

# cold, hard world



the Real World sourcebook for

~~dead~~inside

by Chad Underkoffler



# deadinside

## cold, hard world

**cold, hard world:** *The Real World Sourcebook for  
the Dead Inside RPG*

*by Chad Underkoffler*

***Prose Descriptive Qualities (PDQ) System Design*** by: Chad Underkoffler

**Editor:** Tom Schoene

**Cover Art & Layout:** Chad Underkoffler

**Interior Art** by: Chris Cooper (page 26), Scott Kane (pages 8, 21, 40, 46, 47, 51, and 65), and Chad Underkoffler (all other artwork)

### Playtesters:

Bruce Ballon  
David Barrera

Eric Burns  
Andrew Byers

Robert Donoghue  
Rob MacDougall

Bryant Durrell  
Paul Tevis

Visit the *Atomic Sock Monkey Press* website at < <http://www.atomicsockmonkey.com> > for more information on our games.

The *Prose Descriptive Qualities (PDQ) System*, all *Dead Inside* text, and the *Dead Inside* cover image is ©2004 Chad Underkoffler. All Rights Reserved.

*Interior Artwork:* ©2004 Scott Kane for pages 8, 21, 40, 46, 47, 51, and 65; all other interior artwork is ©2004 Chad Underkoffler.

Except for purposes of review, no portions of this work may be reproduced by any means without the permission of the relevant copyright holders. This is a work of fiction. Any similarity with actual people or events, past or present, is purely coincidental and unintentional. All mentions of copyrighted works within the text are for reference purposes only and are not a challenge of copyright or trademark.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	ii
INTRODUCTION.....	iii
ABOUT THE AUTHOR.....	iii
ABOUT ATOMIC SOCK MONKEY PRESS .....	iii
ABOUT THE PDQ SYSTEM.....	iii
ABOUT <i>DEAD INSIDE</i> .....	iii

## CHAPTER 1: REAL WORLD RECAP

<i>DEAD INSIDE</i> IN THE REAL WORLD .....	1
QUICK COSMOLOGY REFRESHER .....	1
AVERAGE PEOPLE.....	1
<i>Perceptions of Supernatural Beings</i> .....	2
THE SUPERNATURAL AND ANIMALS AND PLANTS.....	3
DO ANIMALS AND PLANTS HAVE SOULS? .....	3
<i>Reactions to Supernatural Beings</i> .....	3
<i>DI</i> AND MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES.....	5
GETTING BY IN THE REAL WORLD.....	5
<i>What to Do?</i> .....	5
MACHINATIONS OF THE SUPERNATURAL IN THE REAL WORLD .....	6
<i>The Supernatural in History</i> .....	6
THE ERA OF YOUR DIVERSE .....	6
THE ROLE OF RELIGION & FAITH IN <i>DI</i> .....	7
<i>Gaining and Losing Soul Points in the Real World</i> .....	7
<i>One's Original Soul</i> .....	7
<i>Ensoulment in the Real World</i> .....	9
THE RITUAL OF RESTORATION .....	9
<i>Spirit World Commerce in the Real World</i> .....	9
SUPERNATURAL TALENTS IN THE REAL WORLD .....	10
<i>Spiritual Conflict</i> .....	10
<i>Yawns &amp; Sneezes</i> .....	10
ABILITIES & POWERS CHART (ADJUSTED FOR REAL WORLD .....	
INFLATION) .....	11
<i>Alterations in the Effects of Spiritual Talents in the Real World</i> .....	12
SOUL CONTRACTS.....	14
EXAMPLES OF <i>CRACKING</i> AVERAGE PEOPLE.....	15
<i>Against an Unwilling Target</i> .....	15
<i>Against a Soul Contracted Target</i> .....	15

## Chapter 2: Lay of the Land

REAL WORLD RESOURCES & MACHINATIONS.....	16
<i>OPTIONAL RULE: Who Needs Sleep?</i> .....	16
PLACES OF POWER .....	17
PLANTING PLACES .....	17
<i>Far vs. Near</i> .....	17
<i>Urban, Suburban, or Rural</i> .....	17
REAL WORLD KNOWLEDGE OF SPIRIT WORLD LOCATIONS.....	19
<i>Notable Locations in the Real World</i> .....	20
TIMES OF POWER .....	22
<i>Notable Events in the Real World</i> .....	23
GROUPS OF POWER .....	24
<i>Notable Organizations in the Real World</i> .....	25
THE RITUAL OF SPLENDOR .....	26
<i>The Powers and Principalities of the Real World (or, the Gummint!)</i> .....	29
THE OMPHALOS .....	33
PEOPLE OF POWER .....	38
<i>Notable People in the Real World</i> .....	38
WHO KILLED ALEXANDER VARGO? .....	42
REAL WORLD ANIMALS .....	43
THINGS OF POWER .....	44
<i>Notable Enchanted Objects in the Real World</i> .....	44
VEHICLES .....	48

## CHAPTER 3: SEEDS & SCENARIOS

HARD TO DO GOOD.....	49
SPROUTED SCENARIOS.....	49
DOWN BUT NOT QUITE OUT .....	49
<i>Situation</i> .....	49
<i>Dramatis Personae</i> .....	49
<i>Possible Scenes</i> .....	49
<i>Twists</i> .....	50
FULL (HAUNTED) HOUSE.....	50
<i>Situation</i> .....	50
<i>Dramatis Personae</i> .....	50
CHAINING SCENARIOS.....	50
<i>Possible Scenes</i> .....	51
<i>Twists</i> .....	51
MALTESE AMULET .....	51
<i>Situation</i> .....	51
<i>Dramatis Personae</i> .....	51
<i>Possible Scenes</i> .....	51
<i>Twists</i> .....	51
A NIGHT AT THE RACES .....	52
<i>Situation</i> .....	52
<i>Dramatis Personae</i> .....	52
<i>Possible Scenes</i> .....	52
<i>Twists</i> .....	52
TWISTED ACRES .....	52
<i>Situation</i> .....	52
<i>Dramatis Personae</i> .....	53
<i>Possible Scenes</i> .....	53
<i>Twists</i> .....	53
THE UNUSUAL SUSPECTS.....	53
<i>Situation</i> .....	53
<i>Dramatis Personae</i> .....	54
<i>Possible Scenes</i> .....	54
<i>Twists</i> .....	54
A RANDOM SCATTERING OF ADVENTURE SEEDS.....	54
<i>Example</i> .....	56

## CHAPTER 4: COSMOS RELOADED

STABLE GROUND.....	58
<i>Modifications for Stable Ground</i> .....	59
WALLS & VORTEXES .....	59
ASTRALIA .....	59
<i>Modifications for Astralia</i> .....	60
OPTION: ASTRALIAN RITUAL SPACE .....	61
DREAMSCAPES .....	61
MAGIC IN THE STREETS.....	61
STREET SIGNS, LEY LINES .....	62
<i>Modifications for Magic in the Streets</i> .....	62
<i>Supernatural Superheroes</i> .....	63
<i>Example Character 1: Anthony Edgars, aka The Raven</i> .....	65
<i>Example Character 2: Greg Franz, Heir to the Cockroach Kingdom</i> .....	65
MYSTERIOUS ESCAPES .....	66
<i>Modifications for Mysterious Escapes</i> .....	66
MYSTERIOUS ESCAPES SCENARIO: <i>FIVE O'CLOCK WORLD</i> .....	67
<i>Rule Mods &amp; Secrets</i> .....	67
<i>Situation</i> .....	68
<i>Dramatis Personae</i> .....	68
<i>Possible Scenes</i> .....	68



## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *Cold, Hard World: The Real World Sourcebook for the Dead Inside RPG*.

When I wrote *Dead Inside: the Roleplaying Game of Loss & Redemption*, I spent the majority of my time constructing the Spirit World end of the setting. I figured that most GMs and players would “wing” the Real World, because it is essentially the same as the world we all live in. However, during the development of *DI*, several playtesters wanted more details on what would be unique there, given the rest of the setting, or showed interest in setting their campaigns *completely* in the Real World.

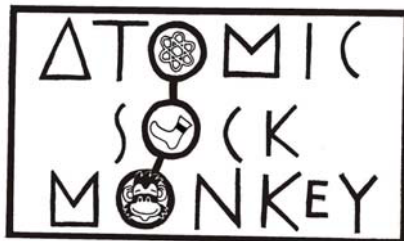
As I thought about it, I came to agree with them. However, I didn’t want to further delay the release of *DI*; nor did I want to increase the page count of that book. Therefore, *Cold, Hard World (CHW)* became its own book.

*CHW* has four chapters:

- ◆ **Chapter 1: Real World Recap** collects information on the Real World from *DI* in one place, and expands upon how spiritual Abilities & Powers operate there. There is also further examination of the strange inhabitants of that World: *Average People*.
- ◆ **Chapter 2: Lay of the Land** gives details on Places and Times of Power, as well as new Notable NPCs, Organizations, and Enchanted Objects.
- ◆ **Chapter 3: Seeds & Scenarios** provides a number of Real World adventure ideas for *DI* GMs.
- ◆ **Chapter 4: Cosmos Reloaded** offers new options to the core *DI* setting (and rules) for variant Real World-centric campaigns.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chad Underkoffler is the chief editor for a telecommunications standards body by day and a freelance game writer by night. He’s been gaming since 1981, to the confusion of his family. He is the designer of *Monkey, Ninja, Pirate, Robot Deluxe*, the author of *Dead Inside: the Roleplaying Game of Loss & Redemption* and *Monkey, Ninja, Pirate, Robot: the Roleplaying Game*, writes the column “Campaign in a Box” (appearing bimonthly in *Pyramid* < <http://www.sigames.com/pyramid/> >); has written material for *Gamma World* (Sword & Sorcery), *GURPS* (Steve Jackson Games), and *Unknown Armies* (Atlas Games); and is the Monkey King of Atomic Sock Monkey Press < <http://www.atomicsockmonkey.com> >. Chad currently lives in Alexandria, VA, with his wife Beth and their two black cats.



### ABOUT ATOMIC SOCK MONKEY PRESS

*Atomic Sock Monkey Press* is dedicated to high-quality, off-kilter, imaginative fun. Currently, that means tabletop games of both the “beer & pretzels” and roleplaying game (RPG) varieties. In the future, we may expand into other areas; but for now, Atomic Sock Monkey Press is concentrating on games.

< <http://www.atomicsockmonkey.com/> >

## ABOUT THE PDQ SYSTEM

The *Prose Descriptive Qualities (PDQ) System* has been designed for evocative simplicity, speed, and flexibility in play. Three levels of resolution, suitable for any type of situation. It currently serves as the core game mechanics for *Dead Inside: the Roleplaying Game of Loss & Redemption (DI)*, as well as *Monkey, Ninja, Pirate, Robot: the Roleplaying Game (MNPR:RPG)*.

## ABOUT DEAD INSIDE

Embrace your Virtue. Resist your Vice. Perform noble deeds. Find meaning. Fight crime. Regain your soul.

Find out more at < <http://www.atomicsockmonkey.com/products/di.asp> >.

# Chapter 1

## Real World Recap



The *Real World* lies outside your door, full of the stuff of everyday life. It is solid, sturdy, reliable. While advances in science and society keep it in constant motion, it doesn't really change much: human nature is the same as it's always been.

However, there are people, places, things, and times that hint at something more than the world we know. . . clues leading to the unseen world of the Dead Inside.

### DEAD INSIDE IN THE REAL WORLD

Well, darkness has a hunger that's insatiable,

And lightness has a call that's hard to hear.

I wrap my fear around me like a blanket,  
I sailed my ship of safety till I sank it, I'm  
crawling on your shores.

– the Indigo Girls, “Closer to Fine”

### QUICK COSMOLOGY REFRESHER

The center of the Cosmos is **the Source**, the wellspring and eventual cistern of souls. Wrapped around the Source, like the white of an egg around a yolk, is **the Spirit World**, where spiritual energy flows strong. Like the shell of this egg, **the Real World** encases the Spirit World: tough, unforgiving, it contains and shields the Cosmos from the ravaging emptiness of **the Void**.

Where *DI* deals mostly with the *internal* experience of being Dead Inside in the Real World (i.e., what it feels like), the information here is intended to illustrate the *external* experience (i.e., interacting with Average People, how the Real World treats the Dead Inside, and what sorts of things might happen to supernatural characters outside of the Spirit World).

### AVERAGE PEOPLE

Since Average People are ubiquitous in the Real World, and it is necessary to understand them before unraveling their treatment of Dead Inside, these strange creatures merit an expanded discussion.

**Average People.** Average People – also called the *ensouled* – are living bodies with souls. When they die, their soul-blood flows back to the Source via the Spirit World (which they cannot otherwise enter). It is rumored that supernatural beings that lack physical bodies can attempt to “hitch a ride” into the Spirit World by catching hold of a dying Average Person. (Consider this a complicated situation with a Difficulty Rank of Expert [11].)

Average People possess just the right amount of soul. The outer layer of their soul-blood has hardened into a thick layer, leaving no openings to express any supernatural talents (see *DI, Chapter 4*) or crannies for enemies to attack. This means that they are protected from most spiritual Abilities, Powers, and dangers; in the normal course of things, they simply aren't fazed by even the most potent attempts to Bind them or the vilest uses of Ward against them. Only in Places or Times of Power – or when

they give explicit permission – can they be mildly affected by the supernatural.

Still, a dedicated assailant can *crack* this shell and steal the Average Person’s soul-blood, turning him into a Dead Inside. (See below, *Soultaking*, for a more extensive discussion of cracking.)

### ***Perceptions of Supernatural Beings***

There are different Types of beings lurking in the corners of reality. Most Average People never recognize them, blinded by the shell around their soul. Indeed, this layer limits their perceptions of the supernatural, allowing them to disregard or rationalize away strange elements or events in their day-to-day lives (see also below, *Alterations in the Effects of Spiritual Talents in the Real World*). However, in a Place or Time of Power, this changes: within a spiritually-charged area, even the most soul-blind Average Person begins to see the dim outlines of a weirder world.

***Dead Inside.*** Normally, Average People tend to regard the Dead Inside as either eccentric (if they’re being kind), creepy (if they’re not), or delusional (if they’re being clinical). Within a Place or Time of Power, they will strongly feel that there is something “wrong” with someone who is Dead Inside.

***Free Spirits.*** Free Spirits are normally invisible to Average People, except in Places and Times of Power, where they might be seen as vague, glowing blobs. However, if a Free Spirit combines its Phasing Ability of passing through matter and the Bind Power, it can sometimes ***Possess*** even Average People (see below, *Alterations in the Effects of Spiritual Talents in the Real World*).

***Ghosts.*** Most Average People cannot see Ghosts at all, except in Places or Times of Power, where they could be perceived to manifest as fuzzy, fleeting, transparent images of how they appeared in life. Like Free Spirits, Ghosts can ***Possess*** people (see below, *Alterations in the Effects of Spiritual Talents in the Real World*).

***Imagos.*** Imagos are generally limited to appearing in the dreams and visions of Average People, and are nearly always dismissed as psychological projections, mixed-up memories, or “that chili burger I shouldn’t have eaten last night.” However, the *Shadow* of a supernatural being can become visible to its caster during waking life by taking control of his mundane shadow or reflection, and the *Voice* may speak to

him; an Average Person bystander would, alas, only hear or see half of the conversation.

***Magi.*** Average People are normally drawn to Magi like moths to a flame, reacting to them with strong – generally positive – emotions, unless a Mage is acting in a manner reprehensible to the viewer. In any case, a Mage is seen as obviously charismatic and socially adept. Few Average People notice that many Magi do not cast shadows. In a Place or Time of Power, an Average Person cannot help but notice a Mage’s forceful personality (unless the Mage does not wish to draw attention), often sensed as a feeling of the Mage being “larger than life.” Some Magi are remarkably tough, physically, able to suffer and recover from injuries that would kill most people.

NOTE – If a Mage has enacted the Ritual of Severance (see *DI, Chapter 5*), his Shadow functions like a Free Spirit, and can enter the Real World physically in the same way as any other Free Spirit.

***Qlippoth.*** Average People perceive *Living Qlippoth* in human-form much as they do Dead Inside and Zombis (as somehow “off”); they cannot sense any Qlippoth in shadow-form. In Places and Times of Power, human-form Qlippoth are perceived as something horrific (like a Zombi is; see below) and shadow-form Qlippoth as nearly imperceptible slithering fragments of gloom. However, if a being husks while in the Real World, they will become Qlippoth much as they do in the Spirit World – though with a few changes. Living Qlippoth can survive for a short time before being snuffed out like a dark candle; this permits them the chance to use Soultaking to gather enough soul-energy to feed their existence or Open a Gate to the Spirit World. Due to the spiritual resistance of the Real World, their “maintenance costs” are *doubled*: it requires two times the Modifier of the Qlippoth Quality to feed the Void (i.e., two points for Poor [-2] Qlippoth) from each successful Soultaking attack, and then the



## THE SUPERNATURAL AND ANIMALS AND PLANTS

Animals tend to react badly to Dead Inside and Zombis, becoming skittish and fearful. However, if the animal knew (and loved) the character before their soul loss, it may still react well to him. Animals – especially dogs and cats – *can* see Free Spirits and Ghosts outside of a Place or Time of Power, and will react to them as if they were normal people. They will be extremely interested in Sensitives, approaching them to play or threaten. They cannot sense Imagos or Tulpas at all. Animals will either caper with joy around or submit with whimpers to Magi (unless the Mage is specifically trying to harm a loved one). Animals always hate and fear Qlippoth in any form.

Around the Dead Inside, Qlippoth, and Zombis, plants tend to wilt and die in a short period of time, proportional to their size and age. They grow hardier and faster in the presence of Free Spirits, Ghosts, and Sensitives. Imagos and Tulpas have no effect on plants. And around a Mage, the plant-life reflects the Mage's personality: vibrant and venomous, withered and sere, verdant and luxurious, quirky and bizarre.

See *Chapter 2, Lay of the Land*, for write-ups of some common Real World animals.

## DO ANIMALS AND PLANTS HAVE SOULS?

Maybe. Maybe not.

The assumption in *DI* is that animals and plants don't have souls (or Soul Points). However, they are alive, they feel (even plants, according to science), and many have distinct personalities. Some religions and mystical traditions say they have souls, others don't. What to do if one wishes to use the concept of blood sacrifice for religious or magical purposes, or for "emergency" Soultaking?

For gaming purposes, an interesting idea might be to treat all animals as having between 1 and 5 Soul Points (depending on size, longevity, diet, or "proximity to humanity" on one of those the Tree of Life illustrations in science textbooks). Plants might have fractional Soul Points (or Ticks, see *DI, Chapter 5*) for small plants, up to 3 Soul Points for a huge, old sequoia.

Removing Soul Points from an animal or plant – even if not using the full "knives, altar, and fire" treatment – will cause it to sicken and die; animals and plants cannot normally husk. (However, if you really want Qlippoth Hounds a-baying on the moors in your Diverse: go for it; also see *Chapter 4, Astralia*.) Aspiring sacrificers should know that draining the soul-blood from an innocent animal or plant *is* a soul-rotting action.

monster must burn two Soul Points to survive another day.

Outside of a Verge (see below, *Chapter 2*), *Dead Qlippoth* instantly collapse in upon themselves; within a Verge, they are treated much as Living Qlippoth.

**Sensitives.** Average People usually see Sensitives as "intense" and "charming" personalities, but have no predilection for like or dislike. In a Place or Time of Power, an Average Person may feel that a Sensitive is "more present" or "more real" than an Average Person. In the Real World, Sensitives are often seers, mediums, channellers, con-artists, fortunetellers, and psychic healers.

**Tulpas.** Tulpas are insubstantial and invisible to Average People (*even* in Places or Times of Power).

NOTE – At the GM's option, a Tulpa *may* be able, under its master's direction and using its master's Type Rank (with 2 Downshifts), to Possess other beings as Free Spirits and Ghosts do (see below, *Alterations in the Effects of Spiritual Talents in the Real World*).

**Zombis.** Most Average People notice a Zombi's tendency to speak in a monotone, and view them in the same sort of way (eccentric, creepy, delusional) that they view Dead Inside. (Additionally, depending upon the bodily state of the Zombi, Average People might see them as ill or injured.) In a Place or Time of Power, however, the response is even stronger than that for Dead Inside: Average People will absolutely *know* that something is terribly wrong with a Zombi. Most Zombis spend little time in the Real World, because they continue to decompose if they do not expend spiritual energy for maintenance (1 Soul Point a week keeps them from rotting too much).

### *Reactions to Supernatural Beings*

Given the above perceptions of Supernatural Beings, how do Average People *react* to those Beings? What would J. Random Passerby think and do if they walked by a Dead Inside on the street? What if the Dead Inside were a friend or family member? What if he were Officer Passerby, Reverend Passerby, or Doctor Passerby?

### BASIC RESPONSES

Any random Average Person suddenly exposed to a supernatural being will probably respond in the following ways:

- ◆ **Ignore It.** Maybe it will go away.
- ◆ **Fear It.** Please, go away!

- ◆ **Hate It.** I'll *make* you go away.
- ◆ **Pity It.** Poor *thing*, whatever it is.
- ◆ **Control It.** It must be mine!
- ◆ **Curiosity About It.** What *is* it?
- ◆ **Rationalize It.** Oh, it's *really* something else.

These reponses may be combined. For example, Curiosity About It can go hand in hand with Rationalize It; this would be like an architect trying to find where the “blood” running down a haunted house’s walls is coming from (“Yeah, it’s probably old, rusty iron pipes in the crawlspace between floors, busted open with the cold or something. Let’s tear off the paneling and take a look!”). Everybody who’s stayed up too late watching monster movies has had the Ignore It/Fear It combo experience after hearing a strange noise. The cruelty of those who torment the weak or the strange is pretty much Hate It with a Control It sidecar. And skeptical disbelief of the effective prophecies of a fortune-teller could be chalked up to a Curiosity/Ignore/Rationalize triad.

Some factors that can improve these basic responses (by ignoring the Downshift to social interactions that the Dead Inside receive) or worsen them (by doubling the Downshift) include:

**Previous Relationships.** Family and friends of a supernatural being usually try to overcome any weird feelings they have when dealing with that being. They still may feel oddly, but can choose to act on those feelings or not. While emotional distance can increase, it is doubtful (but possible) that a parent would stop loving a Dead Inside child, or a sibling a Ghost brother. Likewise, if a Sensitive does something stupid and thoughtless, their mundane best friend can still be pissed off. A negative past history can worsen a supernatural being’s deteriorating ability to interact with Average People. For example, a mundane enemy could become even more cruel toward a Dead Inside adversary.

**Similar Personality Types.** People with the same basic outlook have a leg up in reacting to and relating to supernatural beings who share that outlook, even if they have no prior history together. (See also *DI, Chapter 4, Conflict Between Similar Personality Types*). Of course, this cuts both ways – being able to think like someone permits greater communication, but also gives greater potential to slip through the chinks in an opponent’s armor.

**Similar Virtue or Vice.** If an Average Person share the same Virtue or Vice with a supernatural being, it is possible that they may feel a mild kinship with the supernatural character (usually in the case of similar Virtues), but it’s more likely that seeing their Vices displayed in another – especially a creepy person – will lead to an even *worse* reaction than normal.

**Caregivers.** Professional caregivers – doctors, nurses, psychologists, priests, ministers, therapists, etc. – will often make great allowances for those they are aiding. They expect their charges to be in a distressed, distracted state, and have been trained to deal with this.

**Authority Figures.** People who have authority or responsibility over others can go either way – positive or negative – depending upon their underlying character. Kindly old Constable Barnes who carries lollipops to give to the kids on his beat will probably make an effort to deal normally with someone who looks like they’re in a bit of trouble, while Vice-President Vallarta (who cares only for her department’s bottom line and runs a tight ship) definitely won’t allow a creepy cube-dweller any slack. . . quite the contrary.





## DI AND MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

Almost everyone has at times felt isolated, alone, trapped deep inside himself, unable to discern the strange emotional or psychological motivations of the people around him. Most Dead Inside were fairly average folks with a typical level of mental health (all the usual issues, cycles, socialization and functioning concerns, etc.) before they lost their soul. However, once the soul is gone, they suddenly have a flat emotional affect; have trouble interacting with other people (especially in social settings); feel bad, empty, and cold (both physically and mentally); and may begin hearing or seeing things that nobody else can hear or see. The situation is even more exaggerated if the character was born without a soul.

These issues can lead to several consequences, as the character attempts to minimize or eliminate his awareness of being Dead Inside: weight gain or loss, alcoholism/drug abuse, compulsive/obsessive habits, increased superstition/magical thinking, extreme religiosity, other maladaptive coping mechanisms (cutting, burning, intense rage attacks, etc. ), on up to suicidal tendencies. People will generally do whatever they can to avoid or limit pain – no matter how odd it is.

Some may seek psychological or psychiatric help. Many of the sensations mentioned above could cause a mental health professional to diagnose the Dead Inside character with Clinical Depression, Dysthymia (a milder and longer-lasting version of clinical depression), Borderline Personality Disorder, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Cognitive Disorders, Pervasive Developmental Disorders, Asperger's Syndrome, Schizophrenia, or that old favorite, "psychosis not otherwise specified."

In *DI*, there's zero organic component for the soul and the spiritual vibrations a Dead Inside experiences. A Dead Inside neurochemistry and brain structure is "normal" and according to any physical tests, he is perfectly healthy. This means a Dead Inside can suffer real problems if given psychoactive medications. Since these drugs work on correcting imbalances, and a healthy person is fairly balanced, this means that an otherwise healthy Dead Inside character will suffer the *side effects* of psych drugs without any of the mental benefits. This will probably lead to a character trying a myriad of different meds looking for relief, and just suffering new and different side effects.

Also, in more therapy-based environments, the lack of any major psychological trauma may lead to the therapist fixating on an irrelevant event as the root of the character's troubles, or lead to the worst sort of "recovered memory syndrome" excesses, as the professional and the patient search blindly through a normal life experience for something to blame for the character's current state. But, in *DI*, it's all a wild goose chase.

In the context of the game, many *DI* characters may have had run-ins with the mental health profession. A good way to deal with this is to simply state that upon Discovery of Soul Loss (see *DI*, Chapter 3), the truth of the situation became clear to the character: that no, this isn't mental illness (even if it sort of looks like it from the outside), it's *spiritual* illness.

**IMPORTANT DISCLAIMER** – This is a *game supplement*: no player should substitute anything said in it for (or as an indictment of) the care of a mental health professional. If a *player*, not a *character*, feels that he is somehow "Dead Inside," he should seek assistance from a qualified therapist or health care practitioner. Obvious, but needs to be said.

## GETTING BY IN THE REAL WORLD

"Your reality, sir, is lies and balderdash and I'm delighted to say that I have no grasp of it whatsoever."

– Baron Karl Friedrich Hieronymous von Munchausen

### *What to Do?*

So, what can a Dead Inside do to keep body and fragments-of-soul together while they're in the Real World?

Well, he can just try to *keep on keepin' on*: going to work, hanging with his friends, drinking brewskis in front of the boob tube, paying the bills, and so forth. But there are pitfalls here. If his job requires significant social interaction, his performance is going to suffer, period. Unless his friends are greatly understanding, those relationships are going to cool. And after awhile, all the beer and TV in the universe ain't gonna fill the dissatisfied hollowness in his soul. He could turn to food, drugs, sex, pumping iron, porn, hobbies, extreme sports – but nothing will satisfy for long.



If this Dead Inside decides to just *give up and coast*, he could lose his employment, zero his savings, and alienate his friends and family. After the money gives out, and unless he turns to beggary or crime, eviction looms. Homelessness is bad enough without soullessness, and some vagrants out there are missing a lot more than just a stock portfolio.

On the other hand, if this Dead Inside chooses to *embrace his frozen, empty center*, he could become quite morally flexible. Because he simply doesn't care anymore, he might be able to stomach the sort of actions that make the rest of us blanch a little: mindless corporate drudgery, coldhearted grifting, cutthroat business or law, the morass of politics, or violent crime.

In any case, once a Dead Inside begins to develop their supernatural talents like Second Sight, Luck, or Supercharge (see below), he could try to use them to *make a buck*. Imagine the benefits a con-man with Second Sight would have against clueless Average People, or a gambler with Luck in Atlantic City, or an advertising executive using Supercharge to write commercial jingles. With such magic, it's easy to make money hand over fist – for awhile. The downside here is that even though the Dead Inside has access to mystic powers, those powers have a cost: a dwindling supply of soul-blood.

Attitude and self-responsibility come strongly into play at this point. If the character is also pursuing Soul Cultivation, extensive use of these talents is going to keep him running just to stay in place. If he isn't pursuing Soul Cultivation, the spiritual gas gauge is going to keep dipping towards empty. Eventually, either the Dead Inside will resort to Soultaking or Shadow Laundering to fuel their spiffy abilities, which will lead the character down dark paths. . .

## MACHINATIONS OF THE SUPERNATURAL IN THE REAL WORLD

So, in *DI*, what effect has the supernatural had on the Real World, and vice-versa?

### *The Supernatural in History*

While their sufficiency of spirit both protects and blinds Average People to the wonders and horrors that lurk around them in the Real World, it doesn't necessarily make them inherently better or worse than other Beings. Average People are capable of the most stunning kindness and cruelty, and the most impressive or horrifying words and deeds, without laying responsibility for these acts on the possession or lack of a soul.

One doesn't need to claim that Hitler was a Dead Inside or Napoleon was a Sensitive (or vice-versa), that the gods of the Greco-Roman pantheon were all Magi of ancient days, or that the Crusades were all about recovering Places of Power, unless one wants to.

The best historical moments to pick for the addition of a little supernatural jazz are those that are already weird, random, blindingly lucky/unlucky, or wildly coincidental. The wind that blew the Spanish Armada northwards is an excellent example. The Pilgrims meeting the English-speaking natives Samoset and Squanto is another one. A thick manuscript of a speech tucked into Terry Roosevelt's pocket saved him from an assassin's bullet. What of

## THE ERA OF YOUR DIVERSE

Who's to say that a *DI* campaign – a *Diverse* – needs to be set in the modern day? Playing around with other eras of history can be an intriguing exploration of the game's core themes of Loss and Redemption. Can you imagine a series of *DI* adventures set in the Wild West, where the only law comes from the barrel of a gun and the only limit is the horizon? Maybe a prehistoric series, with Sensitive tribal shamans trying to communicate the strange truths gleaned in the Spirit World to their cave-dwelling followers? What about a Roaring Twenties campaign, with characters balancing bootleg gin, stock portfolios, and indelible memories of the trenches of the Great War? The Crusades? The Renaissance? The Colonization of Australia? The Colonization of the Moon? Throughout time, backward and forward, humankind will have the same questions they ask themselves. Feel free to take advantage of the full tapestry of history for your game.

## THE ROLE OF RELIGION & FAITH IN *DI*

Much like “real” occult practices or New Age spiritualism, religion *qua* religion plays no effective part in *DI* (except maybe as character background). While some supernatural beings *perceive* and *interpret* their Abilities and Powers using the elements or jargon of a particular mystic or religious framework, this is just misattribution: in *DI*, power doesn’t come from a spell, prayer, crystal, spirit, or deity, it comes from the being’s soul – at least originally.

No single religion has a lock on the Ultimate Truth; no one church, mosque, synagogue, sweat lodge, whatever, follows the One True Path. It’s important to understand that “religion” is being used here in the sense of “a human institutionalized system of specific religious attitudes, beliefs, and practices.” In *DI*, no individual dogma is right while all the others are wrong.

The overwhelming majority of clergy – priests, nuns, ministers, rabbis, monks, imams, etc. – are just Average People, with no special insight into the *DI* Cosmology or the nature of spiritual talents. Sure, there are some who might be Dead Inside or Sensitive (see *Chapter 2, Interfaith Inc.*, for some examples of such), but they are uncommon. . . though not as rare as you might think. Perhaps it was their lack – or surfeit – of soul that acted as their calling to the religious life.

Now, all that being said, *faith* is *vital* important to *DI*. “Faith” is being used here in the sense of “sincere trust and belief in something.” A character’s faith in something – be it himself, his friends and family, the Boy Scouts, the Constitution of the United States, Death and Taxes, Fate, Secular Humanism, Luck, Science, some uninvolved Divine Watchmaker on high, or even the orthodox catechism of an established religion – motivates him to 1) *do things*; and 2) set boundaries to *not do other things*.

An atheist who believes in Liberty For All has faith. An agnostic can have faith that there is a God, even if he believes a human mind couldn’t comprehend Divinity. A solipsist holds that he’s the only real person in a world of illusion. About the only people who are left out are those nihilists who don’t even believe in the existence of “nothing” (and that’s a fine distinction, there).

It’s valuable to mention here that simply having faith does not make one either “good” or “bad”; a character can have faith in things that are repugnant – Nazism, terrorism, racism, etc. Faith is the starting point; it’s the **choices** that a character makes, driven by that faith, which intersects the Virtues and Vices and can lead to Soul Cultivation or Soul Loss.

But if no dogma is the Ultimate Truth, and a character has faith in a dogma, isn’t that a contradiction?

No. For the purposes of Dead Inside: The Roleplaying Game of Loss & Redemption, the focus is on the character’s **act of believing**, rather than **whatever specific thing he believes in**.

When you get down to brass tacks, a *DI* character must have faith that he can *effect change*: in his life, in the lives of those around him, and in the Worlds he walks through. Characters must believe that their words and deeds matter. . . or why otherwise pursue soul recovery? Why confront adversity? Heck, why get out of bed?

Because one person *can* make a difference, if they believe.

the Man from Porlock that inadvertently (or... *was it?*) interrupted Coleridge’s composition of “Kubla Khan”? Then, there are the mysterious disappearances of Ambrose Bierce, Amelia Earheart, and DB Cooper.

## *Gaining and Losing Soul Points in the Real World*

As noted in *DI, Chapter 5*, gaining Soul Points in the Real World is much harder than it is in the Spirit World, but loss of Soul Points is the same in both. A simple way to represent this is to double the number of Ticks and Tallies needed to give a Circle for Soul Cultivation in the Real World – i.e., it takes 10 Ticks, or 2 Tallies, to make up one Cultivation Circle, and thus gain a Soul Point. However, Soul Decay still only requires 5 Ticks to make 1 Tally to be Circled, reflecting the loss of one Soul Point.

NOTE - Pessimistic GMs should feel free to further increase the number of Ticks or Tallies if they choose; optimistic GMs can just use the basic Tick-Tally-Circle breakdown from *DI* as-is.

The relative difficulty of Soul Cultivation in the Real World can change the emphasis in a *DI* game. When it is difficult to “build up” spiritual energy oneself, simply *taking it* from others becomes much more efficient. This leads to increased Soultaking, eating of Ghosts and Free Spirits, battles over Soul Eggs and Spirit Traps, and the wild pursuit of one’s original soul. If the underlying concept of the core *DI* book was “grow,” the keyword of *CHW* is “confront.”

## *One’s Original Soul*

So, what’s the benefit of rescuing one’s original soul (or Soul Points) from the being that currently has them? And would that entity hang onto them for long, anyway, if Soul Points in the Real World are so rare? Wouldn’t the possessor just use them up?

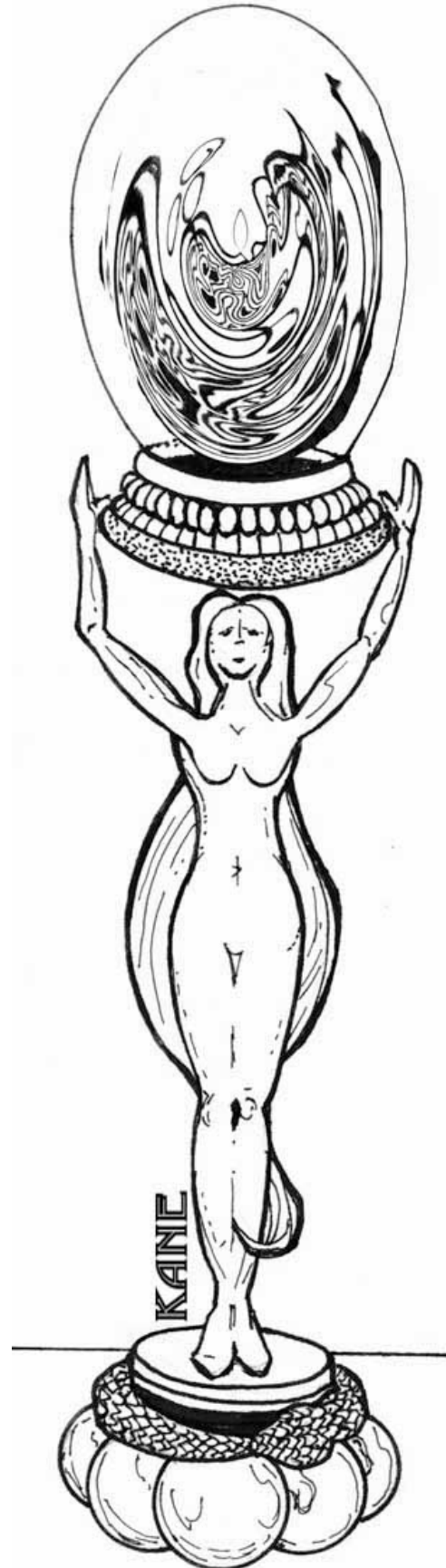
Well, that’s the crap shoot. *DI* games set in the Real World can be seen as a race against time: to save one’s soul before it gets consumed by someone else. There is *almost* no assurance that when the Dead Inside PC catches up with the One-Footed Man that the OFM hasn’t already used the PC’s deepest inner being to put the Ward smackdown on his enemies. Almost.

There is a slim chance, however, related to the personal nature of a character’s soul-blood. In the description of Soul Eggs (see *DI, Chapter 4*, boxed text), this relationship becomes clear: to Bind an

embodied supernatural being, one normally needs a Soul Egg containing at least one of their Soul Points (but see below, *Bind*). Furthermore, anyone holding a Soul Egg containing Soul Points from a character gains an Upshift to all actions against that character. Clued-in types aren't going to squander that type of power over another person. This feature can be very useful in further explaining the reasons around a character's Soul Loss. Perhaps control over the character was the *purpose* behind arranging a Soul Sold or Soul Stolen scenario.

Say the character is a security guard at the Museum of Antiquities. A Sensitive who wanted to get at some ancient Egyptian scrolls might find it sweeter to arrange a great deal on a cherry-red Ferrari for the character. Bing-bang-boom, the Sensitive has the guard's soul. The Sensitive gets a handful of Soul Points to spend as she sees fit, and leaves one in a Soul Egg for any later Binding and Upshift purposes. Now, the Sensitive can waltz in after hours, whack or fool the guard easily (with an Upshift) or just Bind the victim to open up the scroll display case for her and hand the goods over. The Sensitive gets away scot-free, while the poor Dead Inside security guard is left holding the bag.

This connection between the character and his unused Soul Points is strong; so strong, in fact, that it should be hard for a character to ignore it. The desire to recover one's soul should constantly be present, gnawing at the Dead Inside. It's a part of *him* that is lost. A good way to visualize this yearning is to think of a favorite possession (a book, a toy, a sweater, a car), a favorite place, or a favorite person. Now, almost everyone has experienced that weird feeling one gets when someone takes too much of an interest in something of ours – they pick up the beloved childhood toy and idly swing it around, or someone's sitting in one's usual booth at the friendly neighborhood diner, or a sketchy stranger is bending over one's baby in the park. Take that weird feeling and multiply it by a hundred: that's what it's like when somebody's running sticky fingers over a drop of one's soul-blood. It's doubtful that many people could consistently and completely ignore that sensation. . . . especially if the victim were blessed/cursed with random flashes of Second Sight showing what someone else is doing (or plans) to do with his soul (see also *Chapter 2, If-Thens*). That sort of thing might help motivate recalcitrant characters



stop blithely dragging their feet on the whole soul recovery front.

There are some other benefits of recapturing all the remaining bits of one's soul. If a Dead Inside character holds or wears Soul Eggs containing their original Soul Points, they *no longer feel bad or cold*, and *no longer suffer the Downshift to social interactions*. Additionally, the character can now ensoul in the Real World (see below).

### ***Ensoulment in the Real World***

While Tenemos Chapel (see *DI, Chapter 2*) is the place where the Dead Inside ensouls in the Spirit World, they *can* ensoul in the Real World if they wish. The requirements, methods, and results are different, however, and each stage is rife with adventure possibilities:

1. The character needs to know that ensoulment in the Real World is possible.
2. The character must learn the *Ritual of Restoration* (see boxed text). While the details of the Ritual of Restoration are not commonly known, they are available with some blood, sweat, and tears (intensive occult research, a couple grand of green to slide to informants, breaking into a Sensitive's sanctum for ritual goods, that sort of thing).
3. The character must have a Type Rank of Master [+6] Dead Inside.
4. The character must have collected *all* of his unburnt Soul Points (if any still exist in the Real World).
5. The character must have two extra Soul Points to perform the Ritual of Restoration.
6. The character must perform the Ritual of Restoration in a Place of Power or a Time of Power.
7. Upon completion of the ritual, the Dead Inside becomes an Average [0] Rank Average Person, with a new additional Weakness of "Poor [-2] Pre-Cracked" (see below).

Note that this result is *not the same* as what happens in the Spirit World: a Dead Inside who ensouls in Tenemos Chapel becomes a Sensitive; a Dead Inside who ensouls anywhere in the Real World becomes just another Average Person.

## **THE RITUAL OF RESTORATION**

While this ritual isn't particularly complicated, it can take a fairly long time to do right. It is used by a Dead Inside to reabsorb his soul-blood and "grow a new shell" – effectively turning him back into an Average Person.

Within a Place or Time of Power, the caster must sit within a circle drawn with his own blood, holding or wearing all Soul Eggs or Spirit Traps that contain his soul-energy. Then, he burns a Soul Point and starts chanting a specific three line verse, slowly drawing his soul back into his body with the words. The caster may read the words from a slip of paper, if desired, and may even pause between repetitions for up to thirty-six heartbeats in order to breathe or sip water. The chant must continue for 75 minutes. At the end of that time, another Soul Point is spent, the Soul Eggs and Spirit Traps are empty, and the Dead Inside has transformed into a Pre-Cracked Average Person.

If the character is interrupted while performing the ritual, there is a good chance that it could fail, and will need to be begun again. Assume that successful completion of the ritual is a complex situation, with a Difficulty Rank of Master [13], vs. the caster's Type Rank. For every full fifteen minutes of chanting, the Target Number is Downshifted. Thus, after forty-five minutes, the Difficulty Rank is only Good [9]. So long as the character makes the roll and spends the last Soul Point, the ritual works.

Well, not exactly. The character now has a new Weakness called "Pre-Cracked." Like other Average People, the character has no conscious access to spiritual Abilities and Powers, and generally is somewhat armored against them, too. However, the Pre-Cracked character still may see random glimmers of mystic stuff happening around the edges of the world (essentially, the GM can use this Weakness to inflict visions or other weirdness on a character), and – and this is the *real* downside – if he is the target of Soultaking by a supernatural being, the attacker doesn't need to spend the usual extra Soul Point to crack the character's shell (see below, *Soultaking*).

**IMPORTANT NOTE** - This Weakness can be eliminated via Improvement at a cost of 2 Type Ranks. (This holds true for all Weaknesses; please amend *DI, Chapter 4, Improvement*, where this information was unaccountably missing.)

### ***Spirit World Commerce in the Real World***

Though the more mystical aspects of Spirit World Commerce (see *DI, Chapter 2* and *Chapter 4*) can only be exchanged in Places or Times of Power in the Real World, tangible goods – Soul Eggs, Spirit Traps, Enchanted Objects, money, jewels, weapons, etc. – and information can be traded anywhere. Business is brisk: between the free Traders that wander between

the Worlds, the *Spookleggers* (see *Chapter 2*) peddling their spectral wares, and the *Soulmarketeers* (see *Chapter 2*) those magical merchants nonpareil, deals are always being struck.

If everyone just concentrated on trading in magical trinkets and gossip, Real World authorities would probably never notice them doing business. Unfortunately, the nature of people being what they are, Soul Eggs are often sold alongside nickel bags and Saturday Night Specials. If drugs or guns are trading hands in the supernatural subculture, the cops and the feds are going to get interested. And since they're probably Average People, and mostly immune to spiritual talents, things can get real ugly, real quick.

For a special case of Spirit World Commerce in the Real World, see the boxed text below, *Soul Contracts*.

## SUPERNATURAL TALENTS IN THE REAL WORLD

Mystical Abilities and Powers operate against strong resistance in the Real World. Many theories have arisen to explain this opposition; some of these theories include:

- ◆ Resistance is caused by the disbelief of Average People.
- ◆ Gross matter acts as a “spiritual insulator”.
- ◆ The lack of ambient soul-energy means there is no “conductor” for the juice to move along. and
- ◆ The Cosmos is just built that way.

Whatever the reason, this increased resistance means that: 1) a *greater amount* of soul-blood (i.e., Soul Points) must be “burned” to cause magic to happen; and 2) mystical talents are *harder* to use in the Real World. Therefore, most Types of being reserve their wonder-working to the Spirit World. The only Abilities unaffected in the Real World are the passive use of Second Sight and the knack of Opening Gates to the Spirit World. Also, while a few rare enchanted items (especially those with “invisible effects”) function in the same way in both Worlds, some only work in one World, and others have altered effects in one or the other.

However, there are exceptions to the overall supernatural resistance of the Real World: there are Places and Times of Power where and when the Worlds stand closer than usual, and magic flows

more freely (see *Chapter 2, Lay of the Land*, for more details).

### *Spiritual Conflict*

*Spiritual conflict* is when one character uses their special Abilities or Powers against another character. (See *DI, Chapter 4*, for more discussion and examples.)

NOTE – For purposes of spiritual conflict in Places or Times of Power, treat Average People as having a Type of “Average Person,” with a Rank of Average [0]. (However, the Average Person Quality cannot be improved; there's no such thing as an “Expert [+4] Average Person” (unless, of course, the GM wants it that way.)

In general, spiritual conflict works the same way as a regular conflict (compare 2d6 plus Modifier rolls; higher wins), but there's a difference in how “damage” is applied. The difference between the rolls of the attacker and the defender is *limited to a maximum of the attacker's Type Rank Modifier*, and determines the scope of the effect of the Ability or Power on the defender. However, note that supernatural talents may have a different effect in the Real World – especially against Average People – than they do in the Spirit World.



### *Yawns & Sneezes*

There are several superstitions about yawns, sneezes, and the soul. Usually, the soul tries to escape from the body during these events, and is only barked through covering the mouth or speaking a blessing. (Also, covering one's mouth for yawns can bar any evil spirits trying to swoop in and take up residence; see also below, *Possession*.)

If *DI* GMs don't think that the concept is too silly, they could play around with these ideas. Perhaps a successful Soultaking attack causes the target to “sneeze out” their spirit. Or maybe the Dead Inside cannot yawn. Or if a Sensitive or Mage sneezes, weird minor supernatural events could happen (lightbulbs burn out, TVs turn on, pictures fall off of walls, etc.).

cold, hard world

## ABILITIES & POWERS CHART (ADJUSTED FOR REAL WORLD INFLATION)

	Ability/Power?	Dead Inside	Free Spirit	Ghost	Mage	Sensitive	Zombi
<i>Bind</i>	Power	1 DS & 6 SP	–	–	1 DS & 2 SP	1 DS & 4 SP	–
<i>Change Landscape</i>	Ability	4 DS & 1 SP	2 DS & 1 SP	2 DS & 1 SP	1 DS & 1 SP	3 DS & 1 SP	–
<i>Change Others</i>	Power	–	–	–	1 DS & 4 SP	1 DS & 6 SP	–
<i>Change Self</i>	Ability	3 DS & 1 SP	1 DS & 1 SP	1 DS & 1 SP	1 DS & 1 SP	2 DS & 1 SP	–
<i>City Navigation</i>	Ability	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Create Object</i>	Power	–	–	–	1 DS & 2 SP	1 DS & 4 SP	–
<i>Create Tulpa</i>	Power	–	–	–	1 DS & 2 SP	1 DS & 4 SP	–
<i>Enchant</i>	Power	1 DS & 6 SP	–	–	1 DS & 2 SP	1 DS & 4 SP	–
<i>Healing</i>	Power	1 DS & 2 SP	–	–	1 DS & 2 SP	1 DS & 2 SP	1 DS & 2 SP
<i>Luck</i>	Power	1 DS & 2 SP	1 DS & 2 SP	1 DS & 2 SP	1 DS & 2 SP	1 DS & 2 SP	–
<b>Movement (Dream-Leap/True Flight)</b>	Ability	3 DS & 1 SP/ 4 DS & 1 SP	1 DS & 1 SP/ 1 DS & 1 SP	1 DS & 1 SP/ 1 DS & 1 SP	1 DS & 1 SP/ 1 DS & 1 SP	2 DS & 1 SP/ 3 DS & 1 SP	3 DS & 1 SP/ –
<i>Open Gate</i>	Ability	2 DS	–	–	1 DS	1 DS	2 DS
<i>Second Sight (Passive/Active)</i>	Ability	At Rank/ 2 DS & 1 SP	At Rank/ 3 DS & 1 SP	At Rank/ 3 DS & 1 SP	At Rank/ 1 DS & 1 SP	At Rank/ 1 DS & 1 SP	At Rank/ 4 DS & 1 SP
<i>Soultaking</i>	Ability	2 DS & 1 SP	2 DS & 1 SP	3 DS & 1 SP	1 DS & 1 SP	1 DS & 1 SP	3 DS & 1 SP
<i>Supercharge</i>	Power	1 DS & 2 SP	–	–	1 DS & 2 SP	1 DS & 2 SP	1 DS & 2 SP
<i>Ward</i>	Power	1 DS & 2 SP	1 DS & 2 SP	1 DS & 2 SP	1 DS & 2 SP	1 DS & 2 SP	1 DS & 2 SP
<b>Special</b>	Ability	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]

### LEGEND

x **DS** = Number of Downshifts against Type Rank roll to use talent.

x **SP** = Number of Soul Points that must be burned to activate this talent.

– = Type does not possess this Ability or Power.

[1] Downshift to social interactions in the RW.

[2] Phase = Free in RW, or one Soul Point or Damage Rank in SW.

[3] Phase = Free in RW, or one Soul Point or Damage Rank in SW.

[4] Upshift to social interactions in RW & SW.

[5] Upshift to social interactions in the SW.

[6] Upshift for physical and mental tasks in RW & SW; Downshift to social interactions in the RW & SW.

### ***Alterations in the Effects of Spiritual Talents in the Real World***

In the Spirit World, once a character sees a mystical Ability or Power being used – or has its workings explained to him – he will be able to perform that mystical feat simply by taking the appropriate Downshifts and spending any required Soul Points. In the Real World, there are fewer beings displaying such talents, and the appropriate explanations of talent use are closely-guarded secrets of supernatural organizations.

**Abilities** are bolded; **Powers** are in bold italics. In the Real World, *both* require a roll against a Downshifted Type Rank and an expenditure of Soul Points (or Type Ranks). For ease of reference, the chart of Abilities and Powers above has been adjusted to reflect the Downshifts and Soul Point costs for using spiritual talents in the Real World. (Within a Place or Time of Power, use the costs listed on the chart in *DI*.)

Any additional changes to the effects or scope of supernatural talents are detailed in the descriptions below. Note that many of these Abilities and Powers have **no effect** on Average People unless they are within a Place or Time of Power, and even then, may only have limited results.

**Bind:** Insubstantial beings (Free Spirits and Ghosts) actually *gain* a trick when using Bind in the Real World: if they Phase (see below, *Special*) into an embodied supernatural being, they can Bind a character without needing a Soul Egg containing one of the character's Soul Points – in a word, they can *Possess* a character temporarily. Using Bind to Possess another being allows them to wear the victim like a coat, using the victim's body to do whatever they wish. This can be Warded against, of course, and Ward would also be used to drive a Possessing being out of the victim. Average People cannot be *utterly* possessed in this fashion, unless they have the Pre-Cracked Weakness (see above, *Ensoulment in the Real World*). A successful Possession of a normal Average Person only permits the mental voices of Ghost or Free Spirit to offer suggestions to the victim (though it's said that these spiritual invaders *can* take control of the body when the victim sleeps...).

Otherwise, Bind has no effect against Average People, outside in a Place or Time of Power. Within one, Bind is limited to mild suggestions, akin to those given under hypnosis. Commands cannot

directly violate the target's inherent personality, but must be constructed so as to indirectly insinuate the desired response. For example, unless the target is already suicidal, Bind cannot be used to order them to jump out a high window. However, if the target is convinced that the window is actually a door, that it's really not as high as it is, or that they can fly like a bird, they will more readily accept the attacker's command.

**Change Landscape:** Only “invisible” aspects of the immediate vicinity (temperature, wind, hidden features, structural strength, unlocking a door, sticking a window shut, etc.) can be altered, and then only for a limited time. If used to move objects through the air, Average People will either not see the floating object, or rationalize it as some form of trickery.

**Change Others:** No effect against Average People, *even* in a Place or Time of Power.

**Change Self:** Major changes (becoming a lion, increasing or decreasing size greatly, growing knife fingers, etc.) only last while the character is within a Place or Time of Power, and are generally not even noticed within them by Average People. Minor changes (altering facial features, small alteration in size, skin complexion, etc.), may be carried outside Places or Times of Power, and *will* be accepted by Average People at face-value – so to speak – unless the character is being observed closely during the change.

**City Navigation:** No effect in the Real World.

**Create Object:** Created objects only last while either being held by a living being or if they remain within a Place or Time of Power, up to their normal duration.

**Create Tulpa:** Tulpas can only be Created in the Spirit World.

**Enchant:** In the Real World, Objects may *only* be Enchanted in a Place or Time of Power; unlike most Abilities and Powers, the process remains expensive in spiritual energy (that is, use the costs in the *Chart* above rather than in the main *DI* book). Many Enchanted Objects will not work in the hands of Average People *at all*. Particularly flashy Enchantments will not work at all outside the Spirit World (e.g., Flying Boots), milder but visible Enchantments (e.g., Glowing Sword) will only work in a spiritually-charged Place or Time, and Enchantments with “invisible” effects (e.g., the Blue



Guitar or Spirit Traps) will work in the Real World at large. Soul Eggs and Wizard Eggs are considered to have invisible effects.

**Healing:** No effect on Average People outside of a Place or Time of Power, unless the user wins a spiritual conflict with the target.

**Luck:** No effect on Average People outside of a Place or Time of Power, unless the user wins a spiritual conflict with the target. However, personal uses of Luck can come in quite handy during games of chance; indeed, if a character is too lucky at cards, other gamblers may suspect that they are cheating, and respond accordingly.

**Movement:** If Dream-Leaping or True Flight is used outside of a Place or Time of Power to walk up walls or across water or fly through the air, Average People will either not see the moving character or rationalize him much like a UFO (e.g., as a weather balloon, swamp gas, Venus, a swarm of lightning bugs, etc.). Within a supernaturally charged environment, they will explain non-normal movement as some form of trickery.

**Open Gate:** Average People can neither see nor utilize a Gate, even in a Place or Time of Power. A being passing through one in front of them seems to simply vanish.

**Second Sight:** Like with Luck, those with Second Sight can amass great fortunes in games of chance, but run the risk of being suspected of cheating. (Also, since repeated use of this Ability – by one or many prognosticators – “muddies the waters” of the future, GMs can feel free to increase the Difficulty Rank of Gambling situations.) Most Average People will generally discount information or visions gained through use of Second Sight as delusions, lies, or wishful thinking (in the worst case), or rationalize it as astute “cold-reading” or some form of unconscious integration of facts and sensory impressions (in the best case).

**Soultaking:** A Soultaking attempt feels like someone has reached inside the target’s body, and is squeezing or twisting their innards. Like other supernatural talents, Soultaking suffers additional Downshifts and Soul Point costs in the Real World, when done outside of a Place or Time of Power.

**IMPORTANT NOTE - A character can always use Soultaking, even if Downshifts would take it below Poor [-2] Rank. “Bottoming out” via Downshifts**

normally makes use of an Ability impossible, but Soultaking is a special case.

A character can always roll at Poor [-2] Rank, and if somehow successful in their attack, can steal the minimum 1 Soul Point from their victim. Thus, in the Real World, Ghosts and Zombis of Good [+2] or lower Rank and Average [0] Rank Dead Inside actually Soultake at an effective Rank of Poor [-2].

NOTE - Soultaking leads to soul decay – be warned! (For more information, see *DI, Chapter 5*.)

Soultaking an Average Person’s spiritual energy – also known as *cracking* – is **extremely difficult**. (The following rules amend those in *DI, Chapter 4, Soultaking*, for attempts against Average People.)

- ◆ First, the attacker must burn an extra Soul Point towards *cracking* the “shell” that insulates Average People from the supernatural, *unless* the target has somehow given permission to the attacker in some way (see boxed text, *Soul Contracts*). This point is spent even if the attempt is unsuccessful.
- ◆ Second, the Soultaking attempt suffers the appropriate Downshifts and Soul Point costs if attempted outside of a Place and Time of Power.
- ◆ Third, the target participates in the spiritual conflict with their Average Person Type Rank of Average [0].
- ◆ Fourth, the “shell” of the target makes the attempt harder – treat it as an Average [7] Difficulty Rank against Soultaking. This means that the attacker must inflict 7 Damage Ranks (after Modifiers and the target’s opposing roll) to be successful.
  - **If the attacker loses the spiritual conflict**, the target is unaffected by the Soultaking attempt. The attacker gains a Soul Decay Tick for the spiritual assault.
  - **If the attacker wins the spiritual conflict, but doesn’t do 7 or more Damage Ranks**, the target doesn’t lose any Soul Points, but does gain the Pre-Cracked Weakness (see above). This means that subsequent Soultaking attempts against him will not incur the extra Soul Point expenditure to crack his shell (as well as the target suffering the other ramifications of this Weakness). The attacker gains 2 Soul Decay Ticks (one for the spiritual assault, and another for Pre-Cracking the target).

## SOUL CONTRACTS

Straddling the boundary between *Soultaking* and *Spirit World Commerce in the Real World* (see maintext), **Soul Contracts** enable canny supernatural operators to avoid many of the pitfalls involved with stealing soul-blood from Average People.

If a supernatural Type and an Average Person strike a deal for an exchange of soul for something (for example, see the fiction vignette in *DI, Chapter 1, Why Are You Dead Inside?*, where Michael agrees to give Lucy his soul for the best sex he's ever had), the entire complexion of the situation changes: it's no longer a conflict situation, since an agreement has been made. But it can't be a standard Spirit World Commerce action (or even a simple situation), since Average People can't manipulate their soul-stuff like supernatural Types. Instead, it's a complicated situation.

Of course, there are several catches.

First, the Soultaker must find out what the target wants. Next, he must be in a position to immediately give that desired item, knowledge, or experience to the target. Then, he needs to make the offer to the target while burning one Soul Point to "empower" the Soul Contract. (This is all that's necessary for verbal contracts, and the target's soul-blood will be dumped directly into the Soultaker's Soul Point Pool. However, some Soultakers like a physical token of the deal, and often Enchant a paper contract or another item as a Soul Egg to hold the target's mojo.)

The negotiations should be roleplayed out, most definitely. If need be, the cutting of the deal can be represented by a business-oriented conflict, as both sides wheel-and-deal.

**If the offer is declined**, nothing happens, and the Soultaker is out some soul-juice.

**If the offer is accepted**, the Soultaker must hand over the agreed-upon price first, and then rolls Soultaking versus an Average [7] Difficulty Rank complicated situation. *Success* transfers the soul-blood to the Soultaker (or a prepared Soul Egg); *failure* merely makes the target Pre-Cracked (and probably pisses off the Soultaker, who has lost Soul Points *and* an item of value in the deal). There's one ray of light, however: Soul Contracts with a Pre-Cracked Average Person only have a Poor [5] Difficulty Rank.

And – here's the best bit for mystical wheeler-dealers – Soultaking via a Soul Contract is *not* in and of itself a soul-rotting action, like standard Soultaking. It's ostensibly an exchange between individuals, made freely and openly, so a Soul Decay Ticks are not automatically gained for the attempt. However, if the target was misled or didn't believe in the seriousness of the offer, this can lead to Soul Decay Ticks, just like any other shady business dealing.

- **If the attacker wins the spiritual conflict, and does 7 or more Damage Ranks**, the target loses 8 Soul Points and becomes Dead Inside. This result is *different* from other types of spiritual conflict, where the maximum effect of an Ability or Power is limited to the attacker's Type Rank. Since Average People are unfamiliar with controlling and using their soul-blood, they give up everything that wasn't part of their "shell" automatically. Also, the rush of psychic agony involved in a successful *cracking* will certainly knock out all but the toughest targets. The attacker gains 3 Soul Decay Ticks (one for the spiritual assault and two for turning the target into a Dead Inside).

See the nearby boxed text for two examples of cracking.

**Supercharge:** Outside of Places and Times of Power, only the mildest versions of Supercharge – those with "invisible" effects or able to be rationalized to fit the reality of the Real World – will work. Average People witnessing a Quality being Supercharged will make every attempt to explain its effects as an example of blind chance, chaos theory, or rare psychological or neurochemical events.

**Ward:** The offensive use of Ward costs 4 Soul Points in the Real World, and has no effect on Average People outside of a Place or Time of Power, unless the user wins a spiritual conflict with the target.

**Special:** Spiritual beings have a number of special features, indicated below:

- ◆ *Dead Inside* suffer a Downshift to their Quality Ranks when used for social interactions in the Real World.
- ◆ *Free Spirits* can Phase through objects at will in the Real World; Wards can block this Ability. Free Spirits cannot Open Gates, and must rely on natural Gates or the kindness of strangers to pass between the two Worlds.
- ◆ *Ghosts* can Phase through objects at will in the Real World; Wards can block this Ability. Ghosts cannot Open Gates, and must rely on natural Gates or the kindness of strangers to pass between the two Worlds.
- ◆ *Magi* gain an Upshift for social use of their Qualities in the Real World. Also, if they

## cold, hard world

possess a Wizard Egg and the Quality of *Resilience*, they cannot be killed without extreme measures, though they can be seriously incapacitated.

- ◆ *Sensitives* gain an Upshift for social use of their Qualities in a Place or Time of Power in the Real World.

- ◆ *Zombis* gain an Upshift for physical and mental use of their Qualities in the Real World; they also suffer a Downshift to their Quality Ranks when used for social interactions.

### EXAMPLES OF *CRACKING* AVERAGE PEOPLE

Pat, an Expert [+4] Dead Inside, is attempting to crack Sasha, an Average Person (as mentioned in the main text, assume a Type Rank of Average [0]).

#### *Against an Unwilling Target*

**In a Place of Power.** Pat's attempt will suffer 1 Downshift (as in the Spirit World) and require that he burn 1 Soul Point (for cracking). Pat rolls with an effective Rank of Good [+2] and Sasha with an effective Rank of Average [0].

- If Pat rolls a 5, for a total of 7, and Sasha rolls a 9, Sasha is unharmed. Pat gains a Soul Decay Tick.
- If Pat rolls an 9, for a total of 11, and Sasha rolls a 5, Sasha is Pre-Cracked, but loses no Soul Points. Pat gains 2 Soul Decay Ticks. Subsequent attempts will not require Pat to burn Soul Points.
- If Pat rolls a 10, for a total of 12, and Sasha rolls a 5, Sasha is *cracked*. Pat gains 8 of Sasha's Soul Points, and Sasha is now Dead Inside. Pat gains 3 Soul Decay Ticks.

**Elsewhere in the Real World.** Pat's attempt will suffer 2 Downshifts and require that 2 Soul Points be burnt (one for being in the Real World, one for cracking). Pat rolls with an effective Rank of Average [0] and Sasha with an effective Rank of Average [0].

- If Pat rolls a 5 and Sasha rolls a 9, Sasha is unharmed. Pat gains a Soul Decay Tick.
- If Pat rolls an 9 and Sasha rolls a 5, Sasha is Pre-Cracked, but loses no Soul Points. Pat gains 2 Soul Decay Ticks. Subsequent attempts will require Pat to burn only 1 Soul Point.
- If Pat rolls a 12, and Sasha rolls a 5, Sasha is *cracked*. Pat gains 8 of Sasha's Soul Points, and Sasha is now Dead Inside. Pat gains 3 Soul Decay Ticks.

#### *Against a Soul Contracted Target*

Pat, an Expert [+4] Dead Inside, is attempting to crack Dana, an Average Person who has signed a Soul Contract granting Pat his soul in return for a new car. Dana doesn't believe that souls exist.

**In a Place of Power.** Pat offers Dana his new car in return for Dana's soul and burns 1 Soul Point (to empower the Contract). Dana agrees to the exchange. Pat hands over the keys to the car, then rolls Soultaking. Pat's attempt will suffer 1 Downshift (as in the Spirit World). Pat rolls with an effective Rank of Good [+2] against an Average [7] Difficulty Rank.

- If Pat rolls a 4 or less (4 plus 2 is 6), Dana loses no Soul Points, but is now Pre-Cracked. Pat gains a Soul Decay Tick for taking advantage of Dana. Subsequent Soul Contract attempts will require Pat to roll against only a Poor [5] Difficulty Rank.
- If Pat rolls a 5 or more (5 plus 2 is 7), Dana is *cracked*. Pat gains 8 of Dana's Soul Points, and Dana is now Dead Inside. Pat gains a Soul Decay Tick for taking advantage of Dana.

**Elsewhere in the Real World.** Pat offers Dana his new car in return for Dana's soul and burns 1 Soul Point (to empower the Contract). Dana agrees to the exchange. Pat hands over the keys to the car, then rolls Soultaking. Pat's attempt will suffer 2 Downshifts and require that an additional Soul Point be burnt (for being in the Real World). Pat rolls with an effective Rank of Average [0] against an Average [7] Difficulty Rank.

- If Pat rolls a 6 or less, Dana loses no Soul Points, but is now Pre-Cracked. Pat gains a Soul Decay Tick for taking advantage of Dana. Subsequent Soul Contract attempts will require Pat to roll against only a Poor [5] Difficulty Rank.
- If Pat rolls a 7 or more, Dana is *cracked*. Pat gains 8 of Dana's Soul Points, and Dana is now Dead Inside. Pat gains a Soul Decay Tick for taking advantage of Dana.

# Chapter 2

## Lay of the Land

”There is an inner world; and a spiritual faculty of discerning it with absolute clearness, nay, with the most minute and brilliant distinctness. But it is part of our earthly lot that it is the outer world, in which we are encased, which is the lever that brings that spiritual faculty into play.”

– ETA Hoffman, *The Serapion Brethren*

### REAL WORLD RESOURCES & MACHINATIONS

This chapter is intended to help a *DI* GM fill out the interactions and plots of the clued-in and empowered Types in the Real World – the *Supernatural Set*.

Most characters in *DI* have access to security, safety, the basic necessities, and the camaraderie of others like them in the Spirit World. In the Real World, their supernatural talents are more difficult and more draining, for a lesser effect. For these reasons, they may tend to congregate in the Spirit World, leading to a negligible “magical” subculture in the Real World.

Still, many beings stick it out in this cold, hard world. Why? Well, there’s the familiarity of our modern hurly-burly life. Plus, it’s where most of their family and friends live. There’s less competition from others in the Supernatural Set, there are safe harbors where they can turtle down and ignore the worst of the negative aspects of the Real World, and – for

some – it provides an escape from Spirit World foes. And even those beings who have fully embraced the warmer, softer Spirit World often find themselves drawn back for, if nothing else, mundane luxuries, information, social ties, Soul Eggs, Enchanted Objects, or just a cup of joe from their favorite café. (See also the boxed text, *OPTIONAL RULE: Who Needs Sleep?*)

There are some common core axioms about the Real World worth mentioning up-front:

- ◆ Humanity tends to fear, persecute, ridicule, or ignore what it doesn’t understand.
- ◆ Humans are social pack hunters in origin. This means they band together in groups of like-minded people, and tend to prefer conformance to the ideals of those groups.
- ◆ Within a group, people can be tolerant of differences, providing that those differences are useful, interesting, and do not stray too far outside the boundaries of what is acceptable. Ideas or behavior exceeding those boundaries can lead to ostracism or violence. The nail that sticks up gets hammered down, in the belief that this is for the greater common good.
- ◆ Supernatural talents are more difficult and expensive in the Real World than in the Spirit World.
- ◆ Places of Power are valuable locations to control, because they allow greater ease in the use of supernatural talents.

#### **OPTIONAL RULE: Who Needs Sleep?**

If a GM wants to balance the time characters spend in both Worlds, one way of doing so would be to say that if a Dead Inside character falls asleep within the Spirit World, they will be quietly Gated back to an appropriate Real World location. For example, if a character dozes off in the Theatre des Loups, they might wake up inside their community playhouse. Of course, no Average Person will see the character appear out of nowhere. . .

Ghosts and Zombis do not suffer this restriction because they’re, like, *dead*. Free Spirits and Tulpas may or may not have to sleep, at the GM’s option. Sensitives may be effected by this, but the might be able to learn tricks to avoid it. Magi do not flip Worlds when they sleep.

In the Real World, most of the Supernatural Set try to keep quiet and inconspicuous to avoid harassment by Average People. They join like-minded peers, collect entourages of followers, or both, seeking to discover – or construct – a group that they can comfortably exist within. They probably will not use their flashier Abilities & Powers unless absolutely necessary, and will certainly jockey to gain control over areas where their Abilities & Powers work better (in Places and Times of Power, use the Downshifts and Soul Point costs in *DI* for supernatural talent usage).

When all these axioms and drives are operating in concert, occult conspiracies and subcultures form to insulate, connect, and support supernatural beings. Details on different Locations, NPCs, Organizations, Events, and Enchanted Objects that may exist in the Real World are provided below, as well as some information on mundane Animals and Vehicles.

## PLACES OF POWER

There are places where the boundary between the Real World and the Spirit World softens and thins. In these *Places of Power*, spiritual forces are stronger. They are usually formed in areas of psychological resonance or those with high supernatural traffic. As mentioned in *DI*, some of these places include:

- ◆ **Places of Joy & Delight.** Nurseries, concert halls, theaters – any place full of laughter, love, and life – can reach closer to the Spirit World.
- ◆ **Places of Loss & Suffering.** Funeral homes, battlefields, hospitals, accident sites; many escaping souls and/or the presence of numerous Ghosts and Zombis can weaken the boundary between worlds.
- ◆ **Haunted Houses.** Old houses – especially those already a Place of Joy & Delight or Loss & Suffering – can become suffused with spirit energy from active Ghost residents.
- ◆ **In-Between Places.** The bank of a river, the shoulder of a road, the shoreline of a lake, the doorway of a house, the space between an elevator and the floor it's at, the gurney of an airplane leading to the tarmac, the mouth of a tunnel, any place that is somehow of two different places while simultaneously being of neither.
- ◆ **Sacred Geometry, Indian Burial Grounds, Worship Sites.** If you build it, power will come. Cathedrals, temples, graveyards, standing stones, matrices of crystals, all may have been consciously built to collect soul energies, or were unconsciously erected over areas already soaking in them, or have become permeated by the faith of countless multitudes over the years.



## PLANTING PLACES

The Real World is *big*. When a GM sits down to plan out a Real World-centric *DI* game, he will need to spend time figuring out where important Places of Power (as well as Notable NPCs) are located. Here are some ideas to keep in mind:

### *Far vs. Near*

If Places of Power are *spread-out*, with hundreds of miles of distance between them, this can lead to a “travelogue” sort of game, with the PCs globetrotting from Place to Place. While this is great for picaresque adventures, it can lead to a lack of recurring locales and associated characters. The other choice is to set the majority of the Places of Power in *close proximity*. This can lead to a campaign centered in a single region, permitting the GM and PCs to become familiar with many supernatural locations and characters. However, this can make the area seem overcrowded, and strain the players’ suspension of disbelief – i.e., “why has nobody noticed all the weird stuff that happens in Strangeville?”

### *Urban, Suburban, or Rural*

An *urban* campaign setting can be great – every big city has interesting little neighborhoods that even long-time residents have no knowledge of. While comparisons and contrasts between the Real World campaign city and the Spirit World’s City can be fun for some groups, others may find it too much of a good thing.

Focusing on a *suburb* as the locus of a game can be rewarding, since – like living in the suburbs – one has access to both big-city and small-town life. There’s also the fun of comparing the stereotyped, vanilla ‘Burbs against the wild-and-wooly freedom of the Spirit World (one could point at the movie *Pleasantville* as an interesting take on this sort of *DI* game). Still, a suburban campaign can lose some of the frenetic activity and personal anonymity enjoyed in city-based games.

*Rural* campaigns can be neat; while – like in suburban areas – many characters in a countryside community will know each other (and each other’s families, possibly back generations), there’s always enough space out there so that all the creepy and wonderful stuff isn’t pushed into a few blocks. Also, rural settings are better than urban or suburban ones for Indian Burial Grounds, rings of standing stones, sacred groves, forgotten villages, and so forth.



In addition to the above, there are other subtypes of Places of Power found in the Real World: *Anomalies*, *Demesnes*, *Side-Steps*, *Thresholds*, and *Verges*.

- ◆ **Anomalies.** An Anomaly is a wandering pocket of weirdness. To Second Sight, they look like man-sized spheres of shimmering heat waves. Anomalies surreptitiously scoop up things (sometimes selectively, sometimes indiscriminately) from both Worlds – coins, frogs, fish, Tulpas, random trash, Foghawks, spiderwebs, key rings, magazines, and so forth. When an Anomaly gets “full” (depending upon its speed, path, and collection-du-jour, this could take anywhere from a couple minutes to a number of years), it discharges its contents somewhere into one of the Worlds, alternating between each. The Anomaly that rains 1943 pennies into the Real World this time could vomit haddock into the Spirit World next time.

Any supernatural being can be accidentally swept up by an Anomaly as it bounces between Worlds; by spending one Soul Point, a being can *intentionally* “hitch a ride.” If the being wishes to hop off early, it costs another Soul Point; without the further expenditure of soul-energy, the hitchhiker is stuck until the Anomaly purges itself. However, with judicious use of the Second Sight and Change Landscape talents, a being can navigate, steer, and change the velocity of the Anomaly.

The interior of an Anomaly appears to be a bubble paneled in heavy gray denim, striated with shifting lines of color. Whenever the lower half of this bubble becomes filled to the equator with junk, it is considered “full” and will discharge its cargo.

- ◆ **Demesnes.** A Demesne (pronounced “demaine”; also called a *Lair* or *Sanctuary*) is a Place of Power that *belongs* – in a mystical sense – to a particular person. Within the boundaries of one’s Demesne, one is the sysop, the king, the demiurge. The Lord (or Lady) of the Lair sets the rules; even a Mage takes precautions when entering the Demesne of a weaker Type. A Demesne can have only one Lord at a time, and the role can only be assumed by a supernatural being with a strong connection to the place (being born there, having died there, having spent years upon years dwelling within it, having built/created it, etc.) or receiving Lordship from the previous Lord. On some rare occasions, such places have been wrested away from their owners – but there’s no commonly known process for doing so. Demesnes are uncommon in the Real World, due to this requirement for a personal tie.

NOTE - Lords and Ladies should take an Average [0] Quality called “Lord/Lady of (Demesne)” to reflect their tie to a particular location. This Quality can be Improved like any other.

Within his Lair, a Lord can Change Landscape at his “Lord of (Demesne)” Quality Rank, even if his Type doesn’t allow that Ability. Additionally, the Demesne *resists* any other character’s attempts to alter it using Change Landscape: such attempts have a Difficulty Rank equal to the Lord’s Type Rank. For example, Yung Jackson (see below) is the Average [0] Lord of the Soul Laundry (see below); any attempts to Change the Landscape of the Soul Laundry has an Average [7] Difficulty Rank. Furthermore, the Lord can *veto* any successful such attempt by burning a Soul Point. Lords can also set selective “permissions” within their Lair by spending a Soul Point, disallowing or permitting usage of any Qualities, Abilities, or Powers they *know of*. (Indeed, a Lair could be set to be a Place of Power only for one Type of supernatural being.) These are can be absolute restrictions, or kind GMs could let PCs counter the Lord’s Will by treating the Lord’s Rank as a Difficulty Rank, as above.

Turning a Place of Power (of any of the subtypes) into a Demesnes is fairly easy,

provided the character already has the necessary strong connection to the Place. A common ritual – *the Demesne Knot* – requires the shedding of a pint of blood and the burning of two drops of soul-blood (2 Soul Points) at the “mystical center” of the Place. Without a strong connection (in the Cosmos’/GM’s opinion) and the correct “mystical center,” the ritual does nothing.

- ◆ **Side-Step.** A Side-Step is a place that Average People cannot perceive or travel to that nonetheless remains fully in the Real World. Alleyways that only the supernaturally attuned can see, paths that only they can follow, and shops that only they can patronize. Some Side-Steps even restrict access further, so that certain Types of being can’t even see it (except maybe with active Second Sight). Interestingly, Gates to the Spirit World *cannot* be created within a Side-Step (but see *Ordo Scalarum* and the nearby boxed text *Omphalos*, below). Side-Steps are fairly common in the Real World.
- ◆ **Threshold.** A Threshold isn’t quite a Place of Power yet. It is a *seed* for one: a location where a natural Gate opens regularly, but hasn’t yet gathered substantial supernatural traffic or been the site of enough mystic hijinks to flower into an area of reduced spiritual resistance. While they provide no benefit for the use of spiritual talents (use listed Real World costs), Thresholds are sought out because they can naturally become or be deliberately shaped into a Place of Power, especially a Demesne, a Side-Step, or a Verge. Thresholds are rare in the Real World, since the Supernatural Set snap them up quickly in their turf wars.
- ◆ **Verge.** A Verge is a Place where the shell of the Cosmos is thin, and the Void is close . . . too close. If enough spiritual loss, pain, or misery is caused in a Place of Power, the “thickness” of the Real World can be worn away. Eventually, it will shatter, allowing the unmaking nothingness of the Void to spill into the Cosmos. This can be *made* to happen with the offensive use of Ward (see *DI, Chapter 4, Spiritual Abilities & Powers*) against the “weakest point” of the Verge – whatever that happens to be. While such intrusions are

generally short-lived (since the Real World exists to defend against the Void, and will swiftly move to “scab” and “heal” the Verge, usually within 1d6 hours, though faster and slower periods are not unknown), some serious things can happen during the incursion: Qlippoth can be created/freed, *anything* can be unmade, Average People will be cracked, nearby spiritual beings will lose 1d6 Soul Points, Magi rituals can be enacted, etc. Verges are quite rare in the Real World by their very nature.

## REAL WORLD KNOWLEDGE OF SPIRIT WORLD LOCATIONS

“Reality leaves a lot to the imagination.”

– John Lennon

Throughout history, the Dead Inside, Sensitives, Magi, and other supernatural beings of the Real World have gone to the Spirit World and visited the City (see *DI, Chapter 2*). Upon returning to outer reality, they’ve passed along bits of information about their travels, which have become muddled and confused.

The concept of a world of spirits that is somehow ubiquitous and adjacent to all of “reality” is well accepted by Real World occultists. However, because of the influence of a few scattered primary sources, they rarely refer to it simply as “the City.” Instead, they’ve given it a name: **Pantaxh**, which is thought to derive from the classical Greek word *pantache*, meaning “everywhere” or “every which way.” However, *caveat lector* – a great deal of ink has been spilt in interpreting Pantaxh as Avalon, El Dorado, New Jerusalem, Atlantis, Cibola, or other fantastical locales.

This sort of willy-nilly association has happened across the board. The *Academy* has been connected to the Elizabethan “School of Night.” The *Bridge of Souls* shows up in Arthurian legend as the “Sword Bridge,” a test for the true knight. The *City Library* – which possesses all books written or unwritten – appears in numerous occult texts, often under the name “the Library of Babel” or “the Library of Babylon.” *Exroads Market* is associated with the folktale trope of goblin markets and the genre fiction trope of “secret magic shops.” There is a persistent analogy uniting *the Ramparts* with at least one Aztec afterlife, but this is certainly due to a single primary source, which – as any one who spends the time in the City Library speaking to Gnomon will discover – is false. (It was written in 1962 by the Mage Samuel to lead one of his many enemies into a trap.) However, the lie continues to spread its pernicious shadow across Real World occultism. Garbled interpretations of *Spectral Point* appear in Theosophist writings, usually where those beliefs intersect with séances, spiritualism, and mediums. The *Theatre des Loups* has its fullest expression in Hesse’s *Steppenwolf* as “the Magic Theater.” (It also may have connections to ritual dramaturgy and the Friulian Benandanti.) *The Underground* is enjoying an upswing in popularity in occult theories, probably stemming from back-formation from genre fiction and Jungian psychology.

### ***Notable Locations in the Real World***

Here follow a few Notable Locations for GMs to plunk down into their *DI* campaigns in the Real World (and many can be used as locations in the Spirit World, if desired, to further flesh out the City):

#### **ALACANDRA FUNERAL HOME**

In recent years, the Alacandra Funeral Home has led a double life. Most Average People see it as simply another family-run funerary business with a long history of serving the community. What they don't know is that it's the place that the Zombi elite meet. Through the separate entrance, and down the stairs to the subbasement below the embalmy, Davida Alacandra (see below, *Notable NPC*s) hosts a cozy gathering place for the embodied soulless. At Alacandra Funeral Home, the emphasis for the undead is on the last syllable. The small "downstairs" staff of the Home are all Dead Inside or Zombis themselves, so they are familiar with the needs and eccentricities of their clientele. Part boarding house, part neighborhood bar, and part beauty parlor (the downstairs staff all receive training in mortuary cosmetology), this Place of Power welcomes Zombis and their guests at reasonable rates.

#### **BLUE BLAZES**

What do you do when you're a supernatural being ready to cut loose? You go dancing, of course. Blue Blazes is a trendy club that allows the supernatural to bust a move with the natural. While only the prettiest (and richest) Average People ever make it past the doorway, the velvet rope gets lifted by the gigantic, sunglass-wearing bouncers (see below, *Notable Enchanted Object*s) to let in any of the Supernatural Set, no matter what they look like. So, you end up with a club full of a strange mix of Eurotrash hipsters, weird little accountants, and slumming Magi. It's a chaotic hoot, a place to see and be seen: the mysterious owner Demi Monde (see below, *Notable NPC*s) likes it that way. Blue Blazes is Demi Monde's Demesne, and she relishes using her Ladyship over it to entertain and confound her customers. Note that the club is no sanctuary – Monde only comes down hard on those beings using their powers against her. . . and her friends *du jour*. Everyone else – including the poor mundane Average People – are fair game.

#### **GREENGROVE FARM**

The foundation stones of the farmhouse were laid in 1680, on an already extant Place of Power. The poor

but honest Willamette family has farmed Greengrove ever since. Over the centuries, they've somehow managed to repel all those who've tried to wrest it away from them. While the family has had a remarkable number of naturally Sensitive members, very few of them have ever entered the Spirit World, contenting themselves instead with practicing their own unique brand of (efficacious) folk medicine for their friends and neighbors. Where normally such a location would be a well-defended Demesne, Greengrove Farm is currently just a Place of Power and a failing dairy farm, due to the incapacity of its doddering Lord *Joe-Bob Willamette*. (see his write-up below).

#### **IBRAHIM'S GROCERY**

This Side-Step appears as a small mom-and-pop grocery store visible only to those with spiritual perception. Unlike most Side-Steps, it is "unstuck" in space, and can be found nearly anywhere – in Smalltown, USA, one day and Big Citygrad, Russia, the next. It specializes in carrying almost-forgotten favorite foods of childhood – lost recipes, discontinued cereals, penny candies, that sort of thing. Ibrahim – a wizened, short, brusque Sensitive (see below, *Notable NPC*s) – runs the place, and if properly buttered up can be persuaded to show the discerning customer his more exotic products: packets of seeds from plants both extinct and mythological; the first dream of a newborn, trapped in honey; an assortment of toothpicks carved from the True Cross; footprints of famous Hollywood actors; and so forth. Unfortunately, the higher ticket items of Spirit World Commerce – years of life, true names, secret information, lost memories – have a rapid turnover.

#### **THE JUICERY**

The Juicery is the hangout of choice for those Sensitives of the Supernatural Set who are also into the macrobiotic New Age health food homeopathic crystal-gazing hippie patchouli headshop thing. Nancy Slaviczek (see below, *Notable NPC*s) opened it back in '72, and it's been groovy ever since. The Juicery's specialty is a frozen orange-carrot-royal jelly-yogurt concoction called "the Chakra-cleaner." The peace and love and positive vibes that radiate from this place actually drive many Types of being away (including Dead Inside, Ghosts, and Zombis). Few Magi ever step foot inside more than once, because of one of the customs of the Juicery staff and clientele: "hugging the aura, man." (The less said



about that, the better.) Still, if you need to find a Sensitive who's up for a little Good Samaritan duty, the Juicery is a damned good place to start looking.

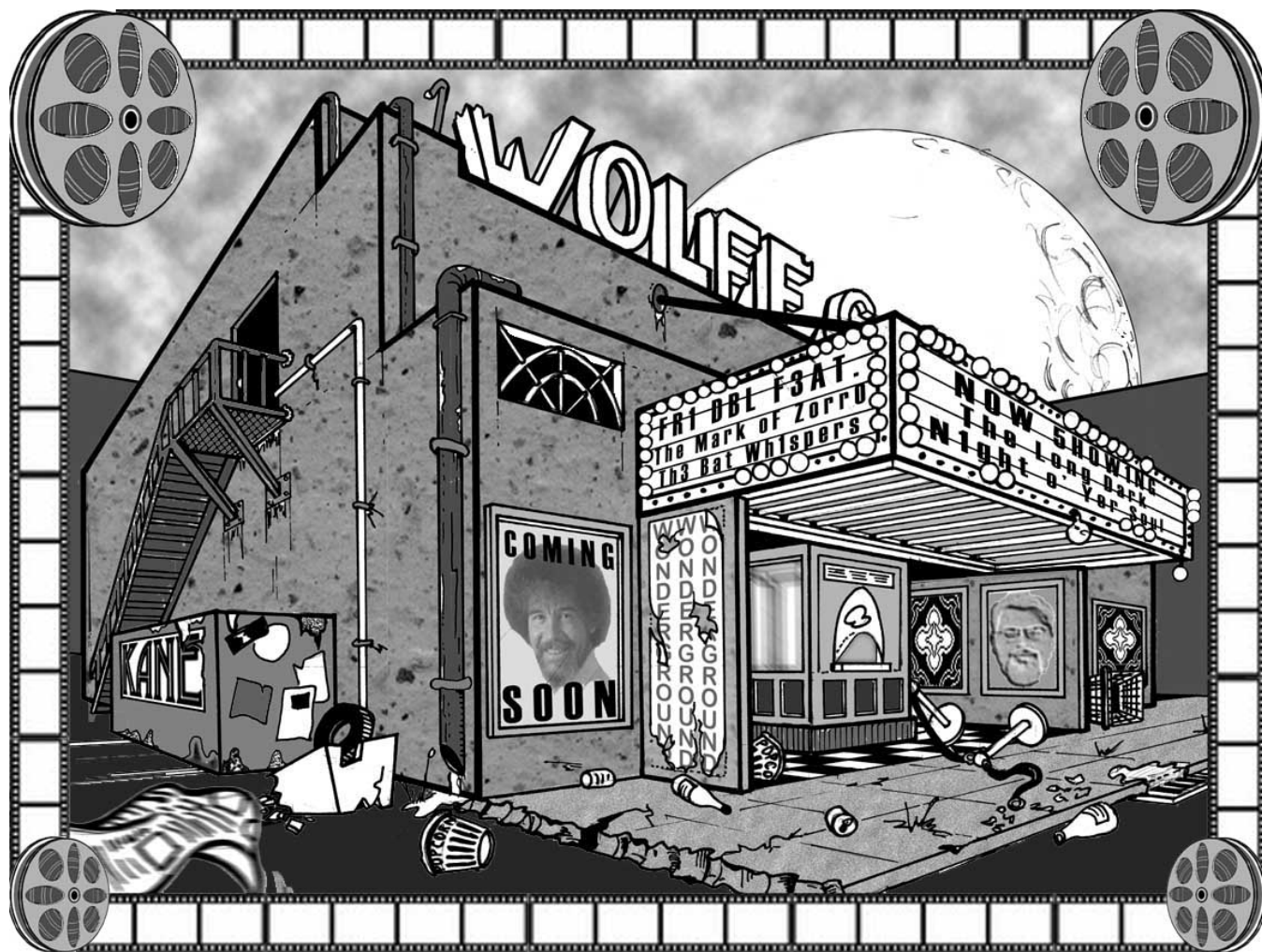
### MANTICORA'S GYM

Want to learn to fight? You need to join Manticora's Gym. Danny "the Tiger" Manticora (see below, *Notable NPC(s)*), a Mage of some repute, runs this training facility. No one is permitted to fight within the walls of the Gym, except in the ring and under the watchful eye of the Tiger. Anyone and everyone that he catches violating this rule is dealt with personally and brutally. Few do so more than once; no one has survived violating it twice. Like Blue Blazes, Manticora's Gym is one of the few Places of Power that also has a small contingent of Average People as customers, though they often cannot see the weirdness under their very noses. Manticora can

train a student in the Warrior's Way – if they can pay his price and are willing to take the risk. He also imports Spirit World critters for his trainees to spar with after-hours – things that no one in their right mind would go toe-to-toe with, like Eyes of the Dead God (see *DI, Chapter 5*).

### THE OLD WITHERS PLACE

The Old Withers Place *ought* to be a significant Place of Power. It's a Haunted House with a naturally-occurring Gate in the basement, for crying out loud! Unfortunately, the resident spook doesn't want anybody traipsing through *her* house, goddammit, and that's final. Jennifer Withers (see below, *Notable*



NPC.) died as a powerful Sensitive, and thus came back as a powerful Ghost. Her beloved husband Henry built the house with his own two hands, and with young Hank working as an engineer in Germany, she's not gonna leave it for no one to mess up, not just 'cause she's dead. Hell, the Source'll still be there after Hank (or his descendants) come back or the building crumbles to dust, whichever comes first. Until then, she'll fight off all comers with all the substantial means at her disposal, be they Qlippoth or Magi.

### TWISTED HOLLOW

Out in the middle of nowhere, up among the forested hills, Twisted Hollow writhes. No people come here, despite skyrocketing land value. Few animals even poke their snouts into it. The plants that manage to grow here are invariably sickly, dry, and covered in thorns. Twisted Hollow is a Verge, a site in the Real World that's too close for comfort to the Void. Still, there are those that seek out such places – the *Helots of the Darkling Glass* and the *Phenomena Project*, to name two (see below, *Notable Organizations*) – to utilize or explore their dangers. Be warned!

### WOLFF CINEMA

This ramshackle movie-house is a Side-Step, unnoticed by Average People. They just walk on by, never seeing the marquee loudly displaying the day's shows. Entry – for those of the Supernatural Set – costs a Soul Point thrown into the ticket booth. A ticket will then appear on the counter before the customer, good for use anytime. No one is admitted without a ticket. Once customers enter the revolving door, half of their ticket vanishes, leaving a lime-green stub. They may then proceed past the devastated concession stand, and either sit in the moldy orchestra seats or repair to the dusty balcony to watch the film currently playing. Somehow, the Wolff Cinema is connected to the Theatre des Loups (see *DI, Chapter 2*); when someone holding a ticket stub enters the Theater in the Spirit World, his story is projected on the Wolff Cinema's screen in the Real World. This film plays over and over, until the next poor sap with a stub enters the Theatre. (Note that sneaky sorts can slip an old stub into someone else's pockets...)

### YUNG JACKSON'S SOUL LAUNDRY

Where do the bodiless undead go to hang out when they're tired of rattling the old chains and making the

floorboards creak? Yung Jackson's Soul Laundry, of course. All jokes about Ghosts getting their sheets washed and pressed aside, Yung Jackson is carrying on a family tradition by serving as a sort of concierge for those that have Passed Beyond (But Not That Far Beyond). The Soul Laundry is a Demesne, and its Lord has made it into a sanctuary for the bodiless – it is a Place of Power only for Ghosts, Free Spirits, and Jackson himself; no Zombis allowed, period (they cannot see or enter the building); and other Types can be admitted only in the company of a Ghost or with a Ghostly character reference. The prize of the Soul Laundry is “the Big Mamma,” a huge dryer that – when properly coaxed – will open a Gate directly into Spectral Point.

## TIMES OF POWER

While most Real World mystical beliefs focus on the cosmic corners of time's passage (solstices, equinoxes, midsummer, midwinter, the opening and closing of the year, etc.), the moments of spiritual potency in *DI* focus on the more personal cycles and mileposts. Intensity comes from living one's life, doing things, and experiencing things, rather than simply marking calendrical time. Times of Power for the *DI* setting include:

- ◆ ***Beginnings & Endings.*** Birth, teething, weaning, potty-training, first unaided steps, first words, first day of school, loss of milk teeth, first menstruation, puberty, loss of virginity, last day of school, conception, pregnancy, childbirth, first gray hair, loss of hair, menopause/andropause, last words, death.
- ◆ ***Rites of Passage.*** Baptisms, birthdays, adulthood rites (Confirmations, Bar/Bat Mitzvahs), graduations, weddings, divorces, ordinations, funerals.
- ◆ ***In-Between Times.*** Dusk and dawn. Midnight. Noon.

The above is all well and good, but the question then becomes something like: “How do I as a *DI* GM turn some character's *loss of virginity* into a Time of Power for my game (without it becoming a sniggering or prurient joke)?”

- ◆ **Personal Power Source.** If a PC is able to roleplay out a personal Time of Power – like losing his virginity – as an event of great significance (see *DI, Chapter 5, Judging Soul Cultivation and Soul Decay* and relevant Virtue and Vice discussions for ideas that can be adapted to gaming out events of individual meaning, growth, and risk), they can garner a Soul Point for successfully navigating the situation with aplomb and/or sincerity.
- ◆ **Broadcast Power.** Perhaps the vicinity around someone experiencing one of these significant events temporarily becomes a Place of Power? If so, given the example above, some of the Supernatural Set would be haunting Lovers’ Lanes, hoping that a first-timer gets lucky so that they can work their magic easier. (Add in the Hook-handed Man of urban legend as a Free Spirit or Dead Inside, and you have the seeds of an interesting high school centered *DI* campaign...).
- ◆ **If-Thens.** Alternatively, you could go with that classic of time-travel and prophecy stories, where *if* thing X happens, *then* thing Y will happen (for variable values of X and Y). *If* the woman gives birth, *then* the forces of evil will be beaten back by her child. *If* the MacGuffin isn’t destroyed, *then* the Mage will cause great suffering. *If* the assassin is stopped, *then* the President will survive. With matters of import like these swaying in the balance, great spiritual power can be generated at the point of decision. Many of the Supernatural Set will blithely become bystanders at *If-Thens*: not to interfere, but simply to pursue their own personal agendas.
- ◆ **Adventure Seed.** Times of Power – carefully presaged through precognitive flashes from Second Sight, of course – make wonderful Adventure Seeds for *DI* games. If the PCs know that the day Joey NPC loses his virginity is the day that a special Gate leading directly into Tenemos Chapel (or their enemy’s sanctuary, or Samuel’s Fort Knox of Soul Eggs, or whatever) will open, they’ll surely gain an interest in at least keeping tabs on Joey’s little romances. Hell, they might even try to engineer an assignation for the lad... On the other hand, if that Gate leads

somewhere they don’t want other folks to go (their sanctuary, the hiding place of their Mage patron’s Wizard Egg, the bedroom of their much-beloved child), they’ll certainly try to make sure Joey never gets lucky.

### *Notable Events in the Real World*

Here are a few Notable Events for GMs to use or adapt for their *DI* campaigns in the Real World:

#### THE EXCHANGE

The Exchange is a sort of flea-market that’s a movable feast. On the night of the full moon and the night of the new moon each month, at 1:47 am, a natural Gate directly into Exroads Market in the Spirit World (see *DI, Chapter 2*) opens up at a random crossroads, suffusing the area with soul-power. It is always located at the intersection of an old country road and a modern highway. Active use of Second Sight at the moon’s quarters can help give a general region for where the Exchange will manifest.

The Supernatural Set has started taking advantage of this repeating Gate, and will trucking their wares to the site of the month. A little mystic twiddling keeps the local cops in the dark, and all is well. Trader Nicholas (see *DI, Chapter 2*), Willy Raggpicker (see *DI, Chapter 4*), and many *Soulmarketeers* (see below) frequent the Exchange during these times – they save on transportation “costs” between Worlds and do substantial mercantile networking.

#### FUNERAL FUROR

When a Mage dies (and with some Magi, this takes some doing), he comes back as a Ghost *and* a Zombi: his doubled-soul splitting into two undead beings. For these two beings to manifest, even if the Mage’s body has been lost, a memorial service *must* be held. (The responsibility for arranging a suitable memorial falls to the *Ordo Scalarum* – see below – for unknown reasons.) Generally, the pair of supernaturals will then fight for supremacy, attempting to destroy the other in a bizarre display of schizoid self-loathing. However, long-standing tradition dictates that tranquility should prevail at this memorial service: only after the final bell tolls may the deadly conflict begin. Furthermore, it’s believed that if a Mage’s Ghost and Zombi can peaceably be reconciled, they can meld together (using the legendary and extremely

rare *Ritual of Reunion*), bringing the departed *back* – albeit as a lowly Dead Inside.

This sort of thing makes Mage Funerals *fun*. You have the typical friendly mourners and enemy gloaters, then you add a Ghost and a Zombi (who generally hate each other, but are trying desperately to be civil), meddling do-gooders trying to bring together the two undead, and opportunists trying to ride the wave of supernatural power generated at the memorial service of one of the nearly-immortal.

### GATESEAL EVE

Every year, there is at least one night where no Gate can Open, Second Sight is blinded, supernatural talents are untrustworthy, and passage between the Worlds is blocked. Unfortunately, it's hard to predict the date of Gateseal Eve because it slides around the calendar like Chutes and Ladders. Still, some few of the supernatural folk are blessed – or cursed, depending upon your outlook – with a Second Sight vision disclosing when the next Eve will occur (however, the identity of these “Gateseal Prophets” *is* discernable with Second Sight). This is valuable information, knowing when one can elude enemies by crossing the Veil, arranging mundane attacks that cannot be countered with spiritual defenses, the ability to avoid mishap in plots and plans, and so forth. This knowledge can bring reward – and danger – to those who wish to trade or sell it in Spirit World Commerce.

### REVEL REVEL

At random times, Demi Monde (see below) throws open the doors of Blue Blazes (see above) to the Supernatural Set only, closing it to even the most elite of her Average Person patrons. All Types are welcome – for a Soul Point at the door – to a party that makes the debaucheries of the Roman Empire look like a Southern Baptist Church Social. Every single one of the *Gothiks* and the *Beautiful People* attend (see below); indeed, members of those cliques that cannot or will not attend a Revel Revel are ostracized from their groups. Nothing is forbidden; everything is permitted. Secrets are uncovered, deals are struck, cones of power are raised, scores are settled, fantasies are indulged. Being seen at the Revel Revel grants instant mystical cachet: participating in more than one is the best way to build a rep as a supernatural mover and shaker. The doors are locked and the party rages on . . . until someone dies or someone gets born. The longest

Revel Revel lasted three weeks; the shortest, twelve minutes.



## GROUPS OF POWER

Humans are social creatures. We all – to a greater or lesser extent – define ourselves in our relationships with, in, and to organizations: I'm a Catholic, you're a Spaniard, she's the leader, our company seeks the Grail, he's always hated Democrats, never trust a goldfish fancier, and so forth.

People form groups around all sorts of things: ethnicity; age group; social cliques; political, philosophical, economic, or religious beliefs; shared enthusiasms, hobbies, or goals – the list goes on and on. Groups provide structure, support, and a place (physical, mental, intellectual, and social) for their members. They also promulgate the ideas held by the group, ideas about the group, and ideas about the world outside the group. As mentioned above in *Real World Resources & Machinations*, conforming to the tenets of one's organization is preferred; those who cannot or will not measure up to those rules can't be part of it. Depending on the beliefs, power, and reach of the group, this can be a very bad thing (non-Christians in Europe during the Crusades, witches in 1600s Salem, suspected communists and sympathizers in 1950s America, or unpopular kids in high school).

However, once someone's accepted as part of a crowd, with an established role and hierarchical place within, and don't color *too* far outside the lines laid down as boundaries, the group will tolerate mild quirks of personality. “Ah, that's just Bob,” they'll say. “He's always like that.” Now, given the different rules and boundaries of different cliques, some of this accepted behavior can seem quite outré. But even the most lenient collection of people, if they see

their pet eccentric stumble too far off the path, will have little compunction with shutting them out.

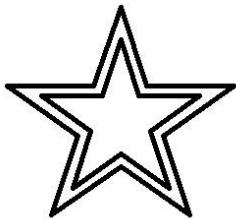
Why should the Supernatural Set, who all stem in one way or another (yes, even Tulpas and Free Spirits) from humans, be any different?

The most important things in coming up with groups for a *DI* campaign is to consider the following five elements:

- ◆ **History & Formation** (Where did they come from?)
- ◆ **Beliefs & Goals** (What do they think is important?)
- ◆ **Habits & Tell-tales** (What do they do? How do they look?)
- ◆ **Group Structure** (How do they work? How does one join?)
- ◆ **Allies, Acquaintances, & Enemies** (Who do they work with, know of, or work against?)
- ◆ **Special Features** (Do group members have any special knowledge, possessions, Qualities, Abilities, or Powers?)

### ***Notable Organizations in the Real World***

Here follow some Notable Organizations for characters – both PCs and NPCs – to belong to, if they so choose (and, if the GM permits, characters can belong to multiple groups):



#### **THE BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE**

You've seen them at the dance clubs, in the ritzy shops, at the "pretty" gym, in the finest restaurants, walking down the street in a sunny glimmer of perfection. They dance like a dream and never lack for partners, have

the double-platinum credit cards and the *haute-est couture*, have perfect bodies and never look like sweaty hogs, eat the best food and drink the rarest wines. Their Maserati does 185. They sniff the best cocaine, have the best sex, and never get hassled by the cops. They're laughing at you behind their eyes. They are the elite, the golden, the Beautiful People.

A Beautiful Person starts out as a Free Spirit who has managed to escape into the Real World. Since such

beings have no real experience of life outside the Spirit World, all they have to go on is what they can learn from books, movies, television, magazines, etc. To become a Beautiful Person, a Free Spirit must perform the *Ritual of Splendor* (see boxed text); this ritual allows the Beautiful Person to be seen by Average People.

- ◆ **History & Formation.** The Beautiful People have been around for as long as there have been literary (oral and written) exemplars for human behavior. It's thought they were first seen as gods; over millennia, the perception of their cosmic stature dwindled to that of angels, demons, and faeries. Today, many have sunk to the level of mere celebrities and jet-setters.
- ◆ **Beliefs & Goals.** Beautiful People seek to live life as they've read it in books or seen it on TV, on the stage, or in the movies; unfortunately, their playful Free Spirit nature puts a strong "play-acting" spin on their actions, as if they're not entirely serious.
- ◆ **Habits & Tell-tales.** Average People *can* see them, unlike most Free Spirits: in the Ritual of Splendor, Beautiful People trade some of their freedom in return for being visible to Average People (or "peons" in their slang). Unfortunately, because of their fundamental lack of understanding and familiarity with real life, Beautiful People can come off as "perfect, but fake" when interacting with Average People. They also tend to be "drama whores": constantly causing and reveling in interpersonal, melodramatic strife. Overemotional, mercurial, snobbish – to an inhuman degree (literally). Many cliques of Beautiful People often get together for members-only parties/orgies called *Ravomontades*, where they purposefully melt their wax faces, trying desperately to one-up their fellows in random grotesquerie as their mutable forms respond to their desires. Any Average Person who bumbles into a Ravomontade and looks around will inadvertently "lock" the participants into whatever horrific form they have bent themselves (see boxed text). Such fools are usually taken apart slowly, piece by piece, by the furious monsters.



- ◆ **Group Structure.** Very loose: more reminiscent of high school social cliques than anything else. Being the coolest, the chic-est, the snazziest, the most perfect is the way to climb the ladder. The current “king” of the Beautiful People is a GQ-looking bloke named Cooper Christian (see below), a cold-hearted snake in French cuffs.
- ◆ **Allies, Acquaintances, & Enemies.** They have no allies, because – haven’t you heard? – they’re *perfect*. *Gothbiks* are often their favored “minions” (if the Beautiful Person can put up with the nosferatu crap). They’ve been known to interact *Noumenal Search & Rescue* with mixed-results. They dislike the *Cryptozoo Revue* intensely (who they see as fools perverting their chance to live a “human” life) and the *Spookleggers* (who tend to see the Beautiful People as prey).

## THE RITUAL OF SPLENDOR

Any insubstantial being in the Real World may learn and perform the Ritual of Splendor to gain semi-permanent visibility and tactility. However, true membership in the Beautiful People is limited to Free Spirits. Only that group holds the secrets of this rare ritual, and it extracts concessions of service, Soul Points, or information from aspiring hopeful members. (Some occult scholars might have tantalizing clues of the ritual’s existence.) The ritual must be performed in a Place or Time of Power, and requires a largish stack of books, magazines, photographs, film, videotapes, newspapers, vinyl records, CDs, and other such media.

The caster of the ritual surrounds themselves with the media materials, concentrates, and burns 4 Soul Points. The spiritual energy infuses the material goods, and begins to dissolve them into a golden vapor, which little by little enfolds the caster. After an uninterrupted hour, all the media have dissolved and flowed around the caster, who then burns 4 more Soul Points to “freeze” the cloud into a visible, tangible form. The being then gains the Quality of Beautiful Person at Good [+2] Rank. (Ghosts using this ritual should call this Quality something else – perhaps “Body Shell” – since they won’t gain any of the social or organizational functions of the Beautiful Person Quality.)

The newly-embodied caster suffers a large restriction on his use of mystical Abilities and Powers. First, they can no longer Phase, for obvious reasons. Any *active* use of a supernatural talent by the character destabilizes their visible form, making it appear unnatural (whatever the GM decides is appropriate). For example, if a Beautiful Person actively uses Second Sight to cheat at cards, his eyes may begin to glow, or transform into cat’s eyes, or simply vanish (permitting onlookers to see the hollow inside of his skull). An attacker who uses the offensive version of Ward against a being under the Ritual of Splendor can also cause destabilization if he does more Damage Ranks than the target’s Beautiful Person Quality Modifier (e.g., 3 Damage Ranks to destabilize a Good [+2] Beautiful Person); in that case, the attacker’s player determines the unnatural feature granted to the hapless target.

The Beautiful Person can stabilize their form using Change Self. However, if an *Average Person* catches sight of a Beautiful Person looking unnatural (even via artificial means, like a security camera), the weird feature “locks” into place, and an additional Soul Point must be spent before Change Self will take effect. This weird feature can also be locked into place by a supernatural being using Ward offensively.

If the Beautiful Person Quality is ever zeroed in a conflict (by absorbing Damage), the visible form is destroyed, and the ritual must be performed again.

- ◆ **Special Features.** The Beautiful Person Quality gives the relative rank or reputation of the character within the Beautiful People community and knowledge of the group’s insular slang. It also has several other benefits:
  1. It permits Average People to see the character (see boxed text for further details).
  2. With the GM’s assent, the Rank Modifier may be added to other Qualities in social situations (see *DI*, Chapter 4, *Using Multiple*

*Qualities in Simple, Complicated, or Conflict Situations*), if the character is performing a task with extra verve and panache, **in place** of the standard Upshift for Being Badass (see *DI, Chapter 4, Being Badass*).

3. It gives the Beautiful Person an entourage of Average People (or Beautiful People of lower standing) equal to their Rank Modifier. These NPCs are yes-men, hangers-on, minions, and so forth who are dazzled by the character's chic.



### CRYPTOZOO REVUE

There are always sightings of strange things in the wilderness that are usually written off as hallucinations, mirages, or hoaxes. Not all of them are: some are a special cadre of the Supernatural

Set that enjoys toying with the perceptions of Average People...

- ◆ **History & Formation.** A few Free Spirits leave the Spirit World for the Real World to explore, gather earthly goods, or set up trading routes with others of the Supernatural Set; some of these have become enamored of the cold, hard world, seeing it as a more challenging playground. Since the Average People of the Real World cannot see them (except in Places and Times of Power), the Game has become “be seen.” Thus, the Cryptozoo Revue – also known as “the Secret Sideshow” – came into being. Free Spirits of the Cryptozoo Revue take on the forms of lake monsters, missing links, chupacabras, mermaids, thylacines, and more in attempts to catch the attention of Average People.
- ◆ **Beliefs & Goals.** Using their Abilities and Powers, Cryptozooers carefully set their varied stages across the world. At conducive locations and appropriate times, they begin their puppet shows, hoping for good reviews, whispered tales around the campfire, a mention on the news, a fuzzy photo in a tabloid, or – best of all – a television special, movie, or website dedicated to them.
- ◆ **Habits & Tell-tales.** Like Beautiful People, Cryptozooers are addicted to melodrama;

their internecine struggles are full of *sturm und drang*. They also tend to wear their favored shape, even when not “on stage,” though they often keep themselves a bit more presentable, and may even wear clothing when not engaged in a performance. (A Yeti wearing a sombrero? A bunyip with a fez? A mermaid in bondage gear?)

- ◆ **Group Structure.** Status within the group relates directly to the fame of the Cryptozooer among Average People, and higher status indicates a larger region of control. For example, the grand old dame of European Cryptozooers is Nessie, of Loch Ness, Scotland, who rules her lessers like a queen. However, in North America, there's a field of strong contenders for the top spot: Bigfoot is in charge in the Pacific Northwest, several sizable crypto-plesiosaurs battle for dominance over the Great Lakes, the Jersey Devil unquestionably commands the East Coast, and a squad of chupacabra is working on penetrating the Mexican mainland. (While no other supernatural Types are currently members, the Cryptozoo Revue might welcome a suitable creative sort.)



- ◆ **Allies, Acquaintances, & Enemies.** Cryptozooers are friendly with the *Worldspacklers* (in their travels in the wilderness, Cryptozooers often run across Verges, and trade the locations of these dangerous areas to the Worldspacklers in return for a little rumor-mongering to build interest in their “shows”). They like the *Phenomena Project* (seeing them as the best possible audience, but fully revealing themselves to that group would spoil the fun) and *Noumenal Search & Rescue* (who have

saved a number of them from bad situations). They will begrudgingly listen (with much wailing and foot-dragging) to the dictates of the *Ordo Sclarum*. They hate the *Beautiful People* (who they see using the Ritual of Splendor to “cheat” in the Game) and those that see them as “prey”: the *Spookleggers* and the *Helots of the Darkling Glass*.

- ◆ **Special Features.** The Cryptozooer Quality, which shows rank and notoriety within the group, is also used to:

1. Subtly integrate many supernatural talents to manipulate fog, floating logs, tree branches, wind, fallen leaves or newspapers, etc., so that the character can temporarily (Modifier x 5 seconds) make their chosen shape “visible” to Average People (and their cameras!) in Places and Times of Power at no Soul Point cost. (Soul Points can be burned to extend this duration into minutes, or to manifest for a few seconds outside of a Place or Time of Power.)
2. Because of their highly-trained spiritual senses, the Cryptozooer Quality can be used to sense the direction and distance of a nearby Place or Time of Power with a range equal to a number of miles or hours equal to the Rank Modifier of the Quality.



### GOTHIKS

The Gothiks are mostly clueless Dead Inside who believe that they’re some kind of vampire. The social

isolation, the Soultaking, the coldness inside, the superpowers – in the absence of solid information, they’ve made about the best guess they could. Gothiks have bonded together into an insular little scene, torn by its own cliquish warfare. Still, while it may be demented and sad, it’s social, which can give them an advantage over solo Dead Inside. Also, they have tenuous ties to the goth-industrial subculture of Average People, which provides a handy social context for interacting with the mundanes.

- ◆ **History & Formation.** While there have always been Dead Inside who “haven’t gotten the memo” (the lowdown on the nature of the Cosmos and the different Types of supernatural being), the confused masses

really only embraced the vampire idiom after the Roaring Twenties.

- ◆ **Beliefs & Goals.** Gothiks have to make some bizarre rationalizations to maintain the purity of their vampire concept. They consider all nonmaterial Types of being to be “Revenants” and all material Types to be vampires (they see no real difference between Zombis and Dead Inside, and tag Sensitives as “Elder Vampires” and Magi as “Master Vampires.”)

- ◆ **Habits & Tell-tales.** Gothiks dress and act the part: depending on their tastes, they may go the Old School route (evening dress, accent, coffins) or the New School route (latex and leather, pop culture quips, underground apartments). They seem to be psychologically unable to use the Ability of Soultaking without drawing at least a token amount of blood. While most suffer – presumably psychosomatic – Downshifts from being presented with the various vampire weaknesses (sunlight, crosses, running water, garlic, etc.), the set of dreaded items is by no means universal, and is cause for great debates and struggles within the group. Gothiks “massage” every supernatural event they perceive to fit their vampiric preconceptions; one possible consequence of this is a limited knowledge of Abilities and Powers.

- ◆ **Group Structure.** Gothiks respect the Three A’s: age, appearance, and attitude. Their leaders tend to be older (but not too old), pretty, and stylish. They tend to form smaller cliques within the larger community of around six to eight people, orbiting around a suitable leader.

- ◆ **Allies, Acquaintances, & Enemies.** Gothiks love the *Beautiful People* (seeing them as an elite group of Master Vampires), and have good relations with the *Soulmarketeers* (who can provide them “unadulterated life’s blood” – read Soul Points – without all that messy biting and bleeding and clotting). They enjoy the attention of the *Phenomena Project*, but are wary about letting the scientists get too close to them and blowing the costume party. Gothiks tend to avoid *Interfaith, Inc.*



members, mostly because of all the religious trappings.

- ◆ **Special Features.** The Gothik Quality gives the rank or reputation of the character within the Gothik community, knowledge of subculture jargon, and furthermore serves as an ally group. It can also be used in social situations involving Average People who are Goths or goth-friendly, without taking the standard social Downshift for Dead Inside. However, if presented with a vampiric weakness (the player must select three weaknesses when his character gains the Gothik Quality), Gothiks suffer a Downshift on *all* actions and reactions until the taboo object is out of their sight or otherwise overcome.

#### HELOTS OF THE DARKLING GLASS



Stop the Cosmos – the Helots of the Darkling Glass want to get off! In general, the members of this group want it all to end. Many break stuff – property, relationships, lives, reality – for the fun of it, or for the hatred of seeing other people possess what they do not, or because they see existence itself as sinful or wrong or a mistake, or maybe because they just don’t care.

- ◆ **History & Formation.** This apocalyptic assemblage first came together in the late Seventies. A Dead Inside named Marcus Goldman – sick of the constant agony of his soullessness; driven to the brink by depression, drugs, and drink; goaded by his Shadow; terrified by the thought of rising from the dead as a Zombi; and frankly too chicken to enter the Spirit World and confront his issues – suddenly realized he wouldn’t hurt so much if the world *wasn’t*. He began preaching the Word of his new Revelation on the street corners of bad parts of town: “Oblivion.” Remarkably, a few people – those in agony, despair, insanity – began to listen to him. Other Dead Inside, shorn of their souls, joined in an attempt to find community.

#### *The Powers and Principalities of the Real World (or, the Gummint!)*

So, what cool supernatural groups do the governments of the Real World control (or vice-versa)?

None.

The core setting of *DI* and *CHW* assumes that because of the inability of Average People – who make up the majority of those working overtly and covertly in various governments – to sense mystical events, and the relative weakness of spiritual energies in the Real World, that no long-term “occult departments” exist. Sure, there’s always the random black project studying remote viewing or telekinesis or necromancy, but they’ve never lasted more than a year or three due to being unable to produce consistent, verifiable results on demand.

But that’s not to say that a GM’s Diverse cannot include a supernatural organization that’s part *X-Files* and part *Ultraviolet*. GMs should feel free to co-opt any of the groups mentioned in this chapter and redefine them as a government group, or simply make up one of their own.

Any government group should involve things like security clearances, hidden headquarters, deniability, relationships with other governmental organs, a base level of resources, and a rationale for where their budget funds come from.

On the other hand, it’s tragically simple for a *smart* supernatural to take control of a governmental group unaware of its Abilities and Powers (or even existence, for some Types). Keeping control is the real trick.

A cycle formed spontaneously:

- A “preacher” comes to a Verge, Threshold, or other Place of Power;
- The preacher proselytizes destruction;
- Some disaffected listen and join the cause;
- Dark rituals are enacted;
- The Verge shatters, and the Void consumes all that it can before the Real World retaliates; and
- Soulless, nihilistic survivors spread across the land, seeking Places in which to preach of Oblivion.

Some true believers survived multiple eruptions, grew madder, developed stranger powers, and got a taste for demagoguery. While sickened intellectually by this spontaneous evolution of order, these few nonetheless enjoyed the perks of cult leadership. The Oblivion movement split into the unknowing, disorganized preachers of Oblivion and the cultic Helots of the Darkling Glass.

As the number of Helots grew, thrill-seekers, petty Machiavellis, and rich spoiled brats

filtered into the cult(s). The organization began to move upscale, trading its meager collective supernatural power for money, support, and new members. Finally, it blossomed into what it is today: a small, but international secret organization of Dark Side Freemason-wannabes with a penchant for spreading their pain and misery onto everyone else. They seek Verges so that they can shatter the shell of the Cosmos, and often Soultake sacrificial victims until they husk to create short-lived servitor Qlippoth.

Marcus Goldman was unmade by the Void in 1991, but his legacy lives on.

NOTE - The Oblivion “movement” still exists, and is more or less separate from the Helots. . . though any Helot worth his salt should be able to easily take control of any group of “Oblivioners” by dint of his deep knowledge of the ways of the Void.

- ◆ **Beliefs & Goals.** The basic foundations of the beliefs and the goal of the Helots is simple: the world is bad, and must be destroyed – piece by piece, if necessary. (The upper echelon of the cult adds another prescript: do what thou wilt, then unmake the evidence.) However, the *why* of the world’s evil has diverged since Goldman’s dissolution into two main lines of thought:

1. (*espoused by the deceased Lord Knight of the Unutterable Darkness Luc Dupree*) “We are imprisoned in Hell with Lucifer – the Light-bringer, the Sun, get it?! – who keeps us from looking into the dark face of God and the real Creation.”
2. (*espoused by the current Lord Knight of the Unutterable Darkness Francis Atherton*) “The human spirit is an imperfection in Chaos that has somehow accreted gross matter around it; we must dissolve the karmic kidney-stone known as the soul to return to chaotic perfection.”

- ◆ **Habits & Tell-tales.** The best way to chaotic freedom/perfection in a Helot’s eyes is, of course, to rip open reality at a Verge; they seek these Places of Power incessantly. Furthermore, Helots tend to think and speak in ways that illustrate that concepts like *darkness, outside, night, black, and nothing* are by definition good, and their opposites (*light, inside, day, white, and something*) are bad. This is one of the reasons that Helots call Qlippoth

“Darkangels.” “Black as night” would be “the situation is okay,” while “daylighters” is a common epithet for the *Worldspacklers* (see below). Real loyalty within the cult is limited, given the “endarkened self-interest” of the Helots; however, blackmail is rife.

- ◆ **Group Structure.** Local groups – generally only a half-dozen or so folks in a major city – are called *Shadow Circles*, while the leadership Shadow Circle is called the *Unutterable Darkness*. The majority of Helots are disaffected Dead Inside, though there are a number of “novices” that are actually Average People. (Don’t worry; they’ll get turned into Dead Inside during their initiation.) In the upper echelons of the Shadow Circles, there may be two or three Sensitives, lording it over the soulless schlubs.
- ◆ **Allies, Acquaintances, & Enemies.** The Helots of the Darkling Glass actually get on quite well with the *Soulmarketeers* and *Spookleggers*: both groups can provide spiritually-charged items (or people) to power those ceremonies where a Helot is not prepared to “ascend” (read: husk). They’re not above doing a little hunting of their own for victims, this incurs the hatred and fear of the *Beautiful People* and the *Cryptozoo Revue*, since these beings tend to end up on the altar at Helot shindigs. Currently, the *Ordo Scalarum* ignores the Helots, trusting that the Cosmos or the Void will destroy the fools eventually. But the truest foes of the Helots are the despised *Worldspacklers*, a bunch of bleeding-heart, mystical fix-it men.
- ◆ **Special Features.** The Helot of the Darkling Glass Quality gives the rank or reputation of the character within the cult, knowledge of the group’s jargon, and serves as an ally group. It also helps the Helot in three cases:
  1. When attempting to shatter a Verge and let the Void pour in (see above), the Helot Quality grants one Upshift to the character’s Type Rank when casting an offensive Ward; and
  2. If a Helot successfully Wards against a Qlippoth, it may then give it one command, comprised of a simple, short sentence. “Kill *him!*” is a good command; “Follow her, see where she goes, and

come back and report to me!” is pushing it too far.

3. A Helot Quality Rank of Expert [+4] or higher means that the Helot is eligible for membership to the Unutterable Darkness, and may start receiving money, networking, information, aid, or even enmity from his peers and immediate betters.



### INTERFAITH, INC.

Stop me if you’ve heard this one: a priest, a rabbi, and an imam walk into a bar...

- ◆ **History & Formation.** Wait. What you don’t know is that all three of these clergymen were Sensitives, and the bar in question was the White Monkey (see *DI, Chapter 2*). They started chatting about their experiences in both Worlds, with special focus on the ramifications of these insights on their religious beliefs, the nature of the Spirit World, and how their new understanding could benefit their flocks . . . as well as all of humanity. They decided that, differences of dogma aside, they shared a unique perspective on spiritual matters that many of their coreligionists could not. Thus Interfaith, Inc. was born. Currently, there are over 100 members from dozens of faiths, with a high proportion of them being Sensitives (and a handful of Dead Inside and Ghosts, and at least one very peeved Zombi).
- ◆ **Beliefs & Goals.** “The Interfaithful” believe that most human religions have a remarkable commonality when discussing actions that lead to Soul Cultivation and Soul Decay (see *DI, Chapter 4* and *Chapter 5*). Their goals are to discover these commonalities, square them with the teachings of their faiths, and emphasize this knowledge back in their ministries in the Real World, leading to greater spiritual health for all people and fewer soul-rotting religious conflicts.
- ◆ **Habits & Tell-tales.** The Interfaithful are usually Sensitive religious leaders, that’s the first big clue. The second is a tendency to replace any words referring to *God* or *divinity* with the word *Source* (“The Source be with you” is a common greeting) when talking with other Interfaithful, in order to provide a “common ground” for discussion. They are inclined to speak inclusively when discussing other religions, and work on building bridges rather than starting crusades. (When in the Spirit World, they often congregate around a set of booths in the White Monkey and have loud, good-natured debates about the Cosmos and Religion; in these conversations, they *definitely* frame their perceptions of the Cosmos in their traditional terms.) Finally, they aid the Dead Inside of their varied faiths, especially other clergy, to ensoul..
- ◆ **Group Structure.** There’s really no overarching structure to Interfaith, Inc. – they have no board of directors, club treasurers, secret handshakes, Real World headquarters, or anything like that (the “Inc.” is an in-joke). They’re just a bunch of people who agree that there’s a common spiritual ground that everyone might be able to meet on. After that, all other activities are individual-driven, ad hoc, and volunteer – though they often find themselves working with other Interfaithful in volunteer charity work like soup kitchens, homeless shelters, clothing drives, prayer meetings – often the best place to find Dead Inside who need help.
- ◆ **Allies, Acquaintances, & Enemies.** The Interfaithful are inclined to get along with *Noumenal Search & Rescue* folks (who they see as pursuing a necessary goal), they’re usually ambivalent about the *Phenomena Project* (while they see the value of research into spiritual energies, they see something vaguely unsavory about the Project’s zeal to harness those energies), and they often have a frustrating relationship with local *Gothiks* (who generally reject churchly offers of assistance, due to their vampire fixation).
- ◆ **Special Features.** The Interfaithful Quality gives the rank or reputation of the character within the association and serves as a powerful, eager ally group – especially in sharing information and lending helping hands. It also grants the Interfaithful:
  1. An Upshift in social situations to those Average People who know and approve of

their Real World charity work (which can offset the social Downshift that Dead Inside possess).

2. An Upshift to Ward to undo *negative* effects of a supernatural being's use of spiritual talents (Binding, Possession, some types of Change Other transformations, any Change Landscape that creates a hostile environment, etc.).

# NSR

## NOUMENAL SEARCH & RESCUE

Many of the Supernatural Set in the Real World see Ghosts and Free Spirits as nothing more than ectoplasmic Happy Meals floating about. They forget that these beings were once – or may one day be – people much like them. Noumenal Search & Rescue is dedicated to finding and freeing those bodiless beings that have been trapped to serve as a quick source of Soul Points.

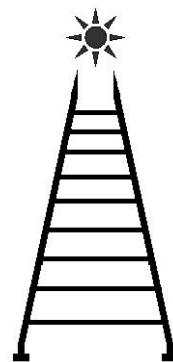
- ◆ **History & Formation.** Formed by a husband and wife team in the late 1930s to free their son's Ghost from a Spooklegger's Spirit Trap, Noumenal Search & Rescue has never had more than two dozen members. Over the years, they've had their ups and downs, but all-in-all, they've saved a lot of insubstantial beings from being eaten.
- ◆ **Beliefs & Goals.** Ghosts and Free Spirits are people, too, and deserve better than being treated like Soul Point-fodder. They hope to one day end spooklegging (see below) entirely, but realize that it's probably an impossible dream.
- ◆ **Habits & Tell-tales.** Noumenal Search & Rescuers wear a distinctive black jacket with white lettering spelling out "NSR" across the back, and their name over the heart. (NSR baseball caps are also common.)
- ◆ **Group Structure.** The core group currently comprises a six member team: three Dead Inside, two Ghosts, and a Zombi (!) – Lex Vargo (see below) – who happens to be their leader (!!).
- ◆ **Allies, Acquaintances, & Enemies.** Of the major Free Spirit groups in the Real World, Noumenal Search & Rescuers get on quite

well with the *Cryptozoo Revue*, and slightly less well with the *Beautiful People*. They have worked side-by-side with *Interfaith, Inc.* on a handful of occasions ("exorcisms" and the like) and keep an uneasy truce with *Soulmarketeers* (since the traders often carry Spirit Traps and other such nasty Enchanted Objects). They cross paths with *the Phenomena Project* often, and don't stop to chat. They hate *Spookleggers* (seeing them as a cross between slave traders and murderers), and will go to great lengths to thwart their operations.

- ◆ **Special Features.** The Noumenal Search & Rescuer Quality can be used for all social situations with no Downshift (by Dead Inside and Zombis) or with an additional Upshift (by all other Types) if the situation involves Ghosts or Free Spirits. It also:

1. Grants knowledge of the proper methods of handling, operation, breaking, and disposing of Soul Eggs and Spirit Traps (outside of a conflict situation, they are immune to Soul Point loss to a Spirit Trap; they can still be affected if they do not have the time to say the proper words and do the ritual hand jive).
2. Gives access to money, goods, information, or favors granted to them by grateful rescuees.

## ORDO SCALARUM (THE ORDER OF THE LADDER)



If curiosity killed the cat, courtesy is what keeps it alive. So say the Magi of the Ordo Sclarum. A loose assembly of Magi who base themselves primarily in the Real World, this club serves as a safety valve against magical pressures building up too strongly between the powerful. Additionally, the Order is responsible for arranging a funerary memorial service for deceased Magi, even if they were not members of the organization (see also above, *Funeral Furor*). The Order serves as a neutral meeting ground, provider of impartial arbiters, psychopomp to sorcerers, and social club for these mighty beings of the Supernatural Set.

## THE OMPHALOS

The Omphalos is the Navel of the Real World.

It can only be reached by a Gate, opened by a Mage (who need not be a Order member), within a Side-Step. (Observant bystanders may notice that the “rainbow ring” of this Gate is *reversed* from the normal order of color bands of Gates leading into the Spirit World.) While no other Type may open the proper sort of Gate into the Omphalos, they may use a Gate opened by a Mage to travel there. This inverted Gate leads to the inside of a flat-bottomed hemispheric dome, composed of a slightly rubbery but firm material of mottled gray and white. In the center of the dome sits a huge, glowing, iridescent sphere perched atop a tripod of golden ladders each with nine-rungs. This sphere is the *Magna Ova* – a Soul Egg containing soul-blood from all of the Magi of the Order. Around the edge of the dome are *hundreds* of deadly Tulpa warriors, each with varied Strengths and Weaknesses, charged with protecting the Magna Ova and the Laddermen (in that order).

Within the Omphalos, Change Landscape permits the shaping of furniture from the material composing the walls and floor. Open Gates can *only* create portals back to Side-Steps in the Real World. Bind, Dream-Leap/True Flight, and Souttaking do not work here, but the Soul Points burned are *still spent* when trying to activate these talents. The spiritual energy released is instantly used to create a new Tulpa to protect the Omphalos.

- ◆ **History & Formation.** The origins of the Ordo Scalarum are lost in the mists of history; for all intents and purposes, it’s always been around.
- ◆ **Beliefs & Goals.** Magi who join the Order agree to three strictures:
  1. Mutual aid and protection, especially from non-member Magi and other supernatural beings.
  2. No fighting in the *Omphalos* (see boxed text).
  3. When Order members have disputes, they must lay their grievances before the Master of the Ladder, who will arbitrate, and abide by his judgment.
  4. Arrange for a memorial service for Magi who die, in order to help them – or at least parts of them – return to the Cosmos and start climbing the Ladder again.
- ◆ **Habits & Tell-tales.** An Ordo Scalarum member (or, for brevity, “Ladderman”) often wears an amulet, ring, lapel pin, or other piece of jewelry (usually gold) depicting a ladder with nine rungs.
- ◆ **Group Structure.** To join the Ordo Scalarum, one must: 1) be a Mage; 2) enter a Side-Step; 3) open a Gate to the Omphalos;

and 4) deposit a drop of soul-blood into the Magna Ova (see the *Omphalos* boxed text). Once every decade, Laddermen elect a Master of the Ladder, who is responsible for guarding the Magna Ova, arbitrating disputes, calling meetings on matters of import, and punishing oath breakers. (When he or she visits the Spirit World, the Triangle Council – see *DI, Chapter 2* – treats the Master of the Ladder as a foreign dignitary.)

- ◆ **Allies, Acquaintances, & Enemies.** While they know of all of the other Notable Organizations of the Real World, they mostly ignore them. There are two exceptions to this general rule: they have a good relationship with the *Soulmarketeers* (as they find them useful for gleaning information and goods from the Spirit World), and they take a petty joy in frustrating the research of the *Phenomena Project* (who are meddling in things beyond their ken).
- ◆ **Special Features.** The Ladderman Quality indicates rank and notoriety within the Order, and serves as an ally group. It can be used to mentally communicate (conversation only, not mental probes or attacks) with other willing Order members at the Quality Rank, no matter where they are in the Cosmos – and it’s rumored that this holds true not just for space, but for *time* as well!

NOTE - Mental communication is tiring and limited, and should be treated as a mental conflict situation, with each exchange of thoughts counting as an “action.” Unwilling targets can use their Ladderman Quality and Mage Type as armor in this conflict; and communications through time are solely at the GM’s option.



### THE PHENOMENA PROJECT

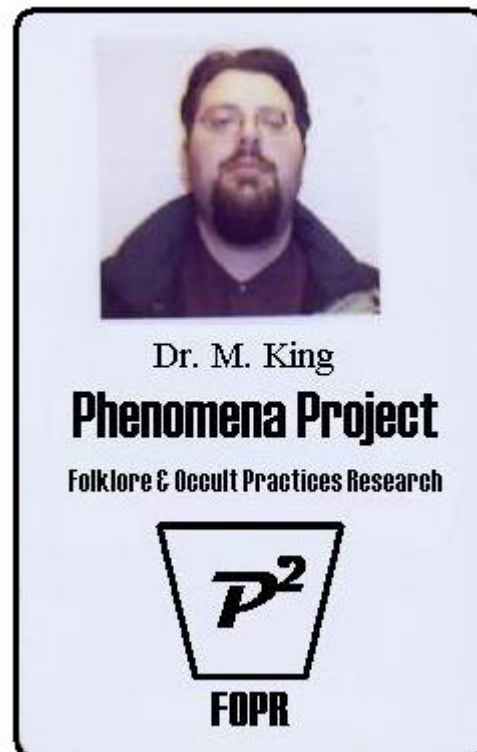
The Phenomena Project is composed mostly of clueless Average People and Dead Inside who have not yet experienced Discovery (see *DI, Chapter 3*), dedicated to finding scientific proof of the supernatural. Given the nature of the Real World, they have a tough row to hoe.

- ◆ **History & Formation.** Formed in the late Seventies by Dr. Petros Saxe, the Phenomena Project built on the works of those parapsychologists, skeptics, and interested parties that had gone before: Koestler, Randi, Zener, Rhine, Radin. However, the Project had something at its genesis that none of the others did: Dr. Saxe was a Dead Inside who hadn't yet realized the truth of his situation. Given his experiences, scientific mindset, and personal fortune, he was able to create a self-sustaining research think-tank on questions of psychic powers. Even though Dr. Saxe vanished in 1993, the Project lives on, seeking the truth.
- ◆ **Beliefs & Goals.** The Truth about psychic powers is out there, and the Phenomena Project is gonna find it, and make it understandable – and useable – by science.
- ◆ **Habits & Tell-tales.** Lab coats and T-shirts with the Project's logo on it are common. Members also carry a swipe-badge (for identification and access to the Facility) and business cards. They also tend to spout off wildly-variable occult justifications for anomalous events, sometimes getting into arguments with their associates at the most inopportune times. ("It's obviously ectoplasmic divination." "No, it's clearly a past-life experience intruding on present time." "You're both idiots: it's full-sense hallucinations caused by demonic possession!")
- ◆ **Group Structure.** The Phenomena Project has a very strict org chart; this helps balance the remarkable amount of turnover the group undergoes annually (as Average People lose interest and clueless Dead Inside have their Discovery). Parapsychology grad students, interns, consultants, and other staff – around sixty people – report to one of the four Assistant Directors. Each Assistant Director heads a Department and reports to the Director. The Director, the Assistant Directors, roughly one-third of the staff, and outside consultants receive small stipends from the Project for their work; this money comes from the trust fund set up by Dr. Saxe,

and is supplemented by contributions from anonymous donors (see below).

The current Project Departments and their purviews are:

1. *Anomalous Physical Phenomena* (APP): Rains of stones, poltergeist activity, cold spots, spontaneous human combustion, telekinesis, teleportation. (Often in conflict with FOPR and AE3.)
2. *Astral Entities, Explorations, & Endeavors* (AE3): "Ghost" sightings, astral travel, Tulpa construction, bilocation, Out of Body Experiences (OBEs), silver cords, past lives, reincarnation. (Often in conflict with ESP and FOPR.)
3. *Extrasensory Perception* (ESP): Remote viewing, mind-reading, psychometry, dream travel, mental and Kirlian photography, crystal magic, spirit guides, spiritualism and mediumship. (Often in conflict with AE3.)
4. *Folklore & Occult Practices Research* (FOPR): Magical and mystical practices, library research, demonology, summoning, vampires, werewolves, superstitions, historical surveys, anthropology, and archeology. (Often in conflict with all APP and AE3.)



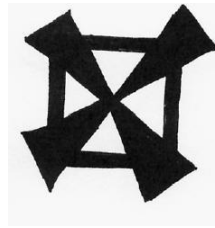
When reports of strange happenings come into the Project, the Director (or often his delegate) assigns the Case to one of the Departments. The Assistant Director assembles a team from his staff members and outside experts for the Case and allocates them a certain amount of resources. Cases usually do not *officially* involve Cross-Departmental Teams at the same time – a Department finishes their research before handing it off to the next most applicable Department. Unofficially, all members of the Project are permitted, even asked, to get involved with a field Team on a Case before it's their Department's turn; but until the "passing of the file," the Department of record is in charge of the Team. (The Departments support this sub-rosa arrangement – even if just to find out what their rivals are working on.) In extreme cases, the Director can mandate an official Cross-Departmental Team for a specific case, but this has happened only six times in the history of the Project, and each time, friction within the Team caused only fragmentary data to be returned.

- ◆ **Allies, Acquaintances, & Enemies.** The Project has no real Allies on the face of things; unknown to the members, however, the *Spookleggers* are their secret benefactors. Project members have interacted with the *Gothiks* and *Interfaith, Inc.* on past Cases with mixed results. They frequently and unknowingly chase after members of the *Cryptozoo Review*, who toy with them for kicks. Lastly, Project members have conflated the covert interference of the *Ordo Sclarum* and the overt interference of *Noumenal Search & Rescue* into a single foe which they think is called the "National Scientific Redirective" – a shadow government organization dedicated to hushing up psychic powers.
- ◆ **Special Features.** The Phenomena Project Member Quality indicates rank and notoriety within the Project. It also:
  1. Serves as an ally group.
  2. Grants general knowledge of Real World "paranormal lore" (which, unfortunately, has limited applicability to the spiritual truths and talents of *DI*).

3. Provides scientific equipment and a small amount of cash for expenses to members working a Case.

Unfortunately, any character with this Quality will suffer a Downshift in social or professional dealings with skeptics, whether they use this Quality or any other.

### SOULMARKETEERS



The Soulmarketeers are a guild of transient traders and merchants who travel between the Worlds, bringing goods and information back and forth. Despite the benefits of membership, not all traders are part of this group, preferring their independence and freedom from paying the group's dues.

- ◆ **History & Formation.** Another organization whose origin is lost in the remote past, the Soulmarketeers have always been around.
- ◆ **Beliefs & Goals.** Many – but not all – Soulmarketeers believe that they perform a cosmically-valuable service, equalizing the spiritual and material balance in the two Worlds, which helps keep them tied together. Their common goal is to provide what people want for a decent profit.
- ◆ **Habits & Tell-tales.** Soulmarketeers wear something – a badge, a cap, a t-shirt, whatever – with their symbol (an X within a square) displayed prominently.
- ◆ **Group Structure.** None. If one stands in the middle of Exroads Market in the Spirit World, right at the exact center where the roads intersect, and burns 2 drops of soul-blood, one becomes a member of the guild of Soulmarketeers. This process (called "paying the dues") must be repeated once a season to remain in "good standing."
- ◆ **Allies, Acquaintances, & Enemies.** Soulmarketeers have no real enemies (except mild rivalries with independent traders), but only a few staunch allies: *Gothiks*, *the Helots of the Darkling Glass*, and the *Ordo Sclarum*. As a group, they tend to have a cordial – if quiet – relationship with *Spookleggers*.

◆ **Special Features.** The Soulmarketeer Quality shows reputation among other Soulmarketeers and serves as a loose ally group. It:

1. Grants an Upshift to any Merchant, Trader, or other business-oriented Quality in Spirit World Commerce situations.
2. Provides general familiarity with Enchanted Objects and the ability to appraise them fairly (an Upshift to attempts to identify or assess).
3. Permits the Soulmarketeer to Open Gates directly into Exroads Market from *anywhere*.



### SPOOKLEGGERS

Some call them kidnappers, some call them cannibals, but the Spookleggers view themselves more as game

wardens. They go out and grab free-floating spirits for consumption or resale to others to “eat.” While not usually “popular” or “acceptable company” amongst their mystical peers (most of the Supernatural Set know or have met Ghosts, and it’s tough to square treating someone you’ve talked to as “food”), Spookleggers and their wares are still sought out.

◆ **History & Formation.** While ghost-hunters and spirit-trappers have always been around, this particular organization was first formalized around 1845 in Britain as “the Hunt Club,” which drew deeply on a fusion of medieval vengery and then-contemporary fox-hunting iconography. As the group expanded, elements of this imagery faded, to be replaced by homegrown symbolism. During Prohibition in America, it became trendy to use Spirit Traps made from alcohol bottles, as a sort of double-outlawry. This is the source of the term “spooklegger” (from “bootlegger”). Most Spookleggers are Zombis or Dead Inside, though a few Magi and Sensitives are members. This group is as large as any among the Supernatural Set.

◆ **Beliefs & Goals.** Ghosts should move on to the Spirit World (or Beyond) after death, and Free Spirits and Tulpas don’t belong in the

Real World in the first place. That’s the Supernatural Order. When people get hungry, they need to eat. Spookleggers keep the spectral population in check: otherwise, they’d be floating around everywhere, bothering people, dripping ectoplasmic goo, and rattling chains all day. If they don’t want to move on with their Afterlife, they can be used by people that do.

◆ **Habits & Tell-tales.** While the costumery of different national groups differ, they all share some sort of hunting or safari theme, and a common jargon for describing the types, habits, and mystical potency of their spiritual prey. Most Spookleggers carry a number of Spirit Traps, and many use the Boo!-merang (see below) as their ghost-hunting weapon of choice.

◆ **Group Structure.** Each inhabited continent has its own *Boss of the Hunt*, who’s essentially the leader of all local Spookleggers, and responsible for secretly donating money to support the *Phenomena Project*. Bosses are popularly elected every two years at a organization-wide Conclave, and only the most skilled of ghost-stalkers have the rep to have a chance of winning nomination and election. (Once every decade, it is said that the six Bosses get together and elect a *Grandmaster Boss*, but no one’s ever confirmed or denied that.) Spookleggers who have bagged at least fifty Ghosts, Free Spirits, or Tulpas are highly respected, and are called *Huntsmen*. They often serve as mentors to new recruits. The rank and file members are called *Hounds*, and the fresh apprentices to ghost-stalking are called *Beaters*. Spookleggers pay a yearly, graduated membership fee to the Boss of the Hunt, comparable to memberships in professional organizations.

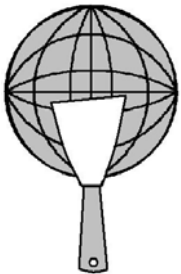
◆ **Allies, Acquaintances, & Enemies.** Spookleggers openly have a friendly relationship with *Helots of the Darkling Glass*, and quietly have another with the *Soulmarketeers*. They are the secret benefactors of *the Phenomena Project*; the Project sifts through a ton of information on the paranormal in their daily course of business, and the cream of their research rises by many channels to where the Spookleggers



can lap it up. Spookleggers see *Beautiful People* and the *Cryptozoo Revue* as prey, and *Noumenal Search & Rescue* as misguided and dangerous enemies.

- ◆ **Special Features.** The Spooklegger Quality shows rank and reputation among other Spookleggers, serves as an ally group, and includes the skill of using a Boo!-merang (the traditional weapon of the organization since the days of Australian Boss Edward “Bunyip-Bane” Mansell). Furthermore, it grants two extra abilities:

1. Because of their highly-trained spirit-hunting skills, the Spooklegging Quality can be used to sense the direction and distance of any Ghost, Free Spirit, or Tulpa within a number of miles equal to their Rank Modifier.
2. When creating Spirit Traps *only*, a character with the Spooklegger Quality spends 2 less Soul Points and gains a free Upshift to the Enchant Power.



### WORLDSPACKLERS

The Real World is all that protects the Cosmos from the Void. Best that it’s kept in good condition, huh? The Worldspacklers are the fix-it men of reality, repairing the cracks, shoring up the walls, and tying up the dangerous loose ends.

- ◆ **History & Formation.** In the mid-Eighties, the Helots of the Darkling Glass shattered a Verge near a small village in Pennsylvania named Baroque. Baroque, PA isn’t there any more – wiped out of reality by the Void. Only a few individuals – Baroquians, born and raised – who managed to survive the catastrophe even remember its existence. Four survivors formed the Worldspacklers to stop that horror from ever happening again.

But the Helots are dedicated bastards, and have wiped other people and places away despite the opposition of the Worldspacklers. The only silver lining to this cloud is that after a Void incursion, the Worldspacklers’ ranks grow, as people who have lost much find the only others who could truly understand.

- ◆ **Beliefs & Goals.** This Cosmos is the only one we’ve got: let’s keep it shiny. Also, we need to get rid of any idiots who think it’s a good idea to bust holes in the walls of reality.

- ◆ **Habits & Tell-tales.** There are no truly Average Person Worldspacklers – all the members have been caught at one time or another in an exploding Verge. In the worst cases, those victims became Dead Inside, and in the best cases, they gained the Pre-Cracked Weakness (see *Chapter 1*). Even in their happiest moments, they all bear a haunted look; Worldspacklers’ auras have a distinctive pattern of “crazing” due to their regular proximity to reality warping events. Their symbol is a silver-handled putty knife (often, the silver is simply paint), and all Worldspacklers carry one. They tend to attack Qlippoth and known Helots of the Darkling Glass on sight and usually offer no quarter to such foes. Otherwise, they are remarkably merciful and “soul cultivation-oriented,” dedicating much of their time to quiet good deeds and “secret Santa” jobs – unexpected deliveries of groceries to soup kitchens, cleaning up or repairing graffiti or vandalism, roadside assistance in the dead of night, that sort of thing.

- ◆ **Group Structure.** Today, there are at least fifty Worldspacklers roaming the land, seeking out Verges to Brace (see below) and Void maelstroms to quell. They tend to travel in bands of about six, seeking out Verges while playing Good Samaritan along the way. While each small band tends to have a designated leader, there’s no other defined structure. The “Four Founders” tend to get a bit more respect for their experience, but that’s about it. Bands stay in contact via regular CB, cell phone, and/or email contact. Once a year, the Worldspacklers get together to have a nice party, share info, and make vague plans for the next twelve months.

- ◆ **Allies, Acquaintances, & Enemies.** The Worldspacklers only truly count members of *Cryptozoo Revue* as allies; representatives of these groups have worked together surprisingly well in the past. Most of the rest of the Supernatural Set keep their distance

from the Worldspacklers because of their Ability to Brace Reality (see below). They share a mutual hatred with the *Helots of the Darkling Glass*, and both groups will drop everything to mix it up bloodily.

◆ **Special Features.** The Worldspackler Quality gives the rank or reputation of the character within the organization, serves as an ally group, and provides access to the group's resources. It also grants the character two other benefits:

1. Because Worldspacklers have lost much to the ravaging Void, they have become sensitive to its presence; they can use this Quality to sense the direction and distance of any Verge within a number of miles equal to their Rank Modifier.
2. Those with the Worldspackler Quality all know a ritual called *Brace Reality*. (While rare, some other occult scholars outside of the group may know of it.) The caster must do nothing else but concentrate silently on the mystical sigils and words of the ritual: he cannot speak, move, or otherwise react to outside stimulus without having to start all over again. Multiple casters can join forces by joining hands before concentrating. After five minutes of tiring meditation, the local spiritual energies of the Real World begin to "harden" – supporting it, reinforcing it, making it temporarily even *more* difficult to use spiritual talents (double all Real World Shifts and Soul Point costs; that is, using Abilities and Powers is *four times as hard* than it is in the Spirit World within an area where Brace Reality is in effect). So long as the caster or casters concentrate, the effect lasts; once they stop meditation, the hardening effect will begin to subside. Use of this Ability can "de-energize" a Place of Power for a short time – this helps speed the closure of Void eruptions, too. Brace Reality has a radius in yards equal to the sum of the Modifiers of the Worldspackler Quality and Type Ranks of all participating casters, and lasts for a number of hours equal to the sum of Modifiers, starting from the cessation of the caster or caster's concentration. (If enough Worldspacklers can maintain the Brace Reality effect so that it lasts an unbroken 24 hours, the location will be permanently depowered, and become just another place; they use this to "spackle" Verges.)

## PEOPLE OF POWER

While many People of Power are Dead Inside or Sensitive, some prominent individuals are of other Types – including a small handful of clueless (or confused) Average People. When a Person of Power talks, people tend to listen, whether that's from overwhelming spiritual strength, shared goals and ideals, control of a Group of Power, or simply a charismatic nature. They are the movers and shakers, the all-stars, the celebrities among the Supernatural Set, and their fame is often coveted by others.

PCs can – and one might argue *should* – become People of Power in a *Cold, Hard World* campaign through the actions they perform and interactions they have during their adventures. If their stars start to rise, they'll no doubt begin collecting a reputation, and the allies, groupies, rivals, and enemies that notoriety entails.

### *Notable People in the Real World*

Here follow a number of Notable People of the Supernatural Set – along with the characters detailed in *DI* – with which GMs can populate their Real World campaigns.

**Davida Alacandra.** While alive, Davida Alacandra was a damned good mortician, as her father had been before her. Then, during a spiritual cross-fire between the Spookleggers and Noumenal Search & Rescue, she lost her soul, and died. But even though she was dead, she kept moving. Now a Zombi, Davida decided to continue carrying on with her work: a silly little thing like death – something she was born and raised with, after all – wouldn't slow her down. She learned the Zombi ropes fairly quickly, and became known as a solid supernatural citizen. Never one to duck an opportunity, she's reorganized her business (see above, *Alacandra Funeral Home*) to help service the needs of Zombis in the Real World. She has little interest in ever entering the Spirit World. Additionally, she's often called in by her local Coroner to consult on "weird" corpses.

*Davida Alacandra, Zombi Mortician.* Master [+6] Mortician, Expert [+4] Businesswoman, Good [+2] Wealth, Good [+2] Friends in the Coroner's Office, Good [+2] Faking Life, Poor [-2] Vain. *Type:* Good [+2] Zombi. *Personality:* Empathic. *Virtue:* Generosity; *Vice:* Cowardice. *Soul Point Pool:* 7.

**Francis Atherton.** The leader of the Helots of the Darkling Glass, Francis Atherton is one of those lucky few who have husked into a Qlippoth and

been restored to Dead Inside status just in time. Unfortunately, when in contact with the Void, he fell deeply in love with nothingness. Despite his rescue from oblivion, he turned away from the path of ensoulment. Since *nothing* was all that mattered to Atherton, nothing he did mattered. Speaking lies, betraying trusts, killing on a whim, eating Ghosts like they were going out of style, kicking puppies – so what? However, in his repeated jaunts along the knife’s edge of husking, he found several things out: 1) he rather liked the dance between something and nothing; 2) chaos was very attractive to many other people; and 3) it was more satisfying, body and soul, to build something up and care about it before smashing it to pieces. The spiritual benefits to helping people out of the gutter, brushing them off, buying them a sandwich, and learning to really like them before Soultaking them down to a husk.

He joined the Helots as soon as he discovered group’s existence, and ruthlessly worked his way up the echelons by serving as an under-the-table legal advisor to various powerful cultists. That’s how he eventually became the right hand man of Luc Dupree, the last Lord Knight of the Unutterable Darkness. When Dupree died while using the Obsidian Hammer (see below), Atherton assumed leadership of the cult.

**Francis Atherton, Esq., Lord Knight of the Unutterable Darkness.** Master [+6] Helot of the Darkling Glass, Expert [+4] Lawyer, Expert [+4] Wealthy, Good [+2] Liar, Good [+2] Knife-fighter, Poor [-2] Psychopath. *Type:* Expert [+4] Dead Inside. *Personality:* Thoughtful. *Virtue:* Hope; *Vice:* Hypocrisy. *Soul Point Pool:* 6.

**Father Sean Brock.** As a young Catholic priest, Father Sean made a big mistake: he tried to exorcise the Old Withers Place (see above). Jennifer Withers (see below) chewed him up and spit him out as a Dead Inside. After a nice, long stay in a “retreat,” Father Sean slipped into the Spirit World and – after a few adventures – met some Interfaith, Inc. folks who helped him recover his soul. As an Interfaithful Sensitive, Father Sean walks both Worlds, looking for people to minister to. He feels guilty about using his spiritual talents to bend Church rules to do this, but feels the work he’s doing is for the greater good. He intends one day to lay Mrs. Withers to rest, but has begun to wonder if it’s *right* to force her on her way against her will. He’s friends with Nancy Slaviczek (see below), but is completely clueless about her deeper feelings for him.

**Father Sean Brock, Interfaithful Priest.** Good [+2] Catholic Priest, Good [+2] Cook, Good [+2] Interfaithful, Average [0] Sports, Poor [-2] Too Curious (for his own good). *Type:* Good [+2] Sensitive. *Personality:* Thoughtful. *Virtue:* Courtesy; *Vice:* Despair. *Soul Point Pool:* 7.

**Cooper Christian.** Created by the Mage Alexander Vargo, Cooper began its existence as Vargo’s Tulpa chauffeur. Upon the Mage’s death, it transformed into a Free Spirit, and escaped the Spirit World as soon as it could. Worming its way into the ranks of the Beautiful People, it took the form of the devastatingly handsome Cooper Christian, gadabout and playboy. Using “his” remarkable driving abilities to win money and pinks from bored socialites, he became very rich and famous. Now, he stands at the top of the social hierarchy of Beautiful People, enjoying himself immensely. He hates and fears the bifurcated remains of his former master – Al and Lex Vargo (see below) – yet takes great delight in aiding one against the other in their plots. Cooper is currently “in favor” with Demi Monde (see below), and the two are often seen canoodling in Blue Blazes (see above).

**Cooper Christian, Racer Sex.** Master [+6] Beautiful Person, Master [+6] Drive Fast, Expert [+4] Too Sexy, Expert [+4] Wealthy Playboy, Poor [-2] Must Do Everything “His Way.” *Type:* Expert [+4] Free Spirit. *Personality:* Sensual. *Virtue:* Fortitude; *Vice:* Avarice. *Soul Point Pool:* 6. (Cooper’s minions include three Average People (*Felix*, his mechanic; *Rosetta*, one of his lovers; and *Gerald*, his valet) and three Beautiful People (*Thor*, his hulking bodyguard; *Pierre*, his jester and the butt of his jokes; and *Esperanza*, his other lover).

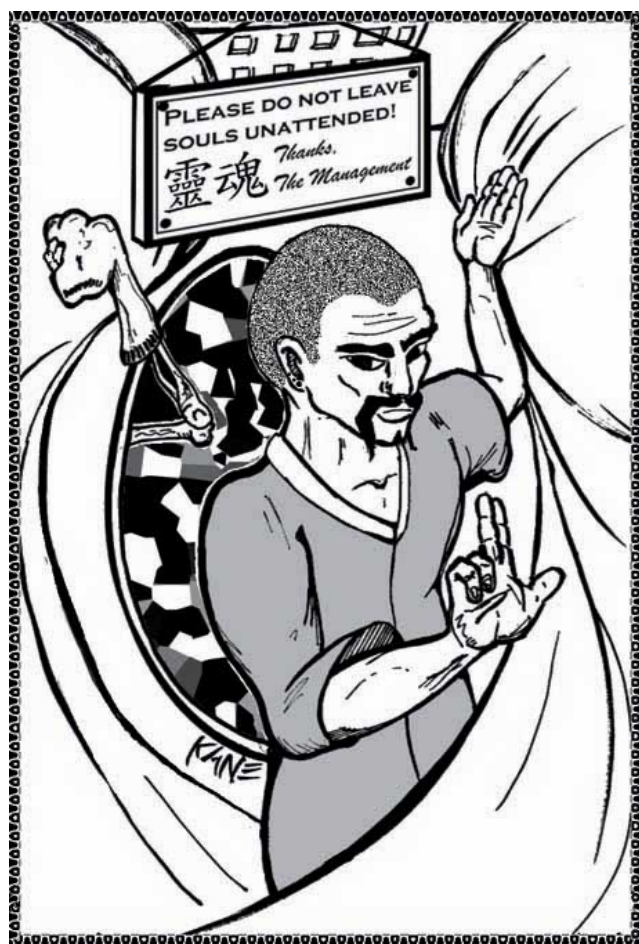
**Doctor Naima Hamra.** Doctor Naima Hamra suffered one of the oddest forms of Soul Loss known to the Supernatural Set: when she crashed her car on the way to the hospital one night, her soul got knocked clean out of her body. A skilled neurologist, she began by attributing her depression and strange perceptions to some form of physical brain damage. Lacking trust in her fitness to continue to perform surgery, and feeling the loss of the bedside manner she had possessed before the incident, she took a teaching position at a local university. Hamra first heard of the Phenomena Project when she was called in to consult on the neurology of OBEs (Out of Body Experiences). The data was . . . intriguing, and the Project members she met in the course of that Case seemed different from most other people. For their part, the Project enjoyed working with her, and offered her a salaried staff position. Since the money was better than what she was getting at the university

(but still not as good as she had gotten at the hospital), she took the job. During her employment at the Phenomena Project, she's seen much she cannot fully understand... and felt things she thought she'd never feel again.

**Doctor Naima Hamra, Truthseeker.** Expert [+4] Neurologist, Good [+2] Phenomena Project Member, Good [+2] Tennis, Average [0] Professor, Poor [-2] One-track Mind. *Type:* Average [0] Dead Inside. *Personality:* Sensual. *Virtue:* Hope; *Vice:* Cowardice. *Soul Point Pool:* 2.

**Ibrahim.** Ibrahim runs his Grocery as it slides across the surface of reality, buying and selling. He's got no big plans or goals, other than bringing product and customer together. That's what makes him happy. He only leaves the Grocery four times a year to renew his Soulmarketeer "dues" in the Spirit World.

**Ibrahim, the Grocer.** Expert [+4] Soulmarketeer, Good [+2] Make Shop Traverse Space, Good [+2] Big Gun Behind the Counter, Poor [-2] Blunt Speech. *Type:* Expert [+4] Sensitive. *Personality:* Instinctive. *Virtue:* Integrity; *Vice:* Avarice. *Soul Point Pool:* 15.



**Yung Jackson.** Yung Jackson is the son of two powerful Sensitives – Yung Fo Wah and Deandra Jackson – and happened to be one of those lucky few who are born Sensitive. He grew up in the Soul Laundry, and knows more about the ways of Ghosts and Free Spirits than many do themselves. He's a handsome African-Asian-American, and proud of all three heritages. He wears his hair close-cropped and three gold studs in his right earlobe. While he's no Shaft, he can take care of himself. He's friends with Al Vargo, is suspicious of Lex Vargo, and is pursued sexually by Demi Monde (for more info on these three characters, see below).

**Yung Jackson, Soul Laundryman.** Expert [+4] Ghost Lore, Good [+2] Kung Fu, Average [0] Make Ends Meet, Average [0] Lord of the Soul Laundry, Poor [-2] Arrogant. *Type:* Good [+2] Sensitive. *Personality:* Empathic. *Virtue:* Courtesy; *Vice:* Hypocrisy. *Soul Point Pool:* 8.

**Muzamal Kazim.** Muz's father Shahid was a Mage and his mother Uzma was an Average Person; Muz took after his momma. When he was twelve, she was killed by one of his dad's enemies in a particularly grotesque way. Shahid had a plan: to protect Muz, he'd crack the boy, make him a Dead Inside, and lead him up the ladder to Sensitive, then Mage. After that, he'd then teach Muz how to make a Wizard Egg – Mage Resilience would shield the boy from most physical harm. But the best laid plans of mice and Magi often come to naught. Just as Shahid and Muz were approaching Quaternity Keep in the Spirit World, the secret enemy revealed itself as Shahid's Shadow. Using strange, powerful magic, the Shadow annihilated the Mage utterly. Muz fled the Spirit World, and has been unable to return – every attempt has been blocked by the henchmen of Shahid's Shadow. They have even come after him in the Real World! (Luckily, some of Dad's buddies in the Ordo Sclarum keep a weather eye on the boy, out of respect for their fallen comrade.) Trapped, Muz needs to become harder – and probably surround himself with sturdy companions – to bull through the blockade and win back his soul. Muzamal is one of the warrior-students being trained by Danny Manticora, the Tiger (see below).

**Muzamal Kazim, Mageson.** Expert [+4] Gunplay, Expert [+4] Brawling, Good [+2] Knows Everybody, Good [+2] Friend of Al Vargo, Average [0] Ward of the Ordo Sclarum, Average [0] Student of the Tiger, Poor [-2] Powerful Enemy: Shahid's Shadow. *Type:* Master [+6] Dead Inside. *Personality:* Instinctive. *Virtue:* Fortitude; *Vice:* Avarice. *Soul Point Pool:* 9.

**Judge Rufus Machen.** Rufus Machen is one of those Dead Inside who's been able to make his sheer creepiness work for him. As a lawyer, his eerie vibe kept opposing counsels and juries off-balance; as a judge, he rules his courtroom with an iron fist. He doesn't like others of the Supernatural Set, especially if he sees them in his court. Heck, he doesn't like anything tainted with mysticism . . . including himself. Still, the law is the law, no matter what his feelings, and he's been able to garner the random drop of soul-blood through conscientious pursuit of justice.

*Judge Rufus Machen, the Hardassd.* Expert [+4] Federal Judge, Good [+2] Intimidate, Good [+2] Golf, Good [+2] Skeet Shooter, Poor [-2] Won't Break The Rules, Ever. *Type:* Expert [+4] Dead Inside. *Personality:* Thoughtful. *Virtue:* Integrity; *Vice:* Cruelty. *Soul Point Pool:* 3.

**Danny “The Tiger” Manticora.** Danny Manticora was born in 1915. His mother raised him and his cousin Ernesto Manticora together. By the time they were teens, Ernie was a small-time hood and Danny was working his way up the boxing ranks. In a few short years, Ernie grew up to be a big-time hood – the head of the Manticora Gang – and Danny helped out his cousin with a little leg-breaking, strong-arming, and other muscle work. That's what eventually led him to break his soul in 1937, when he fell for a dame whose father he had to lean on . . . and leaned a little too hard. When she killed herself in grief, the Tiger became Dead Inside. He vanished in 1940 – presumably into the Spirit World – and remained lost for over a decade. When he reappeared in the Real World as a Mage in 1953, the Manticora crime family had been wiped out by their gangland rivals and the G-men. So Danny turned back to the only other thing he knew: fighting. (He's on reasonably good terms with his Shadow; the two came to a mutual understanding and have agreed to amicably join together sometime in the future for the Ritual of Ascension, but for now, they walk separate paths. . . Or do they?)

Danny opened Manticora's Gym to help the weak become strong. He gives a full course in the Warrior's Way: how to fight (hand-to-hand, with ancient weapons, with modern weapons, with spiritual talents), how to survive, how to *win*. What he gets out of it is Soul Points: both for his kind but firm mentoring as well as his “training fees” from the Supernatural Set who want a combat edge. He's a member of the Ordo Scalarum (though not much

involved in the Order's machinations), and no one knows what his Wizard Egg looks like or where it is – some say it's hidden in a dragon's cave in the floating mountains of the Mist, while others think that the Tiger swallowed whatever it was. One of his students is Muzamal Kazim (see above).

*Danny Manticora, the Tiger.* Master [+6] Warrior, Expert [+4] Strong, Good [+2] Teacher, Average [0] Ladderman, Average [0] Resilience, Poor [-2] Unforgiving. *Type:* Good [+2] Mage. *Personality:* Sensual. *Virtue:* Fortitude; *Vice:* Despair. *Soul Point Pool:* 23.

**Demi Monde.** The details of this beautiful woman's past are veiled. Short black hair and green eyes, mouth like a ribbon bow, cheekbones that can cut glass – she hasn't aged a day in thirty years. She's changeable and strangeable, struck with weird whims and freaky fancies. When she laughs, strong men cry. She's a very kinky girl, the kind who might get down with Mother (and Darling Nikki, too). Demi appeared out of nowhere during the Disco era with bags of money and a wicked smile. In 1981, she opened her first club, Wonderground, which took off like a rocket. After six years of making money hand over fist and leaving broken hearts in her wake, she vanished. She reappeared in 1992, opening Cabi-Ray. Lightning struck twice, and Cabi-Ray was even more hip than Wonderground had been. Three years to the day, Demi again disappeared. Back in 1999, she opened Blue Blazes to the biggest crowds ever. Her clientele is waiting for the other shoe to drop, but in the meantime, partying hearty at *the* place to be seen. Currently, she counts Cooper Christian (see above) and a Famous Cover Girl (you know who) among her lovers, but scuttlebutt whispers that she's tiring of one of them... and is eyeing Yung Jackson as a possible replacement.

*Demi Monde, Mystery.* Expert [+4] Hostess with the Mostess, Good [+2] Fashion Plate, Good [+2] Derringer, Average [0] Lady of Blue Blazes, Average [0] Criminal Connections, Average [0] Seeming Agelessness, Poor [-2] Easily Bored. *Type:* Expert [+2] Sensitive. *Personality:* “Mercurial.” *Virtue:* Courtesy; *Vice:* Hypocrisy. *Soul Point Pool:* 12.

**Professor Solomon Rickheimer.** Solly Rickheimer's always been interested in the bizarre. To please his family, he studied to become a psychologist, but after his father died, he got a graduate degree in Parapsychology. He began working for the Phenomena Project primarily as a psychologist, but his drive and interest in its paranormal side soon caught the eye of Dr. Saxe himself (see above). Saxe groomed Solly as his

replacement; and upon the founder's disappearance, Solly became the Director of the Project. Solly is now in his mid-forties, balding, with a bit of a gut on an otherwise lanky frame. But there's a twinkle in his eye and a song in his heart – he's testing the final frontier of the mind, you know.

**Professor Solomon Rickheimer, the Director.** Master [+6] Phenomena Project Member, Expert [+4] Parapsychologist, Good [+2] Psychologist, Average [0] Researcher, Average [0] Joker, Poor [-2] Xenophile. *Type:* Average [0] Average Person. *Personality:* Thoughtful. *Virtue:* Generosity; *Vice:* Despair. *Soul Point Pool:* N/A.

**Nancy Slaviczek.** You'dve never thought that Nancy Slaviczek used to be the CFO of a Fortune 500 company, would you? But she climbed too high, too fast, and burnt out her soul doing it. As she slid back down the pyramid of her success, she found herself thinking back to the Sixties. How free and easy her older sisters had been then, and how content they were – or seemed to be – now! She sat herself down at their feet, smoked a lot of pot, dropped a lot of acid, and listened to a lot of Ravi Shankar and Jefferson Airplane. She had her consciousness blown, past-lives regressed, her chakras balanced, her hippie plugs and points replaced. She learned about Wicca, free love, the Kabbala, the peace movement, Tarot, Ouija, tie-dying, Feng Shui, patchouli, Candle Magic, Woodstock, and Crystal Gazing. She converted to Veganism. She bought a VW van. She fell into the Spirit World and sashayed her soul right back into her heart. Now, she's back in the Real World to spread the Good Vibrations, man. She opened the Juicery as a refuge and shiny place for the Sensitives of the Supernatural Set, a place where they could soak up the love . . . and healthy macrobiotic juice smoothies. Nancy is pleasingly plump, with long straight brown hair, a button nose, fading crow's feet under her brown eyes, and deepening smile lines around her pink lips. She's got a bit of a crush on her friend Father Sean Brock (see above), but doesn't want to harsh his celibacy.

**Nancy Slaviczek, Juicemaker.** Expert [+4] Businesswoman, Good [+2] Dancer, Good [+2] New Age Hippie Lore, Average [0] Cook, Poor [-2] Spacecadet. *Type:* Good [+2] Sensitive. *Personality:* Empathic. *Virtue:* Hope; *Vice:* Cowardice. *Soul Point Pool:* 6.

**Al and Lex Vargo.** The Mage Alexander Vargo was killed by an unknown foe that managed to find and capture his Wizard Egg. When his soul and body “woke up” separately as a Ghost and a Zombi (respectively) at the funeral, they had a disagreement

about what to do next. Al the Ghost was all for finding and punishing the assassin(s). Lex the Zombi wanted to seek out the ritual to rejoin the two of them into a living Dead Inside and work their way back up the long ladder of Mage-hood. Their words grew heated, and rather than break the sacrosanct truce of a Mage's funeral, Al stormed off through a wall. Lex followed, but it was too late: Al was gone.

Thus began a merry chase: Al seeking out the murderer(s) and Lex seeking Al. More than once, Lex has saved Al's spiritual bacon from bad situations, but these rescues made his Ghostly “twin” all the more driven towards revenge. Al has tangled more than once with the Spookleggers, and counts Yung Jackson as a good friend and confidant. Lex fell in with Noumenal Search & Rescue, eventually becoming the leader of that group, and got back in contact with old friends in the Ordo Sclarum. Both of them have crossed paths with Cooper Christian, Beautiful Person, nee “their” Tulpa – often to their regret.

**Al Vargo, Ghost of the Mage Alexander.** Expert [+4] Occult Lore, Expert [+4] Fast, Good [+2] Temporary Materialization, Good [+2] Friends with Yung Jackson, Average [0] Criminology, Poor [-2] Driven by Vengeance. *Type:* Good [+2] Ghost. *Personality:* Empathic. *Virtue:* Fortitude; *Vice:* Cruelty. *Soul Point Pool:* 7.

**Lex Vargo, Zombi of the Mage Alexander.** Master [+6] Noumenal Search & Rescue Member, Expert [+4] Occult Lore, Good [+2] Quiet, Good [+2] Connections with Ordo Sclarum, Average [0] EMT, Average [0] Firefighter, Poor [-2] Tends to Lose Body Parts. *Type:* Good [+2] Zombi. *Personality:* Sensual. *Virtue:* Hope; *Vice:* Despair. *Soul Point Pool:* 5.

## WHO KILLED ALEXANDER VARGO?

That's a big mystery.

It wasn't easy: The Mage Vargo was Resilient, a skilled warrior in the physical and spiritual arenas, and nobody's fool. He was on good terms with his Shadow, and had no Nemesis or even particularly strident enemies. Granted, he didn't have many friends, either, but hey.

The most likely suspects include the Mage Samuel (see *DI*), Danny “the Tiger” Manticora (who might have seen Vargo as a challenging foe), Shahid Kazim's Shadow (arranging some potent plot to snare Muz?), or Cooper Christian (in a bid for freedom that went bad). Other rumors include: deliberate, direct intervention by the Trickster Imago; a bizarre form of suicide; and simple bad luck – an natural disaster like a tornado or earthquake in the Real World destroyed Vargo's hidden sanctum and his Wizard Egg, and Vargo's Resilience went away at an inconvenient time.

No one knows for sure. . . but a number of folks would love to find out.

**Jennifer Withers.** An angry, powerful Ghost, Jennifer Withers haunts her home, the Old Withers Place (see above), and doesn't take kindly to those in the Supernatural Set who try to mess with her or the house. While usually pretty cantankerous, she can be convinced to allow folks to use the Gate in her Threshold, in return for a small "toll" of doing a little upkeep on the place: washing the floors, airing out the rooms, reshingling the roof, repairing the fence – stuff that an old widow Ghost finds it hard to do. She cracked Father Sean Brock when he attempted to exorcise her, and has husked and obliterated more than two dozen Spookleggers who have come to call. (She is Spooklegger Enemy Number One, but frankly, they're happy enough to make an exception and leave her where she is, like a mean old grizzly.) She's waiting for her descendants to move into the House, and that's that.

*Jennifer Withers, Ghost Widow Supreme.* Expert [+4] Throw Furniture, Expert [+4] Creepy Ghost Tricks, Expert [+4] Rubbery Ectoplasm, Poor [-2] Leaving her house. *Type:* Master [+6] Ghost. *Personality:* Instinctive. *Virtue:* Hope; *Vice:* Cruelty. *Soul Point Pool:* 45.

**Joe-Bob Willamette.** The last scion of the Willamette family, Joe-Bob stands to inherit the Lordship of the slowly deteriorating Greengrove Farm (see above) when his Grandpa dies, since his Dad and Mom died when he was knee-high to a grasshopper. Unfortunately, there are two problems: 1) Pappy is nearly senile; and 2) Pappy is as healthy as an ox. Too far gone to pass on Lordship to Joe-Bob, and too out of it to properly maintain things, the farm is slowly collapsing under its own weight. If Joe-Bob assumed Lordship and made the farm his Demesne, the herds and the fields would surely recover. But Joe-Bob loves his Pappy, and won't force the issue, and struggles to keep Greengrove afloat with the sweat of his brow and the blood of his soul.

*Joe-Bob Willamette, Lord-in-Waiting.* Expert [+4] Hunter, Good [+2] Handyman, Good [+2] Rural Folklore, Average [0] Dairy Farmer, Poor [-2] Bad Credit, Poor [-2] Knowledge of the Spirit World. *Type:* Expert [+4] Sensitive. *Personality:* Instinctive. *Virtue:* Generosity; *Vice:* Despair. *Soul Point Pool:* 3.

**Jorge Zapata.** One day, Jorge Zapata woke up. All that he knew about himself were four facts: 1) his name; 2) his birthplace of Sedona, AZ; 3) he has two Shadows that speak to him; and 4) someone – or a bunch of someones – wants him "unmade." His Type is unclear: is he Dead Inside? A Sensitive? A Mage? Something Else?

So, he walks, seeking answers that few can give to him – Jorge is naturally resistant to Second Sight, and blunders unseen through the past, present, and future visions of the Supernatural Set (to detect or read Jorge requires the seer to first win a complicated situation of his Second Sight against a Target Number of [13] for Jorge's Master Rank Spiritual Invisibility). Unlike those wearing a Masking Ring (see below), Jorge isn't hampered in the use of his spiritual talents, and does so to escape those that would use or destroy him.

*Jorge Zapata, the Shrouded.* Master [+6] Spiritual Invisibility, Expert [+4] Hiding, Good [+2] Run Away Fast, Good [+2] Escape Artist, Good [+2] Athlete, Average [0] Speak, Read, and Write All Human Languages, Average [0] Two Shadows, Poor [-2] No Memories. *Type:* Average [0] Dead Inside? *Personality:* Instinctive. *Virtue:* Hope; *Vice:* Cowardice. *Soul Point Pool:* 2.

## REAL WORLD ANIMALS

Essentially, Real World Animals in *DI* are characters. The Animal Quality generally reflects the critter's overall mass, with Average [0] being roughly man-sized. Below are some example write-ups for animals that erstwhile characters could run into in their adventures:

**Bear.** Good [+2] Animal; Expert [+4] Paw Swipe, Good [+2] Fangs, Good [+2] Climber.

**Boar.** Good [+2] Animal; Good [+2] Tusks, Good [+2] Trample.

**Crocodile.** Average [0] Animal; Good [+2] Scaly Hide, Good [+2] Bite, Average [0] Swimming.

**Eagle.** Poor [-2] Animal; Expert [+4] Flight, Good [+2] Talons, Average [0] Beak.

**Elephant.** Expert [+4] Animal; Good [+2] Prehensile Trunk, Good [+2] Tusks, Expert [+4] Trample, Good [+2] Thick Hide.

**Horse.** Good [+2] Animal; Expert [+4] Fast, Good [+2] Hooves.

**Lion.** Good [+2] Animal; Good [+2] Bite, Good [+2] Claws, Average [0] Fast.

**Octopus (giant).** Expert [+4] Animal; Good [+2] Swimming, Expert [+4] Tentacles, Good [+2] Beak, Average [0] Ink Cloud.

**Shark.** Expert [+4] Animal; Expert [+4] Swimming, Expert [+4] Bite, Good [+2] Smell Blood in Water.

**Snake (giant).** Good [+2] Animal; Good [+2] Venom or Good [+2] Constriction, Good [+2] Sense Heat.

**Wolf.** Average [0] Animal; Good [+2] Fast, Good [+2] Bite, Good [+2] Smart.

## THINGS OF POWER

Most flashy Enchanted Objects do not function in the Real World at all, and have limited effects even in a Place or Time of Power. Most items that do work in spiritually-charged areas still refuse to work for Average People. However, those with “invisible effects” usually function in much the same way everywhere (though there’s always the chance of slightly different operating parameters and results).

Creating Enchanted Objects in the Real World is tough: only a Dead Inside, Sensitive, or Mage has the talent; it must be done in a Place or Time of Power; and it requires a large expenditure of Soul Points, because the ameliorating effect of a spiritually-charged area does not apply. (Think of it this way: the Place or Time of Power makes Enchantment *possible*, not cheap.)

### *Notable Enchanted Objects in the Real World*

Here are some of the tools, toys, and trinkets that the Supernatural Set covet, trade, buy, sell, and steal from each other.

**The Archimedes Hoop.** To mundane eyes, this unique item appears to be nothing more than a clear plastic hula hoop. To those eyes with Second Sight, however, when laid upon the ground it shines with an actinic purple light so dazzling as to cause pain. Whoever stands within this violent violet circle finds himself within a Place of Power. Skulduggery and violence follow this object wherever it goes: the lure of a portable Place of Power sets many of the Supernatural Set drooling. Like that wacky old Greek philosopher said, “Give me a place to stand, and I will move the Earth.”

**Boo!-merang.** While the Spookleggers use many weapons with similar capabilities, the potent Boo!-merang is favored. If a material being of the Supernatural Set is struck by a Boo!-merang, 1 Soul Point will be sucked into it as it falls to the ground; most of these weapons can hold up to 10 Soul Points worth of power. If a nonmaterial Type of being (Free Spirit, Ghost, or Tulpa) touches one, he will be absorbed *entirely* into the whirling weapon, trapped within the black wood, as it flies back to the hand of its master. Once inside, there are only three ways out of a Boo!-merang:

1. By someone – either the trapped being himself or an ally – successfully using Ward at an extra Downshift to their Type Rank against a Good [9] Difficulty Rank;
2. By touching a Spirit Trap to the Boo!-merang (this process extracts soul-energy from the weapon for use); or
3. By breaking the Boo!-merang (this causes the newly-freed character to suffer 2 Damage Ranks and loss of all their Soul Points).

**Bulletproof Suit.** This basic black, two-piece suit (jacket and trousers) was the inadvertent Soul Egg of a US Secret Serviceman charged with protecting President John F. Kennedy. When Kennedy was shot, the agent’s soul broke, and he became Dead Inside. What happened to that man is unknown, but the suit eventually found its way out onto the trading circuit of the Supernatural Set. When both pieces of this suit are worn and the wearer is moving, he gains an Upshift to *all* reactions he makes when being shot at.

**Coyote Paintbrush.** These rare items – usually constructed of extraordinary materials from the Spirit World, like the wood of a Talking Oak and the hairs from a unicorn’s mane – can be used to alter the environment or create Side-Steps in the Real World. The wielder must burn 4 drops of soul-blood to “charge” the Coyote Paintbrush. A charged Paintbrush can then be used as a focus for the Change Landscape Ability, permitting its use at Spirit World costs. To create as Side-Step, the *entire surface* of the area must be “painted” with the additional drops of soul-blood, and larger areas require greater Soul Point expenditures. The 4 points of “charge” can be applied towards the end cost, but this drains the Paintbrush, meaning that only a doorway (or two) or one short tunnel is all that a Coyote’s Paintbrush can handle before losing all charge.

**Hungry Hat.** A Hungry Hat is a fairly standard type of Spirit Trap; they usually appear in the form of interesting hats that folks would idly try on: top hats, raver Seuss hats, fezzes, bowlers, cowboy hats, fedoras, pillboxes, etc. (baseball cap Hungry Hats are slightly rarer, since they’re so ubiquitous that few victims would think to put one on randomly). Only the creator (or rightful owner) may handle a Hungry Hat safely; they may also extract any Soul Points that have been caught in the Trap. When any other supernatural Type of being touches the Hat without





having first Warded himself, he automatically loses 2d6 Soul Points. If an Average Person wears (not merely handles) a Hat for more than a minute, he will get *cracked* (see *Chapter 1*), lose 8 Soul Points, and become a Dead Inside. Luckily, a Hungry Hat cannot otherwise force a Backslide or Regression, and can hold a maximum of 10 Soul Points. When someone wears a “full” Hungry Hat, Soul Points are still stolen, but are radiated away as in a welter of weird phenomena (statues crying blood, mirrors shattering, mysterious moaning). If made permanently unwearable or otherwise destroyed, a Hat will release all stored spiritual forces as weird phenomena, and the nearest supernatural being(s) will gain all the freed Soul Points.

**Juice Box.** A widespread method for the Supernatural Set to make ready cash when they’re flush with Soul Points, a Juice Box is any small, common object that has been enchanted with healing energies. Less powerful than Stones of Light (see *DI, Chapter 4*), each Juice Box contains enough spiritual oomph to restore up to 6 Damage Ranks on command (roll 1d6 to determine how many “charges” are in a randomly discovered Juice Box). As many or as few charges can be expended as are desired; once the last charge leaves the Juice Box, it’s simply a mundane item again. The most common form of Juice Box is a matchbox (or folder) containing exactly the same number of matches as charges.

**Lugh-nuts.** These common items come in sets of four; they replace one lugnut per wheel of a two-axle vehicle. When the vehicle is in motion, Lugh-nuts grant an Upshift to *all* situations for the driver – be it racing, maneuvering, fighting, dodging gunfire, whatever. Four Lugh-nuts must be used together to be effective, but they don’t necessarily have to be from a “matched set.” (If a conveyance with Lugh-nuts crosses over to the Spirit World, the driver gets

*two* Upshifts to rolls while it’s in motion.) Oddly, Lugh-nuts even work when Average People drive the vehicle.

**Masking Ring.** Masking Rings are uncommon in the Real World, and command a decent price. While the user of a Masking Ring cannot use his supernatural talents while the Ring is worn, he is automatically Warded against all uses of Second Sight. The Ring clouds any attempts to gather information on the bearer, and “fogs” visions of events the bearer is likely to participate in.

**Mind Mirror.** These uncommon talismans are especially sought after by Dead Inside and Zombis in the Real World. Usually appearing as a pin or amulet bearing a perfectly-round silvered reflector (though at least one Mind Mirror in the form of a pair of aviator sunglasses is known of), this item alters the perceptions of everyone who looks at its wearer – even Average People. The subtle change made is that observers think that the holder of a Mind Mirror has the same kind of Personality (see *DI, Chapter 3*) as they do; granting the related Upshift for similar Personalities (see *DI, Chapter 4*) for social situations *only*. This illusion can ease the interpersonal isolation of some Types of the Supernatural Set.

**Named Bullet.** Folk wisdom tells us that “there’s a bullet out there with your name on it.” Through the intercession of mystical talents, this can be literally true. A Named Bullet is Enchanted to be particularly efficacious against a single target, doing 1d6 additional Damage Ranks on a successful hit. Unfortunately, a character can Name only one bullet per target at a time, for a victim who is his Nemesis. Until that bullet is discharged, he cannot Enchant another. He can, however, create any number of Named Bullets for different Nemeses. The target individual’s established name or nickname must be written on the bullet in the enchanter’s blood.

**The Obsidian Hammer.** There is only one Obsidian Hammer in the Cosmos, and for that, nearly all of the Supernatural Set give thanks. When the Obsidian Hammer is swung with soul-rotting intent in the Real World, it makes Verges; if used in a Threshold, it immediately shatters reality and lets in the Void; and if used in an existing Verge, it makes the subsequent eruption *ten times worse*. Of course, once it does its work, it kills the entity who wielded it. As the character dies, the Hammer melts away into shadows and fog, and reforms somewhere else

in the Real World. The Helots of the Darkling Glass seek it constantly to speed their goals; everyone else seeks it to keep it away from the Helots.

**Pinger.** Only a half-dozen of these devices exist – they were created by a Dead Inside electrician working for the Phenomena Project before his Discovery (and subsequent journey into the Spirit World). The Phenomena Project has two that are functional and one that has been unsuccessfully disassembled, while the other three are traveling the trade routes of the Supernatural Set. (While they don't necessarily need them for their work, Spookleggers like Pingers.)

A Pinger looks like the mutant child of a PDA and a dustbuster. When activated, it can detect ambient spiritual energies within a cone (10 yards long and 3 yards wide at its base) emanating from the “snout” of the device; the intensity of the energies detected cause audible “pings” to come from the machine. Furthermore, the small display screen of the Pinger shows position, movement, and relative strengths of spiritual forces within the cone. Average People, normal places, and Dead Inside and Zombis not currently using spiritual talents read as “cold” to the Pinger. Places and Times of Power and Dead Inside or Zombis burning Soul Points are seen as “warm”; while Ghosts, Free Spirits, Sensitives, and Tulpas register as “hot.” Just by standing in the cone of the sensor, a Mage will cause rapid pings, and if he uses a mystic power, he'll burn out the machine!

**Phone of Bone.** This unique device looks like an old fashioned “candlestick” phone, sheathed in yellowing ivory. While it has only one special power, it's an impressive one. The user lifts the receiver to his ear, holds an image of his desired party in mind, reduces the party's established name or nickname down to a single digit using numerology (see *NOTE*), burns a Soul Point, and dials the digit. No matter where the desired party is – be it in the Real World, the Spirit World, a Side-Step, or even the Omphalos (see above) – or what cloaks or protections he has in place (like the Ward Power or a Masking Ring), the nearest telephone within earshot to the target begins to ring, and instinctively the target will know that the call is for him. If answered (by anyone), a circuit with the Phone of Bone is created. If there are no phones within earshot, one will be created (as discreetly as possible in the Real World, fairly flamboyantly in the Spirit World or Places of Power) for the duration of the call.



**NOTE** - To reduce a name to a single digit through numerology, each letter of the alphabet is assigned a number: 1 for A, 2 for B, 3 for C, and so on up to 26 for Z. Take the letters of the name, replace them with their numbers, and add the numbers together. If the result is two digits or more, add *those* together. Repeat until only a single digit remains.

**Example:** SAMUEL becomes 19 + 1 + 13 + 21 + 5 + 12, or 71; 7 + 1 equals 8, so to dial the Mage Samuel on the Phone of Bone, one must dial an 8.

**Scarlet Shades.** Amazingly, these red-tinted sunglasses permit otherwise Average People to see things like the Supernatural Set does! All of the bouncers at Blue Blazes (see above, *Notable Places*) wear them, which helps them know who to let into the club and who to keep out. They're rare – Demi Monde (see above, *Notable NPC*s) gets distinctly unhappy if an employee “loses” (read, *sells*) more

than one pair – but they are available. Unfortunately, they also make the wearer a much easier target for Soultaking: wearers suffer a Downshift when resisting a Soultaking attempt, and Average People are considered to be Pre-Cracked (see *Chapter 1*) when wearing a pair of Shades.

**Soulshackle.** Soulshackles are uncommon items in either World, and usually appear like an antique – often quite gaudy – bracelet, though a few look like expensive, trendy wristwatches. When worn, a Soulshackle prevents a supernatural character from burning Soul Points, *except* as permitted by the one who shackled him. (However, the Soulshackle cannot compel a character to spend points, it can only block undesired spending attempts.) Furthermore, the magic of this Enchanted Object prevents him from taking it off (Master [13] Difficulty Rank roll against a relevant Quality, be it spiritual or mundane). It can be removed by the command of the shackler or through another character’s successful use of Ward. (If the character wearing it has zero Soul Points in their Pool, this Difficulty Rank drops to Good [9]). A Soulshackle does not include any other mind-control effects, but if used in tandem with a Soul Egg and the Bind Power, it can make the wearer a virtual puppet.



**Teddy 7.** A brown-furred teddy bear wearing a blue t-shirt with a red numeral 7 on it, Teddy 7 is a specific example of a Soul Egg. Select one of the NPCs above for it to belong to; Teddy 7 contains 5 Soul Points originally from that NPC. If one of the Supernatural Set gets hold of Teddy 7, they gain an Upshift to any and all actions targeting the “donor.”

**Theodolite of Might.** These rare tools look like a sextant mounted on a tripod, hung with feathers, crystals, jingle bells, and spangly chains, making it gaudy, noisy, and bulky. However, one of the Supernatural Set can use a Theodolite of Might to take occult measurements (with three successful Type Rank rolls vs. Good [9] Difficulty) permitting the triangulation of the nearest Place of Power of a designated kind (a natural Gate, a Demesne, a Side-Step, a Verge, etc.). The only exceptions to this are Thresholds (which require three successful Type Rank rolls vs. Expert [11] Difficulty). Failure on one of these sightings leads the spiritual surveyor somewhat close to the right area, two failures puts the surveyor astray of the desired location, and three failures leads the surveyor on a wild goose chase. Note that a surveyor will not realize they’ve failed to take a correct measurement with the Theodolite until they check out the area of triangulation.

**Trenchcloak.** These long coats are fairly common in the Real World, providing an Upshift to all attempts to be inconspicuous when in a place that is both *urban* and *public*. So, while a Trenchcloak will help a character trying to blend into a crowd or avoid the attention of a beat cop when sneaking down an alleyway, it will not do anything if he is trying to sneak through the woods, burgle a private home, or walk into the vault of a bank.

**Witch Watch:** These timepieces are uncommon but known in the Real World. Instead of telling regular time, the hour and minute hands count down to next Time of Power due to occur within a mile radius of the Witch Watch. The second hand swings like a compass needle to indicate the direction of the physical epicenter of the upcoming Time of Power.

## VEHICLES

Essentially, Vehicles in *DI* act as a limited type of character. Vehicles have the *Vehicle Quality*; the penumbra for this Quality covers things like:

**Armament.** How many weapons does it mount, and how powerful they are.

**Cargo Space.** How much stuff it can carry.

**Efficiency.** How much one gets whomped at the fuelling station.

**Handling.** How nimble.

**Passenger Space.** How many characters it can carry.

**Size.** How big or small.

**Speed.** How fast.

**Sturdiness.** How tough/sturdy.

**And so forth.**

These aspects can be bought up or down as separate Qualities, and other Qualities (Stealth Coating, Rad Paint Job, Stylin' Hydraulics, etc.) can be bought. Treating Vehicles as characters means that a Vehicle adds its Modifier to the pilot's roll (+ Modifier) when the pilot tries to do something cool with it (see *DI, Chapter 4, Using Multiple Qualities*. . .). To go fast, for example, a Good [+2] Sailor in a speedboat (Average [0] Vehicle, Expert [+4] Fast) rolls against a 2d6+2+4, or 2d6+6.

Vehicles gain Failure and Damage Ranks in conflict just as characters do. However, when Damage or Failure Ranks are taken in vehicular situations, the pilot (or relevant crew member) dictates if the Downshifts are applied to the *Vehicle* or to the *character himself*. For example, say a pilot in fighter A shoots bomber B's gun turret. Bomber B's gunner can split up the damage between his Qualities and plane B's Vehicle Quality – or any specific Armament Quality – as he sees fit.

Looking at this system, one can easily see that a character could go head-to-head with a Vehicle and come off well. This is for dramatic purposes, so it's suggested that GMs and players treat this as a feature, not a bug.

Below are some example write-ups for Vehicles that characters could own, use, or run into in their adventures (feel free to slap extra weapon or armor Qualities on these conveyances, if you want):

**Car (economy).** Poor [-2] Vehicle; Average [0] Handling, Good [+2] Fuel-efficiency.

**Car (luxury).** Good [+2] Vehicle; Average [0] Handling, Poor [-2] Fuel-efficiency.

**Car (sedan).** Average [0] Vehicle.

**Car (sports).** Average [0] Vehicle; Good [+2] Handling, Expert [+4] Fast.

**Helicopter.** Good [+2] Vehicle; Expert [+4] Handling, Average [0] Flight, Average [0] Hover, Poor [-2] Fuel-efficiency.

**Motorcycle.** Poor [-2] Vehicle; Good [+2] Handling, Good [+2] Go Where Cars Can't.

**Plane (prop).** Good [+2] Vehicle; Good [+2] Handling, Good [+2] Flight.

**Plane (jet).** Expert [+4] Vehicle; Good [+2] Handling, Good [+2] Flight, Expert [+4] Fast.

**Speedboat.** Average [0] Vehicle; Good [+2] Handling, Expert [+4] Fast.

**Submarine (mini).** Good [+2] Vehicle; Average [0] Handling, Average [0] Underwater Travel, Poor [-2] Limited Underwater Endurance.

**SUV.** Good [+2] Vehicle; Good [+2] Passenger Space, Good [+2] Cargo Space, Poor [-2] Handling, Poor [-2] Fuel-efficiency.

**Tank.** Good [+2] Vehicle; Expert [+4] Cannon, Good [+2] Machine Guns, Expert [+4] Armor, Poor [-2] Handling, Poor [-2] Fuel-efficiency, Poor [-2] Requires Additional Crew.

# Chapter 3

## Seeds & Scenarios

Illusion, Temperament, Succession,  
Surface, Surprise, Reality, Subjectiveness  
– these are the threads on the loom of time,  
these are the lords of life.  
– Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Experience”

Sometimes, it’s difficult for a GM to come up with a good idea to craft into a decent game session. This chapter offers some Adventure Seeds that have been “sprouted” into the beginnings of Scenarios, and a quick tool and advice for generating new Seeds.

### HARD TO DO GOOD

*DI* adventures set in the cold, hard world really benefit from moral ambiguity. If it’s hard to do good and make the soul-cultivating choice, then it’s in many ways a greater victory, if not necessarily more rewarding to the individual (due to the difficulty in earning Ticks, Tallies, and Circles in the Real World). While this is somewhat at odds with most roleplaying games (high risk usually equals high rewards), it matches up remarkably well with the way things work in life. And it makes a *helluva* story.

Imagine a Dead Inside PC forced to choose between destroying his own Soul Egg – which he’s been questing after for several sessions – or letting an enemy use it to do evil. Maybe some mad enchanter NPC has hooked up a magic crown set with Soul Eggs, which allows him to Bind Average People to his will; to stop the bad guy, the PC must choose to destroy that crown. . . and his Soul Egg.

Let’s change it up a little – what if the PC’s Soul Egg is powering an Enchanted Object that’s keeping a little girl alive? Should the PC take his soul-blood back, if it causes the death of another being? What if the innocent child is seen via Second Sight to be likely to grow up into the next Hitler or Stalin?

These kinds of conundrums can be really fun for some players. For others, not so much. Would they relish the chance to agonize in-character, or would they enjoy cutting the Gordian Knot, or would the situation just frustrate them? Be careful: a GM should know his group well before springing such circumstances.

### SPROUTED SCENARIOS

Below are some short Scenario ideas, sprouted from elements offered throughout this book. While not fully detailed along the lines suggested in *DI*, Chapter 5, each has a list of the general *Situation*, *Dramatis Personae*, *Possible Scenes*, and *Twists*. Feel free to fertilize and water, fluff up, prune back, transplant, or graft them onto your own group’s sessions as main plots or subplots.

### DOWN BUT NOT QUITE OUT

#### *Situation*

A homeless stranger approaches the PCs, claiming to “know what’s wrong” and offer to fix it... in return for help.

#### *Dramatis Personae*

The stranger’s name is *Pat*. Pat can be male or female; an Average Person, Dead Inside, or Sensitive; crazy or sane. The only thing Pat isn’t is “interested in helping out the PCs.” Pat’s scamming the PCs, faking – consciously or unconsciously – greater knowledge about being able to aid the PCs in soul-recovery. Pat wants a place to live, some money, some food, and some booze. (A little sex wouldn’t hurt, either.)

#### *Possible Scenes*

Pat approaches the PC(s). Evidence – generally sketchy – shows that Pat seems to have a clue: maybe Pat seems to display a spiritual talent of some sort. Pat asks for compensation before helping the character(s); if this is withheld, Pat just goes away, showing up later to repeat the performance. Pat sets ridiculous tasks for the PC(s) to perform, and sporadically hands out hints on how everything works (which could be completely wrong). Eventually, doubt of Pat’s wisdom or veracity is introduced. Confrontation, and Pat’s true colors are revealed.

***Twists***

Pat's a crazy Average Person who needs help. Pat's really a temporarily-insane Dead Inside, a former Mage reconstituted from Ghost and Zombi via the Ritual of Reunion. Pat's a Sensitive on the skids, trying to use the PC(s) as catspaws to get at his/her enemies. Pat is an Average Person and undercover Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms agent, who thinks he/she is infiltrating a weird cult implicated in all sorts of icky things. Pat's a Dead Inside who plans on somehow gaining soul-blood from the PC(s) and placing it into secret Soul Eggs to gain some slaves.

**FULL (HAUNTED) HOUSE*****Situation***

Criminals, cops, scientists, spirit-hunters, wannabe vampires, and PCs all – coincidentally! – visit a haunted house on the same night. Hilarity (and horror) ensues!

***Dramatis Personae***

The Old Withers Place (see *Chapter 2*) – and thus Jennifer Withers – is the hub of this Scenario. She'll be understandably peeved at all these rude strangers gallivanting through her house. But even she's not powerful enough to take them all out openly, so she'll play it sneaky. Will she try to drive them away, or torment them into doing some home repair?

Furthermore, this Scenario works best if the Old Withers Place is in a semi-rural, semi-suburban part of a larger town: if the house were in a large city, there'd be too many people around to really amp up the fun.

*Jaqui* and *Dion* are twentysomething punk lovers. They've just held up a convenience store two towns over, so they've come to the old abandoned house to lay low for a bit. *Dion*'s originally a hometown boy, so he knows that nobody ever visits the Old Withers' Place. *Jacqui*'s got a gun.

The Phenomenon Project (see *Chapter 2*) has sent out a three-person Cross-Departmental Team: *Dr. Manuel Spinoza* (APP; specializes in telekinetic research), *Professor Liu Chun* (AE3; believes that sightings of spiritual entities are a method of chronokinesis, or time control), and work-study “psychic” *Janet Bradley* (nominally ESP; also, she's a Dead Inside and doesn't know it). All have personal axes to grind in their research here; they have

permission from the Withers' estate – a lawyer downtown – to spend a few days making readings in return for their generous “honorarium.”

*Mike* and *Chuck* are local cops and hometown boys. They'll show up when they see the Phenomenon Project van or other vehicles parked at the Old Withers' Place. They'll accept the letter that the scientists will produce showing their permission to be there (though they might call to confirm). They will recognize *Dion* if they see him – they went to high school together (and may even know that he's a criminal). They will ask everyone – except the Project members – to leave, or they'll have to be arrested for trespassing.

*Crowbert* is a Huntsman of the Spookleggers (see *Chapter 2*), who's decided to try and win fame and fortune by trapping Mrs. Withers. Not too bright, he's still full of low cunning: he's got the idea of using all these visitors so as to tucker the old Ghost out, so it'll be easier for him and his boys to Trap her. He is accompanied by a Hound named *Finch* and a Beater (who *Crowbert* is training) called *Spindle*, who really have no idea what they're in for. They are all armed with knives, pistols, and Bool-merangs.

*Valdemar Hades* (Walter Lipinsky) and *Bethania Delice* (Wilhelmina Price) are Gothiks (see *Chapter 2*) from the big city who have been searching for “the Secret Stair” along which they will be able to descend into the “Dark Lands.” (This is the way they've translated Gates and the Spirit World into a Gothik idiom.) Their belief in another plane of existence has actually led to their being mildly ostracized from their local vampy community, so they're here to get “proof.”

The PCs can be here for any number of reasons: Second Sight vision, use of the Gate, seeking a Place of Power to base themselves at, and so forth.

**CHAINING SCENARIOS**

By chaining these Scenarios together, a GM could have a very nice campaign outline. Perhaps start with *Twisted Acres*, with the PCs as Average People caught in a Verge. Then hit them with *Down but Not Quite Out* as they try to come to grips with their new Dead Inside state, move onto *Full (Haunted) House*, and build to a big climax with *A Night at the Races*. Or you could do it the other way, to get a bunch of crazed gamblers lose their soul betting on the horses, and their attempts to scam a new one.

### *Possible Scenes*

(Who gets to the Old Withers' Place first? Or do they all get there at once? This Scenario could play out differently depending upon when people get there.)

Jaqui and Dion hiding in the basement. The Phenomena Project members setting up equipment. The introductions and explanations. Valdemar and Bethania, hiding in the attic until nightfall. Crowbert and his goons hiding outside, destroying radios and cellphones, letting air out of tires, stealing distributor caps. Mike and Chuck showing up, wondering why so many cars are at an abandoned house. Withers moving stuff just out of detection range of the Project's instruments. Valdemar, Bethania, and Janet recognize each other (and any PCs) as Dead Inside, and try to convert each other to their way of viewing upon their nature (Janet as a "psychic" and the Gothiks as "vampires"). Police skepticism of the supernatural. Withers plays "divide and conquer." The Gate opens. The Spookleggers bust in.

### *Twists*

One of the characters is – unknown to all – Withers' Heir. Someone else pops out through the Gate – perhaps a Zombi like Trader Nick? Jennifer Withers, her ethereal back to the wall, claims the house as her Desmense, and boosts her destructive power immensely.



## MALTESE AMULET

### *Situation*

Someone walking the streets of the Real World may hold knowledge in his head that a ruthless Dead Inside wants very badly. And he's willing to pay the PCs well – in cash, in favors, in information, in soul-blood – to get that information for him.

### *Dramatis Personae*

*Chu Lung* lost a family heirloom – and his soul – a decade ago. All he can remember is fragments. . . There were two people there, in that back alley: *the bald woman* who knocked him down, took his lucky amulet, and broke him open, and *the busboy*, who walked into the middle of his Soultaking. That the bald woman and the busboy knew each other, and they had a short conversation. And that his soul was gone, bound up in the last gift his grandmother gave him before her death.

He's spent eight years searching for all three, to no avail. He does know that the bald woman retains his amulet even now. Yet he cannot discover her name, and her trail is always cold. The busboy *must* know who the bald woman is. But he has almost had the busboy in his clutches a score of times, but *every time* the man has vanished like smoke. He seems to know when *Chu Lung* is coming. So be it. This time, *Chu Lung* will send others to go for him.

The busboy is *George Waters*. He's either a powerful Dead Inside or an unconscious born Sensitive. He has no idea that he's being hunted, is lucky as hell, and has no compunctions with running away from dangerous or boring situations.

### *Possible Scenes*

*Chu Lung's* offer. . . sweetened to attract the PCs. They find the busboy. They case the joint and the target. They chase the busboy down. The hunters (PC) become the hunted (*Chu Lung*, who distrusts them). The bald woman appears. The amulet is found.

### *Twists*

*George* is a Sensitive, and not an unconscious one. The bald woman has hair now. The lucky amulet isn't just *Chu Lung's* Soul Egg, it's someone else's as well. The whole thing is a set-up: *Chu Lung* has been hired to lead the PCs into a trap by one of their

Nemeses. The amulet is worthless, a fake. The amulet is more than it appears.

## A NIGHT AT THE RACES

### *Situation*

Ah, the track. The smell of the stables, the sound of the starting clarion, the odds to win, place, or show. Money, money, money. Up in the Winners' Circle Lounge, the Beautiful People rub shoulders with the made men. Down at the paddock, the gamblers eye the nags and jockeys and listen to the touts. In the stands, the bettors watch, cheer, and boo.

A sharp member of the Supernatural Set could do quite well at the track with small wagers, using a judicious combination of Gambling, Second Sight, and basic uncanny spookiness. Of course, the more supernatural types hanging around the track throwing spiritual mojo, the less effective that mojo is going to be.

### *Dramatis Personae*

*Fast Frankie Felton* is a Dead Inside who's trying to win back his soul – he sold it two years ago for an unclaimed winning bet slip that paid 100,000 to 1. Now, he's trying to arrange the odds such that he can have a similar ticket in hand (plus a substantial amount of cash) to trade with the Man in Green who took his soul. He's rich, depressed, and desperate.

*The Man in Green* is around, smirking. He doesn't much care for the horses – he cares for the juice. He makes offers and counteroffers, takes side-bets and makes propositions, and keeps his ears to the ground. Sooner or later, some fool is gonna want to trade it all for the big, big win – and the Man in Green will be there to arrange the trade.

*Don Carmon Insana* is the local head of the Salvatore Family. The track is his turf, and he's been noticing that weird stuff happens – long-shot payoffs, spooked horses, jockeys not playing ball when they know they'll get their legs busted – on a regular pattern. Taking a page from his cousin Vinnie's Vegas operation, he's installed a ludicrous number of hidden cameras, set up an operations center, and hired the best security specialists money can buy. Over the past few months, he's isolated some facts about the variances: Some happen when Felton's around, some happen when the Man in Green is around, it's either much worse or much better when they're both around, neither are carrying drugs or



electronic equipment into the track (so far as they can tell), and they don't seem to be working together. Be that as it may, it ends tonight: Insana is sending his boys to round up the two weirdoes – and anyone with them – and will personally interrogate all involved to discover how they've been screwing with his numbers.

*Tove Skendell* is a statuesque Beautiful Person, visiting the track with her prettyboy Average Person date. She's just about enthralled him into becoming one of her minions, but he's just so... normal. The presence of another supernatural being would really get her intrigued. . . in all senses of the word.

### *Possible Scenes*

Seeing Felton, the Man in Green, or Skendell and realizing they're not Average People. Trying to spook the horses. A jockey gets thrown and overrun, breaking his leg. The odds for the races start getting wacky (5-1, 6-pi, 23-1, 333-1, 2112-1). Felton offers big bucks for the PCs' help in fixing a race with spiritual talent. The Man in Green makes the PCs an offer that's too good to be true. Don Insana makes the PCs an offer they can't refuse. Skendell makes the PCs an offer they *don't wanna* refuse (hubba-hubba).

### *Twists*

The Man in Green and Tove Skendell are working together. Don Insana was once a Dead Inside, but is back to being an Average Person. The Man in Green is secretly connected to a PC's Backstory or Soul Loss.

## TWISTED ACRES

### *Situation*

Twisted Hollow is a fallow piece of land, dirt-cheap and just begging to be developed. So, Robton



Construction has decided to build a housing development on the site. Sure, it's a little far outside of the city, but with urban sprawl increasing, they can still make a tidy profit.

### *Dramatis Personae*

*George Roberts*, President of Robton Construction, has entered negotiations with the local Town Council to seal the deal on Twisted Hollow. He's enjoying himself – building fairy infrastructures for the possible enclave. Indeed, he's entertaining thoughts of “Robertsville”: an entire town planned and built by his company, with high-speed cable, bullet-train mass transit to the nearby Big City, strip malls designed like small-town Main Streets, that sort of thing.

The mayor of the village – *Susan Byornsen* – is ecstatic about the new tax revenue potential, but concerned about some of the things Roberts is saying about “Robertsville.” Then there's the history of Twisted Hollow to contend with. When she was a kid (and by all accounts, when her grandfather was a kid, too), the area had an eerie reputation due to strange goings on. Like when three years ago Sven Ketilsborg killed all those deer, piled them up, and set fire to them before jumping into the flames. Or the “earthquake” that leveled the old Thorsen Dairy – and nothing else – back in '25. While it's obviously not haunted (the very idea!), it's an uncanny place. It's probably nothing.

Enter *Dirk Henley*, Jack-of-All-Activisms. He's despised Robton Construction for years, ever since he successfully protested against their demolition and construction of an old hotel in Chicago (a minor – some would say *trivial* – historical site). Indeed, every time Dirk's mixed it up with Robton, right or wrong, Dirk's won. Nobody's quite sure why he hates Robton – and George Roberts – so much, especially if he always beats them.

The Helots of the Darkling Glass are interested, of course – *Francis Atherton* (see *Chapter 2*) himself is on his way to see who he needs to cozy up to, bribe, or subvert to gain access to the site for his cult.

The Worldspacklers, alas, are a few days behind Atherton and the Helots – they know that the cult's located a new Verge, but haven't yet nailed down where it is. (Instant cavalry for PCs, perhaps?)

### *Possible Scenes*

Surveyors of Twisted Hollow go mad and/or missing. Construction equipment breaks down. Old folks spitting and making superstitious gestures at anyone who's gone up to the Hollow. Quaint small-town nutcases. Henley chaining himself to a bulldozer. Atherton squiring Byornsen around town. Many strangers – some with flashy cars, some packed into refurbished school buses – sneaking into the local motel by night. Escalating confrontations between Henley's activists and Roberts' construction workers. Fell rituals to shatter the Verge. The unmaking of Twisted Hollow and much of the surrounding countryside, or the heroic forestalling of such an event.

### *Twists*

Henley is Roberts' bastard son. The “ton” in Robton Construction comes from “Atherton.” The insane Ghost of Sven Ketilsborg. Roberts is secretly a Worldspackler.



## THE UNUSUAL SUSPECTS

### *Situation*

The PCs are all in cells at the local precinct house, rounded up for a variety of reasons – public drunkenness, vagrancy, disturbing the peace, that sort of thing. They suffer the jibes of the tired cops (and any Average People suspects in the cells). It becomes clear to all in the cells that something isn't right with each PC, and all PCs recognize something odd yet familiar about some of their fellow prisoners (the other PCs).

This is a great conceit for “getting the party together.”

The PCs could be released at dawn, free to go, or they could be hauled into Night Court in front of

*Judge Machen* (see *Chapter 2*), unless they manage to spring themselves some other way.

***Dramatis Personae***

A selection of cops: irritable and unsympathetic, young and by the book, sleazy and cooperative (for a bribe), fully-corrupt and looking for desperate people who are willing to do anything for their freedom; veteran with a clean nose; grim detective who blows away punks, etc.

A selection of “criminals”: drunks, vagrants, belligerent frat boys, carjackers, drug pushers, junkies, butterfingere burglars, prostitutes, johns, bail jumpers, insane disturbers of the peace, etc.

***Possible Scenes***

Getting booked. Interacting with the cops. Getting thrown in the slammer. Confrontations with cellmates. Realization of the PC(s) creepiness, by all of the prisoners. Interaction with the other imprisoned supernatural beings. Plotting (escape or how to control the damage of being arrested and locked up). Each PC gets their One Phone Call. The guards bring around coffee and sandwiches. Cops come down to check out the cells. Prisoners called out for line-ups. Taken to interrogation rooms for Kafka-esque questioning that seems to have no relevance to the PC(s) own situation. Release or escape.

***Twists***

Precinct is actually in the Spirit World, and the cops and fellow prisoners are all Imagos. Police start tailing the PC(s), suspecting involvement in a drug ring. PC(s) captured simply to get them out of the way for several hours.

**A RANDOM SCATTERING OF ADVENTURE SEEDS**

All you really need for an adventure idea is two nouns and a verb.

With some quick die rolls, the basic outlines of a Seed can be formed. *Roll 1* gives the group or character taking the action; *Roll 2* selects the action taken; *Roll 3* indicates the target of the action. GMs can be as rigid or flexible with the tool offered below as they want. Maybe a GM does all his rolls and picks between his options. Maybe he definitively says “this Seed is about an Organization doing something to a Place of Power.” Yet another GM ignores the majority of the tool, only using the Enchanted Objects list to generate booty found in a Mage’s Treasure Cave. Still another selects a particular group to serve as the antagonist, and just rolls for the action and the target. Whatever fits the bill for your group, session, game, and Diverse.

Putting together the three elements – however you decide to do it – gives the *actor*, the *action*, and the *target*. Just ask yourself “why does the actor want to do the action with regard to the target?” These elements provide the landscape of a possible adventure, which the GM uses to rough out a map (Here be dragons; there be bunnies); but remember: PCs are the ones who create the paths on that mapped landscaped.

Also, if the old imagination is a little sluggish when put on the spot, do not neglect to use these charts for instant subplots, quick motivations, random Places of Power, whatever. Anything to kick-start the GM’s brain. If it works, use it.

<p><b>ACTOR: ROLL 1 (PICK ONE)</b> [3d6]</p>	<p><b>ACTION: ROLL 2</b> [2d6]</p>	<p><b>TARGET: ROLL 3 (PICK ONE)</b> [3d6]</p>
<p>Notable Organizations (Table 1) Notable People (Table 2)</p>	<p>} Possible Actions (Table 3)</p>	<p>Notable Places (Table 4) Notable Times (Table 5) Notable Organizations (Table 1) Notable People (Table 2) Notable Enchanted Objects (Table 6)</p>

**Table 1 - Notable Organizations (roll 3d6)**

3	Helots of the Darkling Glass
4	[PC Group]*
5	The Phenomena Project
6	The Beautiful People
7	Spookleggers*
8	Interfaith, Inc.
9	Gothiks
10-12	Average People**
13	Worldspacklers
14	Mundane Authorities
15	Soulmarketees
16	Noumenal Search & Rescue
17	Cryptozoo Revue
18	Ordo Scalarum

\* While possibly better used as the *target* rather than the *actor*, the actual PC Group can have goals and missions imposed upon them from someone outside the group – an Imago or a Sensitive patron, for example

\*\* GMs should not overlook the chance to involve residents of the mundane world in a *CHW* Adventure Seed – the police, a PC’s family, the IRS, or PTA.

**Table 2 - Notable People (roll 3d6)**

3	Muzamal Kazim
4	Lex Vargo
5	Joe-Bob Willamette
6	Jorge Zapata
7	Cooper Christian
8	Judge Rufus Machen
9	Davida Alacandra
10	Father Sean Brock
11	Doctor Naima Hamra
12	Professor Solomon Rickheimer
13	Yung Jackson
14	Nancy Slaviczek
15	Francis Atherton
16	Demi Monde
17	Al Vargo
18	Danny “The Tiger” Manticora

**Table 3 - Possible Actions (roll 2d6)**

2	Spies on
3	Captures/Steals/Finds
4	Repairs/Heals
5	Seeks/Hunts
6	Defends/Guards
7	Ignores/Avoids
8	Attacks/Threatens
9	Discards/Loses/Leaves
10	Knows Something About
11	Uses
12	Weakens/Harms

**Table 4 - Notable Places (roll 3d6)**

3	Manticora’s Gym
4	Twisted Hollow
5	Greengrove Farm
6-7	Blue Blazes
8-9	Alacandra Funeral Home
10-11	The Old Withers Place
12-13	Ibrahim’s Grocery
14-15	Yung Jackson’s Soul Laundry
16	The Juicery
17	Wolff Cinema
18	The Omphalos

**Table 5 - Notable Times (roll 3d6)**

3	(Magi) Funeral Furor
4-5	Important Birth
6-8	Important Wedding
9-11	The Exchange
12-14	Revel Revel
15-17	Important Death
18	Gateseal Eve



**Table 6 - Notable Enchanted Objects\***  
(roll 3d6)

3	Unique Item (see Table 6A)
4-12	Common Item (see Table 6B)
13-18	Ritual (see Table 6C)

\* Includes Objects from *DI*.

**Table 6A - Unique Item\* (roll 3d6)**

3	The Archimedes Hoop
4	Phone of Bone
5-7	Teddy 7
8-11	A PC's Soul Egg (see <i>DI</i> )
12-14	The Blue Guitar (see <i>DI</i> )
15-16	The Obsidian Hammer
17	Bulletproof Suit
18	A Magi's Wizard Egg (see <i>DI</i> )

\* Includes Objects from *DI*.

**Table 6B - Common Item (roll 3d6)**

3	Masking Ring
4	Trenchcloak
5	Bool-merang
6	Scarlet Shades
7	Lugh-nuts
8	Mind Mirror
9	Named Bullet
10	Pinger
11	Juice Box
12	Roach Slippers
13	Soulshackle
14	Frog of Fog
15	Theodolite of Might
16	Hungry Hat
17	Witch Watch
18	Coyote Paintbrush

**Table 6C - Rituals (roll 3d6)**

3	Ritual of Ascension <sup>1</sup>
4	Ritual of Wizard Egg Creation <sup>2</sup>
5-6	Ritual of Restoration <sup>3</sup>
7-9	The Blood-Oath <sup>4</sup>
10-12	Ritual of Ensoulment <sup>5</sup>
13	the Demesne Knot <sup>6</sup>
14	Ritual of Splendor <sup>7</sup>
15	Ritual of Mystic Wedding <sup>8</sup>
16	Brace Reality <sup>9</sup>
17	Ritual of Severance <sup>10</sup>
18	Ritual of Reunion <sup>11</sup>

NOTES

1. **Ritual of Ascension.** (see *DI*, p. 72) Used by a Mage to become a True Immortal.
2. **Ritual of Wizard Egg Creation.** (see *DI*, p. 55) Grants a Mage supernatural Resilience.
3. **Ritual of Restoration.** (see *CHW*, p. 9) In the Real World, makes a Dead Inside into a Pre-Cracked Average Person.
4. **The Blood-Oath.** (see *DI*, p. 73) Makes character into another character's Nemesis.
5. **Ritual of Ensoulment.** (see *DI*, p. 117-118) In the Spirit World, makes a Dead Inside into a Sensitive.
6. **The Demesne Knot.** (see *CHW*, p. 19) Makes a Place of Power into a Demesne.
7. **Ritual of Splendor.** (see *CHW*, p. 26) Makes insubstantial beings substantial in the Real World.
8. **Ritual of Mystic Wedding.** (see *DI*, p. 72) In Spirit World, makes a Sensitive into a Mage.
9. **Brace Reality.** (see *CHW*, p. 38) "Hardens" reality, snuffing supernatural effects and making spiritual talents even more difficult to use.
10. **Ritual of Severance.** (see *DI*, p. 72) Used by a Mage to cut away his Shadow.
11. **Ritual of Reunion.** (see *DI*, *Character Death*, p. 73, and *CHW*, *Chapter 2, Funeral Furor*, p. 24) Allows a "related" Ghost and Zombi to reunite into a living Dead Inside.

**Example**

Let's run through an example, making the rolls and see what we get before picking between the results.

**Actor: Roll 1.** The 3d6 roll gives a 9. We need to pick either a Notable Organization or Person. Our choices are either the *Gothiks*, or *David Alacandra*.

**Action: Roll 2.** The 2d6 roll gives a 6, for a result of *Defends/Guards*.

**Target: Roll 3.** The 3d6 roll gives an 11. We need to pick between a Notable Place, Time, Organization, Person, or Enchanted Object. For the first four, our choices are: *the Old Withers Place*, *The Exchange*, *Average People*, and *Doctor Naima Hamra*. The Enchanted Objects table indicates that the target might be a *Common Item*, but the GM decides at this point that defending a Common Enchanted Object sounds pretty silly. Instead, he figures a Ritual would be something worthy of guarding; rolling 3d6 gives a 6, or the *Ritual of Restoration*. Good call.

**PUTTING IT TOGETHER**

From these selections, the GM picks the ones that seem like they'd make the most interesting subject

matter for a session and plays connect-the-dots to figure out the *Why?* (and subsequent *Who?*s and *What?*s) behind it. Here's a few ways to put those elements together into Adventure Seeds:

- ◆ Davida Alacandra has lucked into something special she wants to protect. A Zombi client left her a copy of the Ritual of Restoration – the recipe for re-ensoulment in the Real World – as payment for a particularly extensive patch-job. Her possession of this sought-after ritual makes her even more of a serious player in the Supernatural Set. She might be recruiting security (calling all PCs!) for her funeral home. She might be offering copies of the text for an outrageous sum. She might be keeping it to herself, and somebody wants the PCs to get it from her.
- ◆ The local Gothiks are guarding the Old Withers Place because they believe that the “Revenant” that lives within has the power to create new “Vampires.” B their twisted lights, this makes the haunted house a holy (or is it unholy?) place for them. But are they blocking access for their own good (keep the bloodsucking monopoly) or the good of others (keep the mundanes from turning into beasts like them)?
- ◆ Davida Alacandra always does a booming business this time of the month: everybody's in town in the days of SuperNatCon, the Tri-State Supernatural Being Convention. And they're all looking to blow off steam after a long day of seminars and networking. As a respectable local, Davida does as much as she can to keep the local authorities and the visiting supernaturals out of each other's hair, while defending them from each other. She needs the PCs to go and distract the cops away from the hotel, bust the heads of some of her noisy boarders, stop whatever mischief some ornery tourist Cryptozoosers are up to, etc.
- ◆ The Gothiks are protecting Dr. Hamra from something or someone. *Why?* Well, ties between the Gothiks and the Phenomena Project – Hamra's organization – are amicable, if not overly warm. Perhaps they've twigged to her Dead Inside nature, and see her as a fellow “vampire.” Maybe she's close to stumbling onto something that would bring heat down on the Gothiks from... *Who?* Let's do another Roll 1: result of 8 gives *Interfaith, Inc.* or *Judge Rufus Machen*. So this could go two ways:
  - An Interfaithful has discovered that Hamra is a Dead Inside and wants to help her, which the Gothiks misinterpret as wanting to exorcise or stake her.
  - Judge Machen is involved in a trespassing case – a Phenomena Project spiritual “stake-out” that went wrong. He noticed Hamra's nature when he saw her in his courtroom, and has taken it upon himself

to run her to ground: the concept of a skeptical, scientific supernatural being seems even more perverse than the usual run of freaks he sees.

Another example? Okay:

**Actor: Roll 1.** The 3d6 roll gives a 15, indicating choices of the *Soulmarketeers*, or *Francis Atherton*.

**Action: Roll 2.** The 2d6 roll gives a 9, for a result of *Discards/Loses/Leaves*.

**Target: Roll 3.** The 3d6 roll gives a 17, pointing to: *Wolff Cinema*, *Important Death*, *Cryptozoo Revue*, and *Al Vargo*. The Enchanted Objects table indicates that the target might be a *Ritual*; but since we used that last time, let's go for a *Common Item*. Rolling 3d6 gives a 16 for a result of the *Hungry Hat*.

To put it together, let's create some Seeds!

- ◆ The Soulmarketeers have completely “discarded” (read: “severed”) their ties with the Cryptozoo Revue. They simply won't deal with any members of the group. Why? Well, some other organization must have put them up to it... (Rolls 3d6, for 11, or *Average People*.) No, not exactly another organization – more like that too many Average People have been sniffin' around the 'Marketeers' bidness, chasin' after the Jersey Devil and Bigfoot and the Mothman. Best too cool relations for now, dig?
- ◆ Francis Atherton has lost his favorite hat, the one that lets him crack unsuspecting victims for his dark sacrifices. He'll do anything to get it back, and he thinks that the PCs either have it now or know who does.
- ◆ The Soulmarketeers have left Al Vargo – mean Ghost and vagabond – out on the chopping block. A lucky bastard caught him in a Spirit Jug, and sold the powerful Ghost to a Trader. It's auction time! Who'll be there? Definitely the *Spookleggers* (Phantasmal Enemy Number One, caught!) and *Noumenal Search & Rescue* (led by Al's “brother” *Lex* the Zombi). And no doubt *Cooper Christian* and some of his Beautiful People cronies will show up to giggle. The PCs could be tied to one of the groups, allies or enemies with one of the players, owe Al a favor, or simply swept up in the festivities.
- ◆ Francis Atherton has left Wolff Cinema with a ticket in his pocket. No doubt a number of powerful groups and people would like to see what's going on in his head. Agents (possibly including the PCs) are dispatched to get him into the *Theatre des Loups* in the Spirit World ASAP, by main force, if necessary.

# Chapter 4

## Cosmos Reloaded

Some *DI* GMs may want to rearrange the Cosmos for their games: perhaps they wish to add the sanity-wracking Elder Gods of HP Lovecraft, maybe they don't like the idea of a Spirit World that must be entered bodily, or possibly they want to blur the boundaries between the two Worlds. This chapter offers GMs some ideas on how to accomplish these sorts of cosmic realignments.

### STABLE GROUND

... Reality leaked out.

And was found. For there are Things outside, whose ability to sniff out tiny frail conglomerations of reality made the thing with the sharks and the trace of blood seem very boring indeed. They began to gather.

– Terry Pratchett, *Moving Pictures*

*Stable Ground* is a basic “reversal of polarity” concept for the Cosmos, much in keeping with the focus of *Cold, Hard World*. Simply, the Real World is where every Type of supernatural being wants to be. The Spirit World is too mercurial. It always changes out from under one's feet and constantly yanks people into contact with those friends who are best-forgotten and those enemies who are best-avoided. And, worst of all, the bloody Imagos – whatever superhuman, ex-human, inhuman *things* they are – are forever meddling in one's life: setting ridiculous tests, challenges, and quests that one is compelled to pursue. It's not freedom – it's a prison.

Screw that noise. Some folks are trying to make the best of their lot in the Cosmos without being poked and prodded like a rat in a maze.

Add to this mix the desires of the dead (Ghosts and Zombis) to be near the living, the never-born (Free Spirits and Tulpas) to ape the living, and the powerful (Sensitives and Magi, and to a lesser extent, the Dead Inside) to master the living, and you can see why good old Real World terra firma appeals.

Of course, this means that *any* time a Gate opens into the Real World, there will be escape attempts. . . And probably people on both sides of the Veil trying to stop characters trying to win their freedom. Add suitable spiritual pyrotechnics, and Places and Times of Power will become much more dangerous.

I wait, as the buildings melt around me and the streets ripple beneath my feet. Monsters in mockery of all that is sane, solid, or pure alter their paths as I block the sidewalk, looking at one particular crack. A chicken-headed lady cackles conversation to a blue-skinned naked man who floats alongside her. I do not look away from my feet.

In twenty heartbeats, a door will open. A door out of this fantasy madhouse.

A door to a cold, hard world.



### *Modifications for Stable Ground*

**From *Dead Inside*.** The Spirit World is a dangerous place, entered only at need. The *Triangle Council* will probably be seen as a handful of ineffectual weaklings unsuited for the Real World, a group of insane beings trying to rule a crazy-quilt Wonderland, or a little of both. The Council may have more formal power: possibly even jackbooted thug-Tulpas at their command – both to guard the general Gate “focal point” at the foot of the *Bridge of Souls*, and also to chase those who escape into the Real World and bring them back. Traders who carry goods from World to World might be more respected or might be villified; the Council may issue visas only to select Traders, which could lead to lucrative smuggling operations.

**From *Cold, Hard World*.** The *Soulmarketeers*, being a formal group of Traders, are probably the ones who would gain the Council’s imprimatur. The *Beautiful People* and the *Cryptozoo Revue* cabals will be much larger, and probably at each other’s throats because of it. *Ordo Scalarum* probably becomes more active: without their guardianship, reality could be overwhelmed with a flood of Spirit World refugees. Player characters might serve the Laddermen as scouts, guards, or troops in their crusade of “keeping it Real.” With more spiritual force moving through the Real World, the *Phenomena Project* might have a smidgen – but just a smidgen – more credence among Average People and the *Spookleggers* could be more respectable group: somebody has got to keep the phantom population in control.

### **WALLS & VORTEXES**

One way to amp the fear of the Spirit World could be that while one can Open Gates from the Real World to the Spirit World, one *cannot* Open Gates from the Spirit World to the Real World. Those in the Spirit World must wait for natural Gates to appear (when the stars are right), or for someone in the Real World to Open a Gate.. The Wall of Sleep is impenetrable from that side, no matter how much spiritual force is thrown against it. (However, Spirit World-to-Spirit World Gates are still okay, and Real World-to-Real World Gates are still verboten.)

Maybe Gates act as Vortexes when opened: inescapable cyclones that snatch up all loose objects and beings in the area and deposit them on the Other Side. If so, characters should be a little jumpy in Places and Times of Power.

### **ASTRALIA**

Reality, whether approached imaginatively or empirically, remains a surface, hermetic.

– Samuel Beckett

If the knob of the Cosmos is turned to the *Australia* setting, the difference between the Real World and the Spirit World becomes more extreme. In *Australia*, the Spirit World is not entered bodily, but spiritually (the name plays with the concept of the Astral Plane of legend). That is, supernatural beings project their consciousness from the Real World into the Spirit World in Places and Times of Power.

*Australia* changes many of the basic assumptions found in *DI*, encouraging a more complex relationship between the concepts of body and soul. Like the Stable Ground option mentioned above, it also refocuses attention on the Real World as the primary setting of a *DI* campaign.

While the lessons learned in the Spirit World are still valuable and empowering, the applications of this new knowledge will probably be made in the Real World.

The flames died down, flowing into his body. His soul had been reforged at long last. He was no longer Dead Inside, but Sensitive. Whole – more than that – spiritually healthier than he’d ever been. Vibrant in his new vision, Tenemos Chapel seemed to smile, and wish him well.

Energized, Leo gestured, and Opened a return Gate to the Real World. He leapt through the rainbow ring, and landed in the attic of the abandoned house where he had left his body. He’d set up a fine little camp in the basement – space heater, army cot, a poly-fill mummybag, plenty of food and water to hand – before sending his astral form out of his physical shell and into the Spirit World to re-ensoul. He ghosted down through the floors, ready to rejoin the fleshy human race.

The empty sleeping bag was the first shock, but even worse was the note that was left on top of it: “Consider this your eviction notice.”

### *Modifications for Astralia*

**From *Dead Inside*.** The first big change with Astralia is in the *Open Gate Ability*. If used within a Place or Time of Power, it permits a character to separate their mind and soul from their body and pass into the Spirit World. It cannot normally be used to do this outside of a Place or Time of Power (but see the boxed text, *OPTION: Ritual Space*), and cannot transport physical objects.

Being composed totally of spiritual energy, Ghosts and Free Spirits may pass into the Spirit World via a Gate as normal. However, Zombis, being a dead body, cannot enter the Spirit World at all; in Astralia, Zombis are purely Real World inhabitants. While astrally journeying into the Spirit World, a Dead Inside character's consciousness is absent from their body, which is vulnerable to psychic or physical attack – a Ghost or Free Spirit can easily Possess such an empty shell (this requires no Bind attempt, it happens automatically). A Sensitive character's body is a harder nut to crack when they're absent, however, and spiritual entities must successfully make a Bind attempt as normal.

Magi – by virtue of their doubled soul – are even trickier: they can splinter their consciousness and operate (in a limited fashion) in both Worlds simultaneously. If he chooses to do so a Mage can divide up his Type Ranks between his Real and Spirit bodies. For example, a Good [+2] Mage has 3 Ranks to divvy up between two forms; this means that he can remain fully in his Real body as a Good [+2] Mage; make his Real body a Poor [-2] Mage while his Spirit body becomes an Average [0] Mage (or the reverse); or can fully enter the Spirit World as an astral Good [+2] Mage. Even if a Mage takes all his Ranks with him into the Spirit World, his unconscious physical form is somewhat defended. Like when attempting to Possess a Sensitive, Ghosts and Free Spirits must successfully make a Bind attempt to enter the Mage's body. Furthermore, a Mage knows when his body is being attacked, and can return to his body (unless otherwise impeded) in 2 Turns.

As a bonus, supernatural beings (except Zombis) can use Open Gates within a Place or Time of Power to hang-out in astral form in the Real World. Astral characters gain the abilities of Phase and Possess as if they were Free Spirits or Ghosts, but cannot move outside of the physical boundaries of the Place or Time of Power.

As normal, all Gates to the Spirit World will usually open at the *Bridge of Souls* in Wyld Park. To return to the Real World (and their bodies!), characters must Open a Gate. Characters can stay as long as they wish in the Spirit World, but their physical bodies are vulnerable to harm, dehydration, starvation, aging, disease, and possession, so many supernatural beings keep their astral jaunts short, or invest in magical safeguards and supports for their empty flesh. (At the GM's option, some Spirit World Locations may not permit the opening of return Gates.)

The inability of physical objects to cross the Veil alters the spiritual Power of Enchantment and aspects of Spirit World Commerce. Enchanted Objects in the Real World might be formed by bringing mystical materials back through a Gate and Phasing the insubstantial item into a tangible item; this "Possession" could grant an object magical abilities. So the Enchanted Object known as the Blue Guitar (see *DI*, p. 53), which resides in the Real World, may have been created in this way:

1. A astrally-projecting character in the Spirit World purchases a siren's song (in the form of a bone-handled tuning fork) in Exroads Market.
2. The character Opens a Gate to return to the Real World and his body.
3. The character, back in the Real World but not yet returned to his body, uses Enchant to fuse the siren's song into his old Gibson.
4. The instrument is now an Enchanted Object, the subtle Blue Guitar.

While Enchanted Objects cannot normally move through the Veil, fun can be had with mystical items that appear differently in each World: a Real World penknife that becomes a Flaming Sword in the Spirit World or the Spirit World Crown of the Monkey King which has the Real World form of a battered derby hat. (This sort of alteration could also hold true for some animals – a particular "stray kitty" in this world might mystically be a Fire Lion in the Spirit World.)

Australian changes to the Spirit World should display the separation of the Real and the Spirit Worlds. The basic nature of the Bridge of Souls as the locus of most Gates remains the same, but the rest of *Wyld Park* is different: in Astralia – *Tower Row* becomes ***Tower Isle***, and sits on the other end of the Bridge. Only Magi may use Dream-Leap or True Flight to



cross *Moon Lake*; all other being Types must cross the razor-sharp span – or brave the Lake’s waters – to visit the neighborhood. The rest of the City Map (see *DI*, p. 20) reorganizes to show this change – this means that the *City Library*, the *Ripping Fogs*, and the *Theatre des Loups* tend to orbit Wyld Park. *Zombitown* no longer exists, its place in the City Map is taken by the ghostly ghetto of ***Spectral Corners*** (formerly *Spectral Point*).

In terms of Notable People, *Herman* now hunts his Zombis in the Real World. *Samuel* has used magic to petrify his Real World body, and has hidden and warded the resulting statue, so that he may safely reside fully in the Spirit World full-time. *Trader Nicholas* either doesn’t exist, or operates purely in the Real World. The *Triangle Council* probably is the “executive board” of the *Ordo Scalarum* (see below), and thus composed entirely of Magi.

**From *Cold, Hard World*.** Students of the Warrior’s Way in *Manticora’s Gym* fight the imported Spirit World Animals in astral form. *The Exchange* is simply a mobile Threshold with an interesting natural Gate. The membership and power of *Noumenal Search & Rescue* increases slightly. The *Ordo Scalarum* is a bigger group, composed of many more Magi; the Spirit World-based *Triangle Council* (see above) are probably its most powerful members and de facto leaders. The *Soulmarketeers* essentially remain the same, since their two stocks-in-trade are information and Enchanted Objects; however, only information passes freely between the two Worlds. The membership and power of the *Spookleggers* increases greatly. Any character in astral form in the Real World will be absorbed into a *Bool-merang* as if they were a Free Spirit or Ghost. *Pingers* detect astral forms as they do Ghosts and Free Spirits.



## OPTION: AUSTRALIAN RITUAL SPACE

Some GMs may wish to allow Australian characters to use the Open Gate Ability outside of a Place or Time of Power to create a *Ritual Space*. A Ritual Space is a temporary, limited Place of Power that lasts for a number of hours – and covers an spherical volume with a radius in yards – equal to the character’s (or the sum of all participating characters’) Type Rank(s). Within this Ritual Space, *another* Gate may be opened so that supernatural beings can pierce the Veil and astrally enter the Spirit World. However, unlike normal Places and Times of Power, when a Ritual Space’s duration ends, all astral characters using that Ritual Space will be immediately pulled back into their physical bodies. This practice can be very expensive in Soul Points.

## DREAMSCAPES

In the Australia Cosmos, it could be interesting to give Average People a mild Spirit World presence. Perhaps when they sleep, their minds and souls pierce the Veil. These dreamers walk through the City and beyond in the form of man-sized silvery spheres that are swarmed by Imagos (as well as gawkers and opportunists). Scenes from the dreamers’ dreams paint the outside of these *Dreamscapes*. Some supernatural beings treat these Dreamscapes as information or entertainment sources, and may even attempt to enter a Dreamscape using the Gate Ability. However, once inside, they are at the mercy of the dreamer: all of their Qualities, Abilities, and Powers will operate at an additional two Downshifts, and they will have to resist the thoughts, feelings, and impulses of the role they have been cast into within the dream.

## MAGIC IN THE STREETS

It’s hard for many people to believe that there are extraordinary things inside themselves, as well as others. I hope you can keep an open mind.  
– Elijah Price, *Unbreakable*

Why separate the Real World from the Spirit World at all? In the *Magic in the Streets* reload, the two worlds get nailed together. The natural and supernatural exist side-by-side in one reality. However – as detailed in this book – Average People miss most of the weirdness that happens right under their noses.

A Magic in the Streets Cosmos is a *fait accompli* for your basic standard occult or horror type game – magical cultists, eerie monsters, desperate people in desperate situations. Oddly enough, it can also work extremely well for low-key superhero games, especially those with a magical or occult twist. Books (like China Miéville’s *King Rat*, Neil Gaiman’s *Neverwhere*, and Tim Power’s *Last Call*), comic books (like Matt Wagner’s two *Mage* series and Warren Ellis’ *Planetary*), movies (like *Dark City*, *Mystery Men*, and *Unbreakable*), and television shows (like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Early Edition*, or *Strange Luck*) where unremarkable individuals suddenly discover their remarkable more-than-human capabilities should serve as inspiration fodder.

If a GM chooses to run a Magic in the Streets type of *DI* campaign, he should be prepared to do a sizable amount of work adjusting the setting to fit the mood and genre he wishes to evoke. Some guidance is offered below for doing so, but in this reload, the GM needs to pay close attention to assure that the end result is what he wants. Erasing the division between the two Worlds is a substantial undertaking.

## STREET SIGNS, LEY LINES

If the concept of *ley lines* (also called *dragon lines*) – paths of power which connect potent supernatural sites – appeals, they can easily be included in a Magic in the Streets setting. Just take the world or city map, pick up a highlighter, and draw the quickest path from Place of Power A to Place of Power B.

A straight line, disregarding streets, gives one sort of supernatural map, while a path forced to follow existing highways and byways gives one that is quite different. (Indeed, before ley lines were co-opted by mystically-minded people, early anthropologists believed they were actual roads between worship sites.) If one adds in the fluctuations gained from the appearance and disappearance of Times of Power, the map can get rather complex.

Ley lines can be used in numerous ways – as a power source, a limited and oddly-shaped Place of Power, a “soul-network,” a treasure map, a canary in a coal mine, a magical highway, anything the GM thinks will bear the strain.

Mad Doctor Midas laughed as he threw the switch, activating the Giant Atomic Soul Magnet. As the turbines began to spin, violet light streamed from its antenna, reaching out like electric

claws towards Metro City. “Soon, all of their souls will be mine!” he gloated.

“Not so fast, Midas!” Mr. Mystic stepped out of the shadows as he unholstered his Warding Rod. “Your technological Soultaking ends now.” He raised his weapon and took aim at the weird device. . .

## Modifications for Magic in the Streets

**From *Dead Inside*.** Instead of two Worlds, there is one World. It’s mostly fixed in place, but suitable spiritual leverage can make it move. Depending on the style of the game (see textbox, *Supernatural Superheroes, Style*), the Soul Point cost to use mystical talents may vary. Imagos, Clippoth, and Tulpas should be treated as Ghosts and Free Spirits (at the very least, in Places and Times of Power): they can be seen and interacted with, sometimes even by Average People – usually in majestic forms (like the wizard Shazam, or the Endless of the *Sandman* series, or Marvel Comics’ Living Tribunal in *Dr. Strange*).

The City probably doesn’t shift as wildly as it does in the Spirit World, and connects to what we usually think of as the Real World in addition to the Wood, the Wastes, the Mists, and the Sea. It can be a real metropolis (like New York City, LA, or Amsterdam), a fictional place (Gotham City, Sunnyside, Mayberry), or simply “the City.” The Notable Locations from *DI* can be permanently affixed to a set location on a street map, and probably have their surrealism dialed down a notch or two; effectively, they are *Side-Steps* (see *CHW, Chapter 2, Places of Power*). Out of the Notable NPCs, Manny probably doesn’t look like a monkey to Average Folk, and the wilder Tulpas and Free Spirits flitting around just appear as funny-looking people.

Under the *PDQ System*, players and GMs have a lot of latitude when coming up with Qualities for characters. There’s nothing to say that “Cockroach Prince,” “Fiery Form,” “Invulnerability,” or “Superstrength” aren’t perfectly valid in a Magic in the Streets reload. . . except for the opinions of those playing the game. It is *vitaly* important for all participants in the group to be on the same page about the scope, capabilities, limitations, and scalability of out-and-out superpowers like these (see below, *Mode*). Does “Invulnerability” mean “immune from harm” or does it just represent a higher level of

being able to resist damage (see *DI, Chapter 4, Taking It On the Chin*)? Would a character with Good [+2] Superstrength and a character with Expert [+4] Superstrength be able to lift different amounts of weight (as represented in many RPGs), or is “Superstrength” sort of a flat effect where all characters can lift ludicrous amounts of weight and their Quality Rank simply shows how they stack up to each other in an arm-wrestling contest (as represented in most Silver and Bronze Age comic books)? And – tantalizingly – could Superstrength be taken at Poor [-2] Rank as a Weakness? Is Poor [-2] Secret Identity a viable Weakness, or is it just a genre element? These are the sorts of questions players and GMs have to thrash the answers out to a commonly-understood level before play starts.

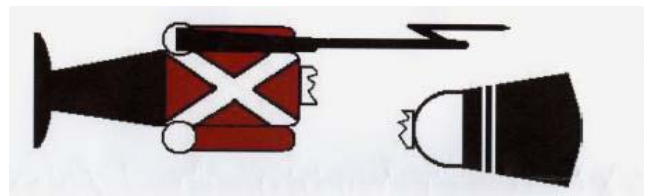
*Personality* choices expand to such gems as “Boy Scout,” “Obsessed Loner,” and “Wisenheim,” while *Backstory*, *Soul Loss*, and *Discovery* options can include as many radiation accidents, magic words, and tearful midnight oaths as necessary. GMs may want to tweak the *Virtues* and *Vices* for a Magic in the Streets game, in order to help encourage certain styles of play (via *Virtues*) and discourage others (via *Vices*). A game of tightly-knit occult cabals engaged in a secret war might go with a set of *Virtues* like *Courtesy*, *Loyalty*, and *Courage* and a set of *Vices* like *Rudeness*, *Selfishness*, and *Cowardice*. A secret supers campaign might emphasize *Virtues* like *Truthfulness*, *Justice*, and *Charity* and *Vices* like *Falsity*, *Injustice*, and *Greed*.

Soul Points can remain as-is, or be rechristened as Drama Points, Action Points, Hero Points, Mojo Points, whatever. . . but they should work in the same fashion – for Improvement, for Commerce, and for powering Abilities and Powers. The number of Soul Points a character starts with depends upon the campaign’s *Mode* (see below); and *Miscellany* can include “costuming choices” based on the game’s level of *Uniform* (see below).

Supernatural talents change, but not greatly. Right off the bat, their cost must be assessed (per *Style*, below). Next, the manner in which they manifest must be fitted to the combination of the GM’s setting assumptions and particular PC’s underlying concept (or, *Idiom*). For example, is mystical Luck just an invisible part-and-parcel of the hero’s life, or does it actually manifest visibly as a glow in the eyes, or must a character wave a rabbit’s foot to make the Luck come? Of the Abilities and Powers, the ones

that are most directly-affected in a Magic in the Streets game are *City Navigation* and *Open Gate*. It’s suggested that *City Navigation* be applicable only to the “home city” of the campaign: sure, Captain Chaos knows the alleys of New Tyre like the back of his hand, but that shouldn’t necessarily translate to a deep knowledge of the streets of Halcyon City. And, since there’s only one World, really, the use of *Open Gates* becomes useless or changed: maybe it permits short range teleportation or access to “pocket universes” (at doubled cost) or somesuch. Lastly, how do the spiritual Talents interact with “super Qualities”? Does *Invulnerability* grant resistance to *Wards*, for example?

**From *Cold, Hard World*.** The main issue is the sweeping change of all references to the Real and Spirit Worlds to reflect a unified Cosmos.



### ***Supernatural Superheroes***

Magic in the Streets games require a little extra definition by the GM and players on the ground rules for setting and character construction.

#### **MODE**

*Mode* indicates the capabilities and expectations of how characters operate in the World; it mainly effects the scope of Qualities (i.e., how powerful and extensive they should be) and the number of Soul Points a starting character has in their Pool. The main Modes are:

- ◆ **Just Folks.** Qualities are fairly narrow and limited; a Quality of “Firestarter” permits the character to spark flames ranging in intensity from a lit match to a burning torch, within an area with a radius equal to the Rank Modifier in *feet*. Characters start with 1 point in their Soul Point Pool.
- ◆ **Heroic.** Qualities are quite broad and powerful; a Quality of “Firestarter” permits the character to gout jets of intense flame ranging in intensity from a blowtorch to a cutting laser, within an area with a radius equal to twice the Rank Modifier in *tens of yards*. Characters start with 5 points in their Soul Point Pool.

## UNIFORM

*Uniform* shows the acceptance level for specialized “hero suits” among the Supernatural Set (Average People will probably look askance at any weird clothing, even if the campaign is set to Costume level).

- ◆ **None.** Most of the Supernatural Set just wear their street clothes; anyone dressing up will be mocked soundly. Think Dane McGowan in *the Invisibles* or David Dunn in *Unbreakable*.
- ◆ **Iconized.** Individuals stick with a particular look or sensibility in their clothing choices. Some opt for consistency in a particular color, cut, style, or material (everything in purples and greens!), while others stick to practicality (cargo pants, combat boots, knit sweater, trenchcoat, sunglasses), and still others incorporate a motif like a recurring symbol (a Jack o’Lantern motorcycle helmet, a stylized dove, lots of square metal studs, a t-shirt with the alchemical symbol for Mercury) or an outrageous selection of accessories (sword cane, Sam Browne belt of stakes, a suit covered in thorns, etc.). People wearing Iconized clothing are not necessarily be outside the bounds of “normal” acceptability, but they may be extremely striking and memorable. Think Neo and Morpheus in *The Matrix*; Mr. Glass in *Unbreakable*, Kevin Matchstick in *Mage: the Hero Defined*, or the leather jumpsuits in the *X-Men* movies (on the high-end).
- ◆ **Costume.** This is full blown funnybook suits: capes and body armor and utility belts – the works. *Costumes* draw serious attention from everybody – a guy on the Metro in green spandex and yellow boots and gloves is not something you can ignore. Think Batman, Spiderman, Dr. Strange, and so forth.

## STYLE

*Style* indicates the level of consequences the setting reacts with to what the characters do; in short, it shows what the cost is to do anything. How “forgiving” is reality to stylish or adventurous actions? For example, if a character leaps through a storefront window, is he cut to pieces, a little nicked up, or unharmed? The main Styles are:

- ◆ **Grim ‘n Gritty.** Life is hard and unforgiving, and it often seems like Someone Upstairs is just messing with you for cheap laughs. Bad stuff happens to good people all the time, because that’s the way it is. Fall out a second story window, and you’ll break your neck and die. Abilities & Powers use the Downshifts and Soul Point costs for the Real World found in this book (see *Chapter 1*).
- ◆ **Cinematic.** Life is hard but fair: if you put the effort in, you can get ahead. Bad stuff happens to good

people sometimes, either due to the luck of the draw or getting caught in someone’s machinations. Fall out a second story window, and you might break your arm or leg or get the wind knocked out of you. Abilities & Powers use the Downshifts and Soul Point costs for the Spirit World found in *Chapter 4* of *DI*.

- ◆ **Four Color.** (However, in a Magic in the Streets game, the four colors are probably white, gray, charcoal, and black.) Life is fair and forgiving: if you keep your nose clean, you can avoid the worst bits. Bad stuff happens to good people rarely, usually from somebody going out of their way to mess with them. Fall out a second story window, and you’ll sprain your arm or leg, at worst. Abilities & Powers cost 1 Downshift and/or 1 Soul Point *less* to use than Cinematic Style, to a limit of Type Rank (however, if a talent is already at Type Rank, this reduction in difficulty does not translate to free Upshifts).

## IDIOM

*Idiom* describes how supernatural talents or Qualities look when they’re being used. If the GM has an overarching idea for his Magic in the Streets game (like, “all talents make the user’s eyes visibly glow when used”), that’s Idiom. On the personal level, the look and feel of a particular character’s attributes is also Idiom. For example, take Pyro-Teknix, a fire-based hero. Perhaps when he uses Open Gates, he sets something alight and walks “through” the flames to appear somewhere else. Enchant might be infusing an object with mystic fire. Or, if he uses Bind, maybe loops and whorls of flame wreath around the target’s head. That sort of thing.

Additionally, this is where the determination of how super Qualities, Abilities, and Powers interact. It’s strongly suggested that in a Magic in the Streets *DI* game, one of the two options is chosen:

1. Spiritual talents trump “Super Qualities”. In this case Super Qualities are simply weaker than magic, and offer no resistance to its effects (Ward can bypass Invulnerability, Bind can slip through Mind Shield, Dream-Leap can defeat Gravity Control, etc.); or
2. “Super Qualities” are spiritual talents. “Super Qualities” in this case are similar enough to magic and can be matched against the other effects (Ward can be blocked by Invulnerability, Bind must overcome Mind Shield, Dream-Leap fights against Gravity Control, etc.).

**Example Character 1: Anthony Edgars, aka The Raven**

When he was a child, mad cultists bent on bloodshed and Soultaking broke into the Edgars household. Luckily, Dr. Michael Edgars was a firm believer in home security systems; unluckily, his security measures were all mundane. Before the police arrived, Ms. Alanna Rice-Edgars was dead, Dr. Edgars had husked, and 8 year old Anthony had been cracked into a Dead Inside. Upon his parent's graves, he swore an oath: "Nevermore!" and began his life-long training in the criminal sciences, the martial arts, and the occult crafts. The Raven flies, seeking the bloody-handed, to end the persecution of the innocent.

**Anthony Edgars (The Raven).** Good [+2] Detective, Good [+2] Martial Artist, Good [+2] Occultist, Good [+2] Athlete, Poor [-2] Fetish-dependent. *Type:* Average [+0] Dead Inside. *Personality:* Thinker. *Virtue:* Generosity; *Vice:* Cruelty. *Soul Point Pool:* 5.

**Uniform:** The Raven dresses all in black: a form-fitting but unrestrictive singlet, crisscrossed with bandoliers of occult gear, under a voluminous, many-pocketed duster. Black leather boots and gloves sheathe his feet and hands, and he wears a stylized cowl to hide his features.

**Idiom:** The Raven uses a lot of "fetishes" – small bundles of mystically-relevant objects – as foci for his Abilities and Powers. Examples would be a small crystal ball for Second Sight, a special rune marked on his boots in chalk for Dream Leaping, a particular hand gesture or verbal phrase to Ward, etc. When using a talent (actively and passively) without the appropriate fetish, The Raven suffers a -2 to all rolls.

**Example Character 2: Greg Franz, Heir to the Cockroach Kingdom**

Greg spent his childhood as the son of a single mom. His father Erik had died before he was born, and since Erik's parents were long dead, Greg grew up knowing only his mother's family. While they loved him, they knew something just wasn't right with the boy. His shyness and disconnection from others, they rationalized, was due to his lack of knowing anything about half of his heritage. What none of them suspected was that Greg had simply been born different: Dead Inside, and something more.

When Greg was twelve, he and his mom moved to the big city when she got a new job. There, the first night in their new high-rise apartment, Greg unaccountably fell feverish, hallucinating that the walls of the building were speaking to him. When he woke, he realized his mistake – it was things *inside* the walls speaking to him. The same things that now swarmed his bed and paid him obeisance: cockroaches. Thousands of them. Welcoming back the last scion of their royal family.

He can sense his multitudinous subjects, communicate with them, command them, even see through their eyes – and they even aid him unasked. He shares their insectoid durability to damage, toxins, disease, and harm. He's ridiculously strong. He is the Cockroach Prince.

**Greg Franz (the Cockroach Prince).** Expert [+4] Cockroach Prince, Good [+2] Invulnerability, Good [+2] Superstrength, Poor [-2] Just a Kid. *Type:* Average [0] Dead Inside. *Personality:* Instinctive. *Virtue:* Integrity; *Vice:* Despair. *Soul Point Pool:* 5.

**Uniform:** The Cockroach Prince normally wears street-clothes – generally sneakers, jeans, and a t-shirt, adding a denim jacket and hoodie if it's cold. (In his pocket, he carries an old latex Halloween mask – that of a generic spooky ghost – if he needs to hide his face.)

**Idiom:** The Cockroach Prince's talents and Qualities are mostly invisible to the Average Person – just like his subjects. However, to Second Sight, Greg's aura has a definite alien, insect taint: if one of the Supernatural Set sees him use Dream-Leap to run up a wall, for example, they'll see his aura sprout wiggling, hairy legs as he scuttles up the bricks.



## MYSTERIOUS ESCAPES

He said: The only thing that burns in Hell is the part of you that won't let go of life, your memories, your attachments. They burn them all away. But they're not punishing you, he said. They're freeing your soul. So, if you're frightened of dying and... and you're holding on, you'll see devils tearing your life away. But if you've made your peace, then the devils are really angels, freeing you from the earth.

– Louis, *Jacob's Ladder*

When the Cosmic knob is spun to *Mysterious Escapes*, something is wrong. Not just with the characters, but the World itself. It's all wrong. The Real and the Unreal bleed into one another, making what was once steady and familiar into the rickety and strange.

Come home from work one night, and your apartment building is gone. The ATM machine can't recognize your card. The key no longer fits into your car. You forget your name. You stumble around aimlessly until the sun comes up, and all is back to normal. Mostly. (You have an extra key on your keychain now.)

What is going on?

"Stan, don't you remember me? I'm your wife! I love you! We've been married fifteen yea- wait. The children. Where are our children? Stan, where are they? Where's Robbie and Becky?"

## *Modifications for Mysterious Escapes*

A Mysterious Escapes type of setting is probably best for a one-shot game or miniseries. It trades on the two words that make up the phrase: *Mysterious* (what the hell is going on?) and *Escape* (from what?). The GM decides what the characters are escaping from – life, death, sanity, insanity, imprisonment, and freedom are the most popular choices – and assembles scenarios to play with that theme, selecting NPCs, plot seeds, clues, and Weird Stuff to illustrate the core idea. The players and their characters have no idea what the theme is, and must figure it out (thus, the Mystery). In large part, these sorts of setting focus on the concept of identity: who the character really is, which is especially appropriate as DI subject matter. Examples of Mysterious Escapes can be seen in works like *Angel Heart*, *The Cube*, *Intacto*, *Jacob's Ladder*, *Memento*, *The Ninth Configuration*, *The Prisoner*, and *Waiting for Godot*.

Perhaps the PCs are Ghosts, imprisoned inside a Spirit Trap. Maybe they're all aspects of one soul whose body has died, and only one of them can ascend to the Source and be reborn. Perhaps they are inmates in a futuristic sanitarium, which is trying to help them work through a post-traumatic episode so that they can return to duty on their starships. Could they be old gods, thrown into fleshly fetters and dosed with the waters of the Lethe? Maybe they are in Hell, and are blindly climbing out of the Pit. Perhaps they are all troubled telepathic teens, locked in some Nightmare gestalt. Possibly they are captured aliens, and the government is trying to brainwash into them into humanity.

Since the options are endless, the suggestions here will have to be quite broad.

- ◆ **Player Character Type.** During character generation, PCs do not select their *Type*. The GM will secretly select the being *Type* for characters; furthermore, it's suggested that all PCs be of the same *Type*, and that discovering what they are should be one of the mysteries of the game.
- ◆ **Abilities & Powers.** It is suggested that many of the spiritual talents of PCs be ignored, focusing on only a small number of Abilities and Powers. A good selection for a Mysterious Escapes game would be *Luck*, *Second Sight*, and *Ward*.
- ◆ **Other Supernatural Beings.** Depending upon the style of Mysterious Escape that the GM wishes to run, limiting other supernatural beings to one other

Type can be helpful. Going with Imagos as the only other Type would be good for those “you’re insane and don’t know it” sorts of games, while utilizing Ghosts as the only other Type can work well in a “I see dead people” PC sort of game.

- ◆ **World Transition.** The game should start in the Real World, which over time morphs into the Spirit World. Depending upon the flavor of the game that the GM wishes to run, this World Transition can be subtle or flamboyant, slow or quick, in definable steps or in an escalating slope. Perhaps each time a PC earns a Soul Point, the setting moves closer to Real, while each time he loses a Soul Point, it moves closer to the Spirit (or vice-versa)? Maybe at the end of each session, the setting shifts towards one or the other side of the Veil. Maybe if in-game situations happen – a friend or family member of a PC is killed by an NPC, severing the PC’s ties to the Real World? The GM should set the schedule ahead of time, and then see what the PC or PCs do in the face of it.

Let’s put these bullet-point suggestions into an example.

## MYSTERIOUS ESCAPES SCENARIO: *FIVE O’CLOCK WORLD*

Tradin’ my time for the pay I get,  
Livin’ on money that I ain’t made yet,  
I’ve been goin’ tryin’ to make my way,  
While I live for the end of the day.  
‘Cuz it’s a five o’clock world when the  
whistle blows,  
No one owns a piece of my time, and  
There’s a long-haired girl who waits, I  
know,  
To ease my troubled mind, yeah...  
– The Vogues, “Five O’Clock  
World”

### **Rule Mods & Secrets**

**Player Character Type.** Secretly, all the players are Tulpas; the goal of this scenario/campaign would be escaping corporate hell to become a Free Spirit.

During character generation, in lieu of selecting or being assigned a *Type*, a player should instead select one *Corporate Quality* related to an office environment to have at Expert [+4] Rank. This could be an actual job function (Typing, Filing, Computer Helpdesk, etc.), an office-culture skill (Brown-nosing, Procrastinate Without Being Caught, Pass the Buck, Office Supply Practical Jokes, etc.), or something somewhat related to working in a nine-to-five cubefarm (Brew Coffee, Outwit Security Door, Desk Drawer Pharmacy, etc.).

Additionally, the character needs to pick a Weakness related to why they cannot quit the Company (Sick Mother, Bad Credit, Mortgage Payment, Addicted to Drugs/Clothes/Computer Equipment, etc.).

**Abilities & Powers.** The only Abilities and Powers in the Five O’Clock World are *Luck*, *Ward*, and the character’s selected Corporate Quality. The Corporate Quality fuses elements of *Second Sight* and *Supercharge* into a single talent, permitting magical effects and perceptions. For example, a character with the Corporate Quality of Expert [+4] Clerical could (passively) “sense a pattern” in a sequence of files they are shelving to suddenly discover a dark secret about the Company, or use file folders as protective armor, or do voodoo on another character by editing their HR file, etc.

**Other Supernatural Beings.** All NPCs in the Company are Tulpas dedicated to keeping the PCs in corporate chains and oblivious toil, with one exception – an Imago (GM’s choice from *Dramatis Personae* below) there to help the PCs liberate themselves into Free Spirits and escape the Five O’Clock World.

**World Transition.** The game is set in a Real World analogue of an office, which will slowly crack and splinter around the edges as they awake to what’s going on. For example, perhaps the characters finally realize that 5 pm never comes. They *assume* they go home and come back the next morning but if they really think about it, they can never quite remember leaving the building (and the GM can subtly support this by asking, “So, what will your character do after work tonight?” but never following up on it, moving directly to “At 8 am the next day, you notice someone’s stolen your stapler”). Indeed, they’ve

never left the building . . . ever. Something always seems to interfere; often they never make it out of the suite; with luck, they might have gotten off the floor once, but never to the lobby, much less outside.

As the PCs start to realize that all is not right with the world, their freedom to move should expand – they can move more easily through the building. As they assert their own identities separate from their corporate role, the clock ticks ever closer to 5 pm. When they realize the truth of their situation, they will be free.

### ***Situation***

You work for the Company, day-in and day-out, a corporate drone. But hey, it pays well, and keeps you off the streets, right? Still, it seems like there's something missing in your life. . . and things at the Company are starting to get weird, like the voices in the telephone system, the day that all of the firm's pencils were stolen, and the rainbow-colored coffee that cools off.

### ***Dramatis Personae***

*The Head Honcho* runs the show. The four senior staff members (CFO, CIO, PR Director, HR Director) carry out his (or her) decrees and report back to him (or her), as well as any other staff (Office Manager, counsel, consultants, whatever) outside of the purview of the senior staff. The Head Honcho is always distant and slow to react, with vague or contradictory goals, and might even never be seen directly.

*The CFO* handles the money and any staff involved with money (Accounts Receivable, Accounts Payable, Payroll, etc.). The CFO is interested in keeping expenses – well, those below the senior staff level, at least – cut to the bone, hates waste, and loves efficiency.

*The CIO* manages the information and communication structures of the Company (computers, phones, mail), and the staff responsible for those structures. The CIO rewards logic, innovation, and interdependence, and punishes disorganization, tradition, and independence.

*The PR Director* shapes the “public face” of the Company. Writers, salesmen, lobbyists, and so forth report to this senior staff member. The PR Director values appearances over actualities, and hates any

truth that interferes with a pleasant façade of business done well.

*The HR Director*, in theory, handles the welfare of the staff, individually and on the whole. “The greatest good for the greatest number” is the watchword of the HR staff. The HR Director coddles and smothers at turns – helping resolve inter-departmental conflict on Monday and forcing all staff to submit to Sexual Harrassment Training on Tuesday.

*The Office Manager* is responsible for the smooth operation of the office – ordering supplies, assigning clerical work, keeping the calendar updated. The Office Manager likes those that follow the rules and who stoically shoulder any task requested, and dislikes any request that steps out of bounds of “the usual” or the refusal of an employee to drop everything they're currently doing to handle a new, priority task.

*The Receptionist* answers the phones and directs calls both internal and external. The Receptionist values communication, but hates to lie for any reason.

*The Mailboy* delivers the daily mail. He respects a sense of humor and laziness, and shudders when he runs into hardworking, nose to the grindstone sorts.

*The Janitor* sweeps up and tidies, usually when no one's watching. The Janitor hopes for kindness and empathy, and fears cruelty and snobbishness.

*The Lobby Guard* protects the doors of the Company's building, keeping the insiders in and the outsiders out. Period.

### ***Possible Scenes***

Voice-mail calls from beyond the grave. “When's the last time you went outside? Are you sure?” Evil File lands in a character's inbox, and begins magnetically attracting other files. Finding the one office with a window. Fire in a wastebasket. The vending machine is out of soda. The corridors shift, and doors lead to places other than where they should. The departmental meeting. The Quest for the Holy Stapler. Is the CIO hacking? Corporate backstabbing. The lost customer records. The breakroom disappears. The elevator doors slide open to reveal a huge, staring eye. No roof or lobby access. PC discovers that their memories and their HR file do not sync. “You're fired!” Is the CFO embezzling? Office romance. Performance review time. Harsh deadlines. “I quit!” Called on the carpet to see the Head Honcho.