer (Aspect: Perception)

Every era and nation adds its own insight to the riddle of life. Why just read dusty tomes about strangeness and novelty? Experience it yourself! Nothing surpasses the thrill of the new, the unknown, the situation never seen before and perhaps never again.

Most any skill can turn to your advantage, though travel and survival play an important part.



Healer (Aspect: Strength)

Wherever suffering is found, you will ease the pain. As humans, and indeed any beings, collide with life and lie broken by the roadside, you give of yourself to help another, often at the expense of your own well-being or even your life.

You know the curing skills of your time – science, herbalism, spirit magic or pure superstition. Often you'll have empathic or nurturing skills as well.

Leader (Aspect: Discipline)

Set the direction. Show the way. Look around and make sure everyone's on board. Groups and communities need your initiative to thrive and survive. You're likely to be articulate and charismatic, though you might just have a powerful sword-arm. Your dedication will set the tone. A heavy responsibility – but you'll only realize your potential if you're in the driver's seat.

Priest (Aspect: Spirit)

Humanity needs guidance. You provide the holy link to a revered Deity or to the Way that brings understanding. It's your responsibility to keep the eyes of all upon the real values, the higher purpose, the inner reality.

Depending on your culture of origin, you might have retreated from day-to-day mundanity into monastic contemplation or ritual observance. Other priests pitch in to show the way more directly, in a lay career or feeding the hungry in social ministry.

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Rogue (Aspect: Agility)

From moment to moment, you pursue the main chance. You might have a sly tongue, a swift and hidden blade, a hacker's console, or just a keen sense for both pleasure and danger.

Rogues may develop powerful skills, but learning and training take a back seat to seizing a moment of opportunity, and more generally enjoying the finer things of life.



Scholar (Aspect: Education)

From age to age, the sphere of human knowledge expands... and sometimes contracts. You dedicate your efforts to pushing the envelope of understanding outward. Scholars build a monument of science, criticism, history... any realm of fact or lore. Social

distinctions of nation, wealth, language mean little to you; all who take part in the honest search for truth are your brothers and sisters.

Soldier (Aspect:)

You'll dedicate your life – and your death, if need be – to the glory of your cause and your people's ultimate victory at arms. You will train body and mind without ceasing to become a weapon in the great struggle that is existence. Your determination is the wall that shields your people, or the hammer that destroys your opposition.

Trader (Aspect: Insight)

You excel at the game of commerce. You may use your skills at buying low and selling high to sustain your community or family, or you may feed upon the weak, taking what's yours by right of wits and good marketing.

Example hybrids

- Mother of five – Healer/Leader
- General – Soldier/Leader
- Drug dealer – Artist/Rogue
- Apache scout – Athlete/Explorer
- Medieval European monk – Priest/Scholar
- CIA med-tech – Healer/Assasin



Jack Shephard

Jack was nothing special at school, he wasn't too bad on the track and he got along with all his classmates; but, you knew he'd never end up with the prom queen or winning any college placement. It wasn't that he was stupid he just had better things to do with his life, girls guns and trucks ruled his world. The one bright point of his school life was Mr May a veteran of WW2, his simple patriotic vision was something Jack could respect and understand.

Private Jack Shephard first experienced the flashbacks in the jungles of Viet-Nam. He was serving with his brother in the infantry. His brother died during a high casualty operation. He returned soon after with the promise that he would take care of his brother's son.

He kept having flashbacks of previous lives and, to drown out these images, he turned to alcohol. Although this was a conflicting turn for him because he wanted to set a good example to his nephew for whom he had taken over a fatherhood role. One of the main supporters he had during this hard time was his old high school teacher who he had formed a very close friendship with before the war. But this still wasn't enough. As the months went on, the flashbacks became more and more traumatic and so he slipped further and further into drink until he basically became a recluse.

He was sectioned when the flashbacks and sleep deprivation led to violent outbursts and erratic behaviour. His doctor, a man experienced at dealing with combat veterans, decided to use hypnosis to allow Jack to deal with the trauma of the war. Thanks to the doctor's influence Jack finally got to see what was really causing him the sleep loss. What he saw made no sense to him at all, and he slipped closer to madness.

After Jack left the hospital he stumbled into the museum where he became fully aware of what he was experiencing.

Incarnate

How to Run Incarnate

Christ, I don't know. We just wrote the thing today. It isn't so much a game as random madness. Still, here's how to run it. Or away from it, whichever seems appropriate.

Starting Off

Beginning PCs are fairly clueless about what's going on. The early sessions of *Incarnate* should be concerned with getting the PCs acquainted with the rules and concepts of the setting while also setting them on the path to regaining the memories of their former selves. The karmic links between PCs will draw the characters together, but will also let Immortal hunting parties find the group. Bang – instant antagonists for the first session.

The characters' early memories of their previous lives will probably be fairly patchy. Some players might have a good idea of their old incarnations, others will have no idea who their characters are, let alone were. The GM should be fairly forgiving with memories and Resonance early on.

One option is to start the game with a prequel set in another era. Run a game set in the Middle Ages or Victorian era which introduces some elements of the setting, then kill off the PCs in the climax of the scenario. (Indulge the dark side of GMing!)



Campaign Structure

Once the PCs are comfortable with the idea of accessing their past lives, the GM should introduce the factions and other dangers of the *Incarnate* world. As the PCs are forced to explore their past selves, their present selves will change in response to the pressure of inherited memory. You can run this as horror, as the morals of the present day are swept away by remembered barbarism, or heroism, as the PCs regain their previous stature as heroes of myth and legend. The characters can fight for control of the Well of Souls, hunt out ancient magics and lost treasures, or just try to live a normal life with their previous selves poking them in the head.

Some scenario ideas might include:

- A PC once locked a rival's soul away in a magical trap. Now, the eternal lover of the prisoner is

hunting the PC down to learn how to open the trap – but the PC can't remember...

- The imbalance in the Well can have disastrous effects on the physical world. Surges and splashes in the well can mean earthquakes and volcanoes on Earth. The PCs have to avert a catastrophe by returning an errant soul to the well.
- The PCs hear about an Inheritor group who are still looking for the Incarnate who founded them. The inheritors are vastly wealthy. Can the PCs trick the Inheritors and claim the wealth destined for another Incarnate?
- Nexus Points allow PCs to influence the well. Maybe they can use the points to drag a specific soul of the Well.

Ending a Campaign

The finale of an *Incarnate* game should be fairly final. The characters might be able to resolve the imbalance in the Well, or finally drive their ancient Incarnate rivals into complete oblivion – but the player characters should die in the attempt. The only fitting ending to a game of the returned dead is returning TO death.

Experience and Character Improvement

Gaining Experience Points:

Experience points can be received in the game in two ways. Firstly by rolling under 5% on a skill check. This outstanding performance gains you 5 experience to spend in that skill alone. Also, the Gamesmaster should assign 5-10 points for exceptional roleplaying in a game session. Points should also be assigned when the heroes succeed in a significant goal or complete a major task. 10 points for small or limited goals, up to 50 points for extraordinary achievements (like saving the world).

Spending Experience Points:

Experience points can only be spent on improving skills. Attributes do not change, and past lives are developed in the game. To improve a skill by one level costs 10 experience points. If one of your past lives has the skill, it costs only 5 points.

If you want to learn a completely new skill, you must pay 50 points to learn that skill at the basic level of 5. Skills are capped at 20. You can only increase a skill by three levels per adventure.

Staying Sane

Suddenly discovering that you are a millennial old being with the emotional baggage of several lifetimes can be a recipe for insanity.

Many Incarnate go for the mental purge approach, keeping their memories of their past lives separate from who they are now. For many though, this proves impossible, especially when strong emotions are involved.

Unresolved emotional events from a former life can end up becoming the focus of an Incarnate's existence. Many Incarnate seek to forge a perfect life for themselves by finding the perfect partner, settling some old scores or merely being happy with who they are.

Some even believe that this will get them off the endless wheel of life, death and re-birth. Others utterly fail to resolve their issues, and the centuries of guilt, grief and irritation catch like bits of grit in the wheel of reincarnation. They eventually become Lost, Incarnates whose personalities are shattered across time, desperate to make it all stop by laying to rest the ghosts of their past.

The following is a list of common Foci.

Love: Probably the most common focus, the problem isn't so much finding the love of your life, (powerful links usually let the paramour find her love), but what to do when you find them. The Swedish beautiful blonde who captured your heart 200 years ago could easily now be a French engineer of the gender that you don't prefer.

These problems aside, an Incarnate who fails to examine the reason why the relationship failed in first place is doomed to repeat their failure.)

For example, in Yorkshire, England, they are three beings who have been obsessed with each other since the English Civil War. Every time the relationship carries on for about 20 years of romantic idyll before they murder each other in their beds.

Lovers who belong to the faction known as the Lost tend to seek out the first Incarnate they can find, and attempt to resolve the romantic issues of their shattered minds. Should the unfortunate victim fail to escape from the mad incarnate, a link can become formed between the two, which results in the victim being stalked by the lost across time.

Hate: The flip side of love, hate is just a strong motivator. Typically, if an incarnate doesn't have another incarnate as the focus for his rage, he'll lay the blame for some long forgotten slight on a nation, race or creed.

In cases where two incarnates hate each other, the reasons for the feud tend to become irrelevant after a

couple of hundred years, and become more of a battle between two beings who wish to destroy each other utterly. The more subtle Incarnates do not go for out and out physical destruction, but instead take great glee in ruining their enemies' lives. Resolution can come from mutual forgiveness (fat chance) or more often, utter annihilation of their enemy.

Suffice to say, Lost incarnates fuelled by hate are the serial killers of the world, destroying the lives of anyone they can find, in order to seek some release from their madness.



Identity: To beings whose physical forms are constantly changing, the sense of self is in serious danger of collapse. Without a strong understanding of who you are, how can you possibly cope with hundreds of past lives? To some, they have to embrace their former lives and weave them into a single whole being. Though this sounds easy (after all, you are who you are), every single sin, victory and emotion has to be justified and understood. Often, the Incarnate seek validation in the eyes of others, rather than standing on their own.

Lost Incarnates who focus on identity end up becoming psychic vampires, stealing the personalities of other beings, becoming more fractured as they do so.

Intellectual: The rarest focus, some incarnates possess the drive and determination to uncover some of the more esoteric mysteries of being. Kabbalist, Holy grail hunters and scientists looking for the equation that defines the universe all fit into this category. Typically the immortal sets themselves an impossible goal, in order to ensure that they have something to do throughout eternity. In the few cases where one of these beings does discover the secret they are searching for, they tend to be ready to cease to exist.

Incarnate

Memories: An Incarnate Scenario

This is a quick outline of a simple Incarnate scenario, suitable for beginning characters. The tie that binds the characters together in this case is a painting, a group portrait of the members of a Victorian spiritualist society called the House of Grey Whispers. All the PCs were members of this society in a previous existence, though they may not remember this. The portrait was painted by an artist of astonishing genius named Swinson. His skill was so great that he saw beneath surface features, and managed to capture the soul beneath. In moonlight, anyone looking at the painting can see the fundamental SELF of the subjects. The painting is simply called 'Dwellers In The House of Grey Whispers'.

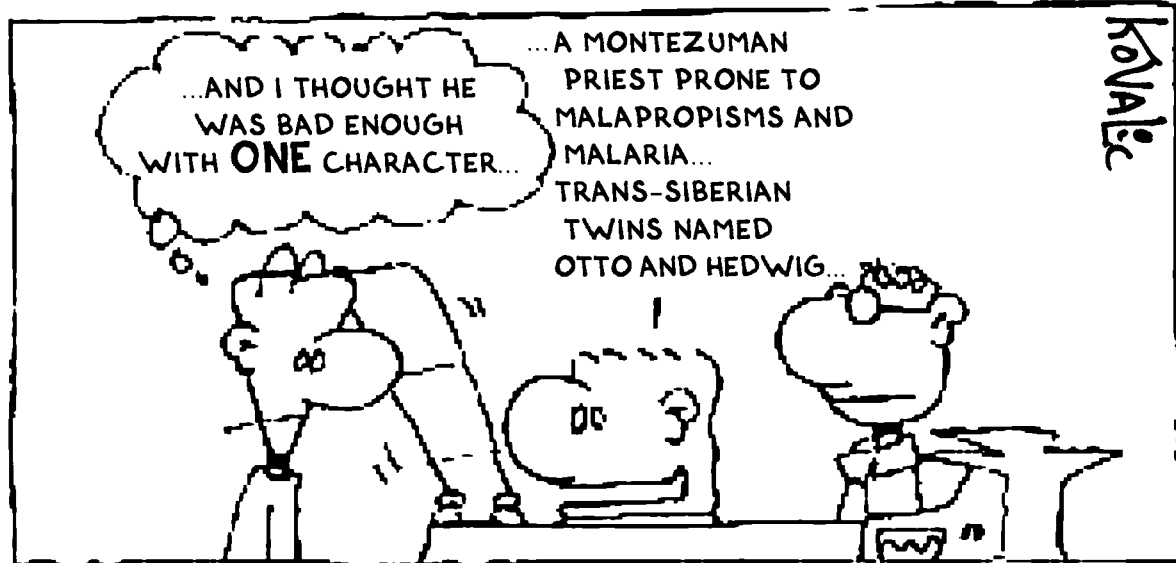
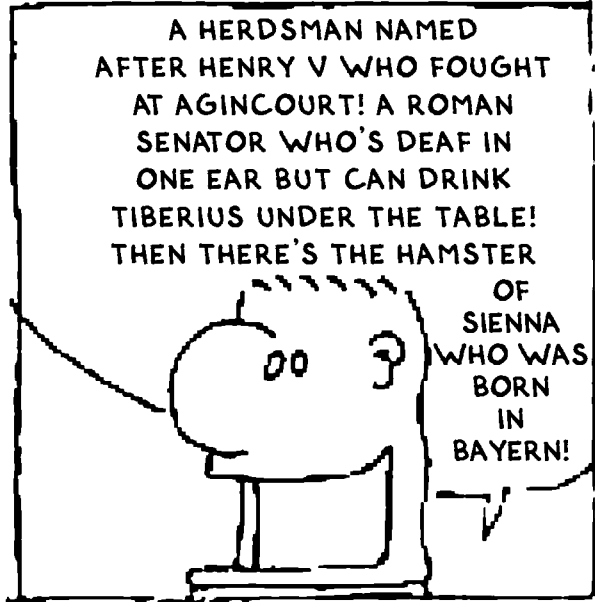
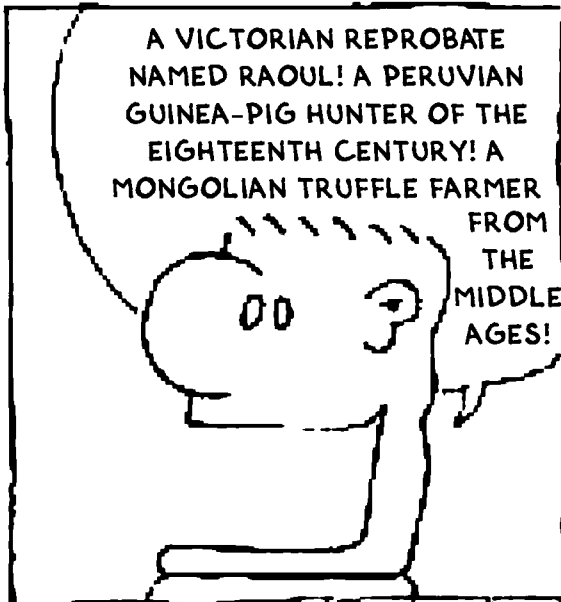
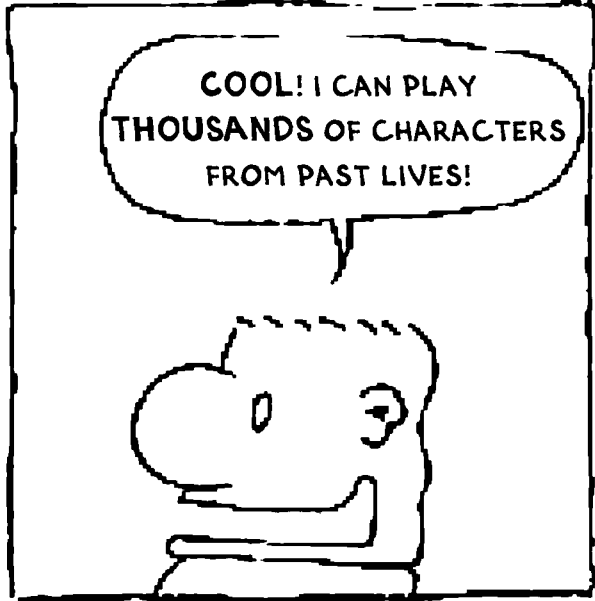
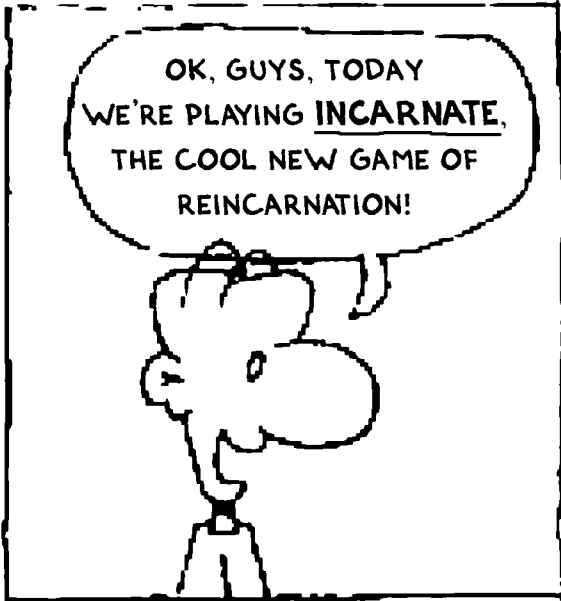
Today, the painting belongs to a man named Cordwin. When he was a child, he saw the souls beneath the painting, and has since been obsessed with the painting. He is now a rather wealthy art collector, and 'Dwellers' is his favourite piece. Two years ago, Cordwin's private gallery was broken into, and several paintings were stolen. The thieves were disturbed during the burglary, and were forced to dump Dwellers in an alley. Heavy rain fell before the painting was found, and the paint has run.

For months, Cordwin mourned the loss of the magical painting. Then, by chance, he met a young woman. He did not know her, he RECOGNISED her – she was one of the souls in the painting. He hunted her down, and trapped her, and mixed her blood into the paints, and restored part of the painting. It was perfect – her figure in the painting was renewed exactly as it has been. If Cordwin could find the other figures in the painting, he could fix the whole thing.

For months, now, Cordwin has been looking for the other figures. Once he finds them, he will pretend to be an eccentric millionaire, and invite them to his private gallery. Once there, his hired thugs will attack and capture the characters, so he can use them to restore the rest of the painting.

The woman he trapped, Jemima, has a secret of her own. Not only is she an Incarnate, she was the lover of the artist Swinson in a previous life. Dwellers is actually a magical trap, made to capture the souls of the other characters. She hoped to use the psychic energy of the others in the House of Grey Whispers to devour the other characters. Now, if they rescue her, she's got a second chance...





INCARNATE

Character Name:

Player Name :

Character Description:

Archetype:
 Aspect:
 Resonance:

Hit Points Wounds

Injuries :

Physique

Dexterity

Intellect

Will

SPEED: AGILITY: INSIGHT: DISCIPLINE:
 STRENGTH: COORDINATION: PERCEPTION: SPIRIT:
 HEALTH: REFLEXES: EDUCATION: CHARISMA:

RESONANCE

CORE RESONANCE FLUX 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Past Lives

Name: Archetype: Aspect: Resonance: Skills:	<i>Skills – continued</i>	Name: Archetype: Aspect: Resonance: Skills:
	Unfinished Business:	Unfinished Business:

SKILLS	RATING

EXPERIENCE

EQUIPMENT, GEAR AND RESOURCES

WEAPON	SKILL	DAMAGE	RANGE

Past Lives – continued

Name: Archetype: Aspect: Resonance: Skills:	<i>Skills – continued</i>	Name: Archetype: Aspect: Resonance: Skills:
	Unfinished Business:	Unfinished Business: